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‘Believe me, I remain...’

The Mary Greg Collection  
at Manchester City Galleries

Elizabeth Sarah Mitchell  
PhD 2018



**‘Believe me, I remain...’**

**The Mary Greg Collection  
at Manchester City Galleries**

Elizabeth Sarah Mitchell

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of the Manchester Metropolitan University for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

MIRIAD

Manchester School of Art  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
2018





## Abstract

This thesis traces the history of a collection of domestic objects and amateur crafts given to a museum during the first half of the twentieth century. Using the metaphor of archaeology, it takes an object-centred approach to the investigation of changing relationships over time between a collection of objects, an archive of letters, and the institution in which they are held. Drawing on developments in sensory anthropology, theoretical distinctions between objects and things, and letter-writing as a gendered social practice, it treats this material as both ‘evidence and affect’, using writing and photography to consider sensorial and emotional responses to objects, documents and place alongside the historical data they may yield. It situates this within wider historical and biographical research into private and public collecting during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In so doing, this thesis provides new insight into the histories of collecting and the development of the municipal art gallery in Britain during the interwar period. It evidences the centrality of decorative art to an increasing domestication of the art museum in the aftermath of the First World War, even as modernist art practices prompted the development of the formalist ‘white cube’ aesthetic. It demonstrates the conflicted position of decorative art objects within this developing dynamic, caught between aesthetic and ethnographic criteria of value. It also challenges received knowledge in relation to the gendered history of institutional collecting. Mary Greg is identified as a significant patron of multiple museums, her interests contributing to an expansion of scope in what was considered worthy of museum preservation. The Mary Greg Collection in Manchester is shown to manifest, in microcosm, a history of changing attitudes towards the material culture of the domestic past, from nineteenth century antiquarianism, through an Arts and Crafts sensibility and developments in domestic ethnography, to the early twentieth century theorising of childhood and the interwar handicrafts revival. However, this thesis also demonstrates how formal technologies of record keeping, distinctions between professional and amateur, and developing hierarchies of museological value, as well as social and gendered modes of propriety, all contributed to the obscuring of one woman’s contribution to British museum culture.

Bringing the history of the collection up to the present day, this research also considers the ways in which museums incorporate the sedimented layers of their own institutional histories, and how the meaning and value of objects in museums changes over time. Drawing on a Ruskinian notion of ‘voicefulness’, found within the collection’s history, it makes a case for

alternative museological criteria of value based on qualities of intimacy, love and curiosity. In so doing, it demonstrates how the legacies of past collecting practices, often difficult to reconcile with contemporary professional concerns, may yet have the potential to yield not just new insights into the past, but new possibilities in the future.

## Acknowledgements

There are so many people to thank. No project is conducted in isolation, and it is often hard to know where and when it really begins. This one has been a long time in the making. It emerged as a possibility from countless conversations and debates and excited showings and tellings, and behind it all, the quiet company of objects, during the period of my association with Manchester City Galleries. It took shape through a similar process with supervisors, colleagues and fellow researchers at Manchester School of Art. But it goes back further than that. To growing up in a ramshackle house full of inherited bits and pieces that didn't quite fit. To parents and grandparents who were, in their own ways, both collectors and makers, both professional and amateur, who pursued their own idiosyncratic pathways according to the different opportunities available to them. It goes back to a love of objects, in all their vulnerability and durability, that was founded within this complicated dynamic.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisory team, in its various iterations, at Manchester School of Art. Jane Webb, Myna Trustram, Sara Holdsworth, Alison Slater, Jim Aulich and Melanie Horton have all given so generously of their considerable expertise, thoughtfulness and enthusiasm, and I am completely in their debt. In particular, Myna and Alison have provided both the discipline and encouragement to see me through the last months and I would not have managed it without them. Thank you both. I would also like to thank my fellow Art School researchers who have made the past five years such a joy and have opened my eyes to the creative possibilities of research, as well as becoming good friends along the way. Sara Davies, Tilo Reifenstein, Sue Blatherwick, Jan Fyfe, Sabbi Kaur, LOkesh Ghai, Ralph Mills, Derek Trillo, Daksha Patel, Laura Guy and Simon Woolham – thank you. And to Jackie Stacey and the members of the Writing and Anxiety discussion group, who have shared both the dark side and the joys of academic writing: Lin Charlston, Sara Davies, Anna Frew, Victoria Haire, Gemma Meek and Stacey Coughlin. Finally, to my examiners, Dr Sandra Dudley from the University of Leicester and Dr Philip Sykas from Manchester School of Art, thank you for your constructive criticality, insightful questioning and guidance for the future.

Manchester City Galleries has been a part of my life for such a long time it is part of me. I am grateful to the institution as a whole, for the richness of opportunity it afforded me during nearly two decades as a member of staff, for the lasting friendships I made there, and for its ongoing support of this research in allowing me unlimited access to store rooms and archives. I would like to thank all the staff at Manchester Art Gallery, Platt Hall and Queens Park, and

especially Amanda Wallace, Janet Boston, Miles Lambert and Rosie Gnatiuk. I would also like to thank the *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* project team: Alex Woodall, Martin Grimes, Sarah Rainbow, Joanne Davies and, from Manchester School of Art, Sharon Blakey, Hazel Jones and all their wonderful students. Particular thanks must go to Sharon Blakey, with whom I have since had the good fortune to develop a wonderful writing partnership that goes from strength to strength. And thanks are also due to those who set me on my path in the first place with encouragement and opportunity in equal measure, in particular Lesley Jackson and Ruth Shrigley from Manchester City Galleries, and Alex McErlain from Manchester School of Art. Memories of exploring the pottery store cupboards with Alex will stay with me always.

Thanks are also due to the many people who have patiently and generously responded to my requests for information. These include numerous archivists, curators, academics and private individuals, but in particular Laura Carter, Richard Gray, Peter Greener, Bettina Harden, Kate Hill, Catherine Howell, Michael Janes, Louise Pullen, Ros Westwood, Amy Woodson-Boulton and Bridget Yates. And the Guild of St George, whose members have welcomed me with such enthusiasm. I am particularly indebted to Stuart Eagles in this respect, for his enthusiastic support of my research, for commissioning me to talk and write about Mary Greg for the Guild, and for providing invaluable historical and editorial advice.

To my poor longsuffering family, Tom, Peter, Arthur and Rosie, thank you for putting up with the growing heaps of books and papers on every surface, with my gradual withdrawal in recent months from work and play alike, and with my furiously furrowed ‘thinking/stinking face’, prowling the house, lost in thought. Thank you for understanding the thing about spoons and keys and bits of old fabric. And for the meals and the cups of coffee and the clean clothes and not complaining about the state of the living room.

And then there is Mary. A woman whom I never met, who died twenty years before I was born, but whose energy, determination and faith in the future, at the age of 70 and in the face of personal loss, I have found truly inspirational. She emerges from this research as being, like all real people, complex and contradictory – alternatively gracious and demanding, lyrical and blunt, passionate and stubborn – and I love her for it. This thesis is dedicated to four equally complex and contradictory women, who have been particularly influential in my life. None are famous, or written about, or expect/expected to be; nevertheless they have made and continue to make a significant difference in the world.

Rose Cottle, Marcia Paul, Marilyn Paul and Cathy Seal. Thank you.

Nothing is sudden. Not an explosion – planned, timed, wired carefully  
– not the burst door. Just as the earth invisibly prepares its  
cataclysms, so history is the gradual instant.

Anne Michaels<sup>1</sup>

I so enjoy being out in a good wind – being half lifted or carried along  
by it or still better meeting it full in the face & battling with it!

Mary Greg<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997) p.77.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Greg, nature diary, 30 December 1904, p.141.



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## 12 November 2012

It's a shabby house. There are cracks in the masonry, a missing window pane, wallpaper stained and torn. But dignified. A Georgian town house, tall and symmetrical, pale lemon yellow with white columned portico and terraced front. An elegant winding staircase, with full height sash windows at each landing turn. One has a half-moon table, a vase of paper flowers catching the light. In the first floor drawing room, a blue velvet sofa and mantelpiece candelabra. Piano stool pulled back; a tea tray on a table. Light falls through an open door, across the spindles of a curving banister, onto the floral print wallpaper of a landing.

Downstairs, in the cellar kitchen, a jam jar sits on a wooden table. It is huge, the size of a bucket. Consider. Curtains fall stiffly, paintwork is thick. The dining room is missing its table; chairs stand to attention round the empty space, willing one into existence. The furniture is in denial. Where are the people? The shaft of light through the drawing room door conjures voices off. Unheard, unseen, but *there*, nonetheless.

The house has been here for 90 years. There is a photograph – a young girl with bobbed hair, holding a doll on the front doorstep. It is 21st December 1922; she has a bow on her dress. The house was old even then. In the picture the windows are intact, but the cheap paper on which the image is printed has yellowed and ripped.

\*

In the space between my cupped hands, glass dissolves and the house swells. Part-Alice, part-Goldilocks, I am falling through the looking-glass, trying out the beds. How else could I describe a jam jar no bigger than my thumb as 'huge'? A decade ago, I chose the sofa, placed the piano and the vase of flowers. I remember sorting through chairs and pictures and crockery, placing them carefully, aware as I did so of loose and wordless half-narratives breathing into life. Somewhere near my shoulder – *there* – was my childhood self, playing with my grandma's green wooden dolls' house. *There* – was the nameless little girl, with her bobbed hair and her bow. *There* – was the elderly Mrs Greg, arranging her gifts for the delight of the 'little folk'.

Ten years on, I am marvelling and worrying at the jam jar and the missing table and the light through an open door. My body is too big, too crude, too clumsy – but I can feel my hand on the banister rail, my foot on the oversized carpet tuft. The warmth of my breath in the darkened room.



Figure i: The dolls' house, interior. Gallery of Craft & Design, Manchester Art Gallery, 12 November 2012.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

*'We must not lose any good thing which will add to the interest of those concerned in the future.'*<sup>1</sup>

This thesis tells a story that has not been told before. It emerged from a position of curiosity about a collection in a museum; a collection that has, in the past decade, inspired an increasing amount of curiosity after many years of being effectively forgotten. It reconstructs the history of this collection as a way of reflecting on its present day identity, and considers the wider implications this may have for our understanding of museums and people and things at the beginning of the twenty first century. Curiosity appears to be making something of a comeback in museums. This in itself might be regarded as a curious statement. After all, museums emerged from the curiosity cabinets of princes and scholars. But as historians of the museum have been at pains to point out, *wunderkammers* and museums are not the same thing; one is ostensibly the home of the arbitrary and odd, the other of order and the archetype.<sup>2</sup>

And yet, a renewed focus on the curious and affective properties of the museum object has emerged in recent years. This is evident not just in academic inquiry but also in museums themselves and in the idea of the museum in public consciousness. It is there in series such as 2010's hugely popular *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, written and presented for Radio 4 by British Museum Director Neil MacGregor.<sup>3</sup> It is in the comedy panel show, *The Museum of Curiosity*, also on Radio 4, in which 'distinguished guests' from all walks of life are invited to donate something meaningful to a 'vast imaginary museum' managed by the Professor of Ignorance, show host John Lloyd.<sup>4</sup> The collection, which looked for a while as though it was at risk of becoming redundant,<sup>5</sup> is emerging once more as central to what makes museums unique. In a recent publication titled *The Return of Curiosity: What museums are good for in*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Mary Greg to William Batho, 20 February 1929, MCG Archive.

<sup>2</sup> See E. Bruce Robinson, 'Curiosity Cabinets, Museums and Universities', in Colleen J. Sheehy (ed.), *Cabinet of Curiosities: Mark Dion and the University as Installation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) pp.43-54.

<sup>3</sup> BBC, 'A History of the World' (no date) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/> [accessed 07 August 2017].

<sup>4</sup> BBC, 'The Museum of Curiosity' (no date) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00k3wvk> [accessed 07 August 2017].

<sup>5</sup> See Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Director of the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Nicholas Thomas argues that 'there is something about material culture in the distinctively assembled form of the collection that now enlivens the museum'.<sup>6</sup> For him, the museum collection is not just 'a manifold set of deposits that offer lenses on human creativity' but also, in the oddities of its artefacts, 'a creative technology, a means of making new things'.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, the Barbican exhibition *Magnificent Obsessions: The Artist as Collector* explored this very idea, showcasing the personal collections of modern and contemporary artists. Reviews described the show as 'delightful', 'bizarre' and 'eclectic', advising visitors to 'rummage' and 'wander' and 'see what catches your eye'.<sup>8</sup>

In 2015, prompted by the experience of conducting my research in an art school, I wrote an article pondering the question of what art school is for. Informed by conversations with colleagues and friends, curiosity featured largely: curiosity as 'a kind of momentary stoppage caused by unexpected observation', as a condition which can apply to both subject and object – 'I am curious to know more about this curious thing'.<sup>9</sup> I became curious about curiosity, as something not just benignly incidental or charming but potentially transformative, radical even. Jacques Rancière describes it in terms of disjuncture, of looking sideways, 'at places or questions that are not supposed to be your place or your questions'.<sup>10</sup> Alberto Manguel observes that it is 'seldom rewarded with meaningful or satisfying answers, but rather with an increased desire to ask more questions'.<sup>11</sup> Tyson E. Lewis proposes that, as 'a surplus in the field of the sensible',<sup>12</sup> it is 'always implicated in politics'.<sup>13</sup> Curiosity thus seems to have been a good point of departure for embarking on this research.

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity: What museums are good for in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016) p.8.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, ref.6, p.9.

<sup>8</sup> Alastair Sooke, 'Magnificent Obsessions, Barbican, review: 'delightful'', *The Telegraph Online*, 12 February 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/11406615/Magnificent-Obsessions-Barbican-review-delightful.html> [accessed 07 August 2017].

<sup>9</sup> Liz Mitchell, 'What is Art School For?', in Laura Robertson (ed.), *On Being Curious: New Critical Writing on Contemporary Art From the North West of England* (Liverpool: The Double Negative, 2016) p.6.

<sup>10</sup> Hydrarchy, 'Interview with Jacques Rancière by Lawrence Liang, Lodi Gardens, Delhi, 5 February 2009', 26 January 2010, <http://hydrarchy.blogspot.co.uk/2010/01/interview-with-jacques-ranciere.html> [accessed 07 August 2017].

<sup>11</sup> Alberto Manguel, *Curiosity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015) pp.1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Tyson E. Lewis, 'Teaching with Pensive Images: Rethinking Curiosity in Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 46 (1) (2012) p.37.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, ref.12, p.28.

## Two collections

In May 2002, the newly-titled Manchester Art Gallery opened to the public after a four-year, multi-million-pound redevelopment.<sup>14</sup> The two nineteenth century buildings that formerly comprised Manchester City Art Gallery had been refurbished, extended and linked by the addition of a new wing. New exhibition galleries and the renovation of historic buildings doubled the amount of available display space,<sup>15</sup> a full century after the land adjacent to the Royal Manchester Institution (RMI) and Manchester Athenaeum (MA) had first been acquired for the purposes of housing the city's growing art collections.<sup>16</sup> On the top floor of the 1837 Athenaeum building, a former theatre was converted into a showcase for the Galleries' extensive decorative art collections. One third of the new Gallery of Craft & Design explored the Galleries' own collecting history, through a series of case studies that celebrated both institutional initiatives and significant private gifts and bequests. Of the many once-private collections that have shaped Manchester's present-day holdings, four were selected for inclusion; of these, two were the Thomas and Mary Greg Collections (Figs.1.1-2).

The Thomas Greg Collection is well-known to ceramic historians, curators and collectors. Comprising 1,003 objects, it illustrates the development of British pottery from medieval times to the early nineteenth century. First loaned to the City Art Gallery in 1905, it soon became established as one of Manchester's highlights, and in 1923 became part of the permanent collection. In 1969, *The Incomparable Art: English Pottery from the Thomas Greg Collection*, by Michael Parkinson, described it as 'one of the most valuable collections of English pottery ever to have been made by one man', a collector 'of great knowledge, discernment and enthusiasm'.<sup>17</sup> It has been widely recognised as such ever since. By contrast, the Mary Greg Collection was, in 2002, almost entirely unknown outside the institution. Given by Thomas Greg's wife, Mary Greg, it comprises approximately 2,000 objects<sup>18</sup> across a diverse range of material, mainly but not exclusively domestic and/or childhood related. It traverses geography, date, material and function, ranging from clothing to cutlery, from children's toys to scientific instruments. It has no dedicated publication and receives little more than passing mention in

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<sup>14</sup> This thesis uses the current institutional name, Manchester City Galleries (MCG), and venue name, Manchester Art Gallery (MAG), when referring to events from 2002 onwards. When discussing events prior to this, it uses the historical institutional and venue names, Manchester City Art Galleries (MCAG) and City Art Gallery (CAG).

<sup>15</sup> Michael Howard, *Up Close: A Guide to Manchester Art Gallery* (London: Scala Publishers, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1902*, MCG Archive.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Parkinson, *The Incomparable Art: English Pottery from the Thomas Greg Collection* (Manchester: City Art Gallery, 1969), pp.3-4.

<sup>18</sup> A precise number is impossible to determine, for reasons which will become clear.



Gallery guidebooks.<sup>19</sup> However, in 2002 the decision was made to show both collections together, for the first time in nearly 80 years. Then employed as a Curator of Decorative Art, I was a member of the team that put this display together.

The display presented two collections in a relationship of complementary opposition. Thomas Greg was presented as systematic and scholarly, his collection a chronological narrative of design evolution. The text panel described it as a story 'of experiment and invention, triumph and downfall...in many ways...a history of England itself'.<sup>20</sup> Mrs Greg, by contrast, 'appeared to be a compulsive collector who could not resist the curious and bizarre'.<sup>21</sup> Where his collection told a coherent history of design, hers juxtaposed the ordinary and the odd in an eclectic exploration of domestic and everyday life. However, as the text panel also acknowledged, she too was a serious collector, whose interests overlapped with those of her husband in their shared focus on pre-industrial crafts. A selection from the Thomas Greg Collection was presented in a single display case, via a series of continuous shelves from left to right and front to back. Medieval floor tiles and seventeenth century slipware gave way to blue and white delftware, salt-glazed stoneware and the industrial earthenwares of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Fig.1.3). Visitors were encouraged to 'read' a sequence of objects as an evolutionary progression of skill, design and manufacture. The Mary Greg display was organised around the central motif of a large Georgian dolls' house, flanked by individual objects on short floating shelves: a Noah's ark, a model greengrocer's shop, a toy theatre and 'The Frog House', a taxidermy tableau. Smaller objects, including dolls' crockery, miniature furniture, pipes, snuff boxes and embroideries, were housed within a variation on the collector's cabinet, with small peephole windows and drawers (Fig.1.4). Here, visitors were invited to 'glimpse' individual objects or small groups of objects in tightly enclosed spaces.

The whole ensemble suggested a relationship of gendered opposition – one sequential, logical, didactic, the other eclectic, playful, intimate. Both Greg collections were afforded equal status in their physical presence within the gallery, in a deliberate attempt to reflect different modes of collecting in the Galleries' history. However, in *Up Close: A Guide to Manchester Art Gallery*, published to celebrate the Gallery's re-opening, while the Thomas Greg Collection was

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Timothy Clifford, *A Century of Collecting 1882-1982: A Guide to Manchester City Art Galleries* (Manchester: City of Manchester Cultural Services, 1983) pp.27-28.

<sup>20</sup> Text panel, 'The Mary Greg Collection', Gallery of Craft & Design, MAG, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Text panel, 'The Thomas Greg Collection', Gallery of Craft & Design, MAG, 2002.





Figures 1.3-1.4: Teapots from the Thomas Greg Collection; miniature teapot from the Mary Greg Collection; Gallery of Craft & Design, Manchester Art Gallery, 2002-2014.



The 2002 Gallery of Craft & Design display marked the beginnings of renewed attention to a body of objects that had been in storage for many years. Three years later, in the context of profession-wide debate around stored collections,<sup>23</sup> the Mary Greg Collection was briefly considered and then rejected for disposal. Subsequently, it formed the basis of a collaborative research project with Manchester School of Art, which in turn attracted the attention of museum theorists and historians. Several essays were published, and one doctoral research project embarked on which included the collection in its scope.<sup>24</sup> But the questions of how this collection came to be, what it consequently *is*, and why it should generate such interest in recent times remained. I am interested in these questions. Museums incorporate the multiple layers of their own histories; their collections embody not just the material evidence of their particular subjects, but also the sedimented remains of their own changing attitudes and identities. Recent debates on the ‘rationalisation’ of museum collections raise challenging questions about what to do with such historical material, how to determine its value and meaning in a shifting world of limited resources.<sup>25</sup> My aims in conducting this research are thus two-fold. They comprise a contribution to historical knowledge in the fields of collecting and the art museum in the first half of the twentieth century, and an ongoing reflection on the shifting meaning and value of historical collections in the art museum a century later.

This thesis traces the historical trajectory of the Mary Greg Collection within Manchester City Galleries through the material and textual remains its history has left behind. It reveals that the collection is not, as was previously thought, an assemblage of objects made in private, fixed at a given moment in time, and made permanent through transfer into public ownership.<sup>26</sup> In fact, it is the cumulative result of a series of collaborative relationships between individuals and institution, conducted over a period of nearly half a century, combined with the impact and legacies of changing institutional circumstances and attitudes in the half century that followed. Thomas and Mary Greg’s association with Manchester City Art Galleries began in 1904, when Thomas Greg first offered his collection of English pottery on loan. By the time of his death in 1920, the Greg Collection of Early English Pottery had become an established feature of the Galleries’ displays, but did not belong to the city. Mary Greg, as

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<sup>23</sup> See Helen Wilkinson, *Collections for the Future: Report of a Museums Association Enquiry* (London: Museums Association, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter Two, ‘Words and Things: Methodology’ for details of these.

<sup>25</sup> Simon J. Knell (ed.), *Museums and the Future of Collecting* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004 [1999]) pp.1-46. See also Suzanne Keene, *Fragments of the World: Uses of Museum Collections* (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> See Sharon Blakey and Liz Mitchell, ‘A Question of Value: Rethinking the Mary Greg Collection’ in Amanda Ravetz, Alice Kettle and Helen Felcey (eds.), *Collaboration Through Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) p.171. This essay pre-dates this research.

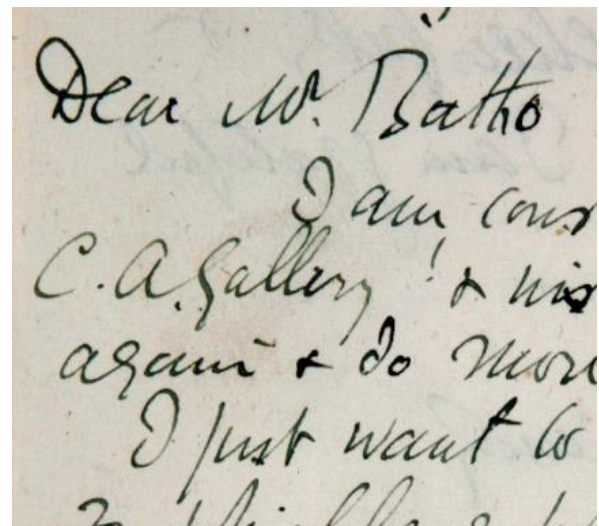
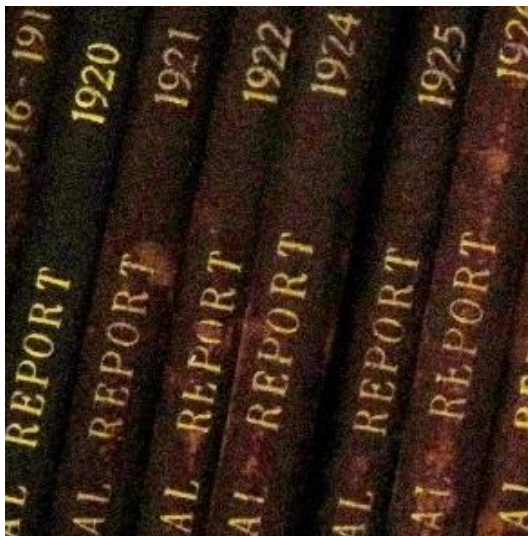
his widow and executor, was placed in the role of custodian. Thus began a relationship that lasted three decades.

Over the next thirty years, until her own death in 1949, shortly before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, Mrs Greg developed and maintained a close relationship with Manchester City Art Galleries. Including her husband's collection she gave, in total, over 3,000 objects to the city, taking an active role in their conservation, display and interpretation. She oversaw the installation, arrangement and re-arrangement of the collections personally, adding to them over time with further acquisitions as her interest, knowledge and understanding of the museum increased. She developed a network of relationships in Manchester and further afield, distributing objects across multiple museums and, in so doing, often facilitating introductions between them. This research reveals that, far from being merely custodian of her husband's affairs, Mary Greg made a significant contribution to museum culture in her own right. The Greg Collections at Manchester formed a core part of the Galleries' public displays throughout the interwar period. They were not, however, framed as two gender-differentiated bodies of objects, but as four individually coherent collections determined by content and purpose. The Greg Collections of Early English Pottery, Handicrafts of Bygone Times, Dolls & Dolls' Houses, and Brass Tobacco Boxes, enjoyed separate identities both together and in separate locations throughout the period. It was only after Mrs Greg's death, and with successive generations of curatorial staff and changing institutional priorities, that they were re-configured into the two collections shown in the Gallery of Craft & Design in 2002.

This thesis reconstructs the history of the Mary Greg Collection for the first time. It identifies and analyses the implications of a sequence of events and relationships through which the collection was formed. It is thus a history of both institution and individual, examined through the body of objects that together they assembled, and which remain in the museum today. Through attention to the material body of the collection and its historical trajectory, this research explores museum objects as occupying a state of continual flux, in spite of common assumptions that the museum preserves such things as fixed 'in perpetuity'.<sup>27</sup> It identifies the collection as both historical narrative and material entity, as situated both in the past and the present, and through this, as occupying further threshold territories that have arguably contributed to its disappearance from documented museum history: between public and private, professional and amateur, art and 'non-art', the 'treasured' and the disregarded.

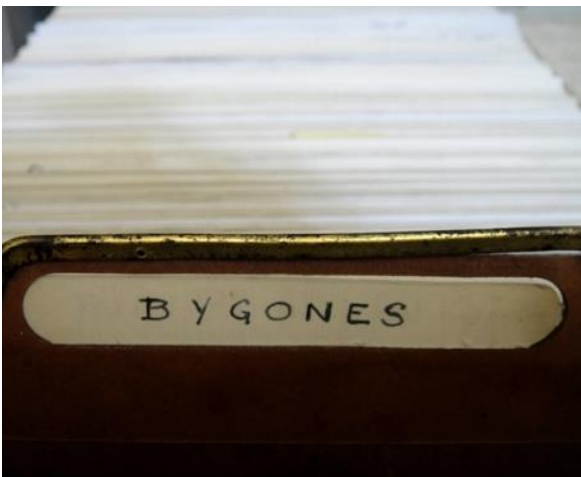
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<sup>27</sup> Knell, ref.25, pp.15-16.



Figures 1.5-1.10: Objects and documents from the Mary Greg Collection and Archive, Manchester City Galleries.





Figures 1.11-1.16: Objects and documents from the Mary Greg Collection and Archive, Manchester City Galleries.

## Bodies of evidence

Objects and archives – and the relationships between them – form the basis of this research (Figs.1.5-16). The Greg collections sit within the context of standard documentary practices that, to a greater or lesser extent, accompany all museum collections. Committee minutes, annual reports and catalogues provide the official institutional narrative that ‘explains’ the presence of the collections within the institution; inventories and indexing systems evidence the ways in which their content has been organised, managed and interpreted. In the case of the Mary Greg Collection, however, the documentary imprint for much of its content is comparatively thin. Little is known of individual object histories and provenance beyond their acquisition by Mrs Greg; most of the collected objects were anonymously made and are difficult to pinpoint precisely as to date, place and even, in some cases, function. As a collection of ‘everyday things’ in the context of an art museum, its status within the wider collections is comparatively low; as a result, its objects have received little in the way of curatorial attention or research, resulting in the information that accompanies them becoming de-valued over time, as it has fallen behind developments in related scholarship. However, as a result of their very ‘everydayness’, the objects themselves are rich with markers of their past lives, both within and without the institution – from inscriptions, dedications and doodles in margins, to marks of making and use, damage, wear and subsequent repair, to the tickets, labels and reference numbers of buying, selling and entry to the museum. The paucity of accompanying documentation gives added potency to these material traces.

Furthermore, in the case of the Greg collections there is also a third set of documents – letters – that unsettle the apparent simplicity of the official record in the evidence they provide for the personal relationships and complex interactions that lie behind it. Mary Greg receives little more than passing mention in the institutional record. The content of the collection has had little attention in terms of object documentation and research. However, an archive of 700 letters, written over the thirty year period of her relationship with the institution, provides a detailed account of the attitudes, actions and interactions that resulted in the collection that still exists within the Galleries today. The Greg correspondence deals with the ownership, development, care and display of all the Greg collections, from Thomas Greg’s death in 1920 to that of Mrs Greg herself in 1949. But it situates these within a context of social interaction, one in which personal lives, institutional dynamics and wider events intermix. Its scope and duration is unusual, possibly unique, in the history of museum/donor relations in Britain.<sup>28</sup> It

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<sup>28</sup> An email inquiry circulated via the National Register of Archives email list, archives-nra@jiscmail, on 27 October 2014, yielded ten responses from archivists of large and small institutions, none of which



provides evidence of a far more active, influential and long-lasting relationship between Mrs Greg and Manchester City Art Galleries than the formal record would suggest. It also makes manifest the human relationships that lie behind the development of all museums, in this case between Mrs Greg and a variety of staff members, from Art Galleries Committee Chairman Councillor Frederick Todd to umbrella assistant Ellen Lucas. This research thus reads across a range of archival documents, from the formal record of minutes and reports, produced with a view to institutional history, to procedural documentation, the everyday tool of collections management, to the Greg correspondence, written in the moment in a process of transactional negotiation and personal relationship.

In addition, it pays close attention to the body of the collection itself, as historical evidence but also as the surviving manifestation of the attachment between people and things that is at the heart of collecting. Much has been written on the history and practices of collecting in recent years. Multiple definitions, from the perspectives of sociology, anthropology and psychology, identify collecting as an intrinsically human trait, a means of organising the world and asserting our place within it.<sup>29</sup> Central to much of this literature is what Walter Benjamin describes as the 'dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order'.<sup>30</sup> Collecting is characterised as system, classification, knowledge, but also as passion, sickness, obsession. At the start of the twentieth century, John La Farge was able to describe collectors as the 'owners of things gathered according to certain rules or sequences'.<sup>31</sup> A hundred years later, such an apparently straightforward definition is much contested. Susan Pearce, in her comprehensive investigation of collecting in the European tradition, focuses on motivation over method when she describes the practice as:

a set of things which people do, as an aspect of individual and social practice which is important in public and private life as a means of constructing the way in which we relate to the material world and so build up our own lives.<sup>32</sup>

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could identify comparable correspondence elsewhere. A subsequent advert in the February 2015 issue of *Museums Journal* yielded no further information.

<sup>29</sup> See Brenda Danet and Tamar Katriel, 'No two alike: play and aesthetics in collecting' in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994) p.221 for a summary of literature.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Benjamin [trans. Harry Zohn], 'Unpacking my library', in Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) p.60.

<sup>31</sup> John La Farge, cited in Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture 1800-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) p.6.

<sup>32</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.4.

This applies both to the individual, creating their self-centred world of things, and to the museum, reflecting aspects of society back to itself. And indeed, this recent development in academic inquiry has been followed professionally in the growing tendency for museums to incorporate elements of self-reflection and/or critique within their interpretive strategies. Manchester is not alone in dedicating display space to the exploration of its own institutional history.<sup>33</sup>

### **Believe me, I remain...**

This thesis investigates the creative, collaborative and social nature of collecting. It pays particular attention to those parts of the Greg collections that have not previously received academic attention, seeking to understand how, while one group of objects acquired a reputation of scholarly significance, the rest disappeared from view. According to Susan Pearce, women 'collect relationally and in an unemphatic style which so merges with their broader lives that its emergence as a true collection tends to be written out of the story'.<sup>34</sup> Following this assertion, Diane Sachko Macleod argues for a redefinition of collecting that encompasses female perspectives. Against the dominant view of collecting as a rational pursuit with a pre-determined goal she claims that:

this teleological view of collecting as a premeditated process of selection, classification and categorization is the antithesis of the more intimate, subjective, and impromptu relationship that existed between women and things in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>35</sup>

Russell Belk and Melanie Wallendorf identify the different elements of collecting in terms of stereotypically masculine and feminine traits. They contrast 'aggressiveness, competitiveness, mastery and seriousness' with 'care, creativity, nurturance and preservation', commenting that 'characteristics defined as masculine seem especially useful in acquiring objects for a collection; traits defined as feminine are important in curating and maintaining the resulting collection'.<sup>36</sup> But, as Sachko Macleod also argues, historically gendered behaviours cannot simply be mapped onto male and female collectors; her investigation of nineteenth and early

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<sup>33</sup> See Pearce, ref.32, pp.142-146, for further examples.

<sup>34</sup> Pearce, ref.32, p.210.

<sup>35</sup> Macleod, ref.31, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> Russell W. Belk and Melanie Wallendorf, 'Of Mice and Men: Gender Identity in Collecting', in Katharine Martinez and Kenneth L. Ames (eds.), *The Material Culture of Gender, The Gender of Material Culture* (Delaware: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1997) p.10.

twentieth century American women collectors examines ways in which men and women influenced and informed each other's collecting practices and values.<sup>37</sup>

This thesis reveals the multiple processes of ordering and re-ordering through which the collections have gone during their lifetime in the museum, and the ways in which such processes have impacted on their status, value and meaning. Over the past century, Thomas Greg has come to be regarded as the model of the heroic scholarly collector, working to document the history of design, technique, skill and industry within a clearly delineated but under-appreciated field of manufacture – pottery made in Britain between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries. The material contained within the Mary Greg Collection cannot be so easily defined. It includes things made in Roman Britain and things made by Mrs Greg herself. It includes African, Chinese and Mediterranean as well as British-made things. It includes things made of wood, straw, fabric, paper, metal, glass, plaster, wax, leather, bone and horn as well as clay. Mary Greg has been characterised anecdotally as the antithesis of her husband; dismissed as a naïve and indiscriminate accumulator, emotionally vulnerable to the nostalgic tug of everyday things of old.

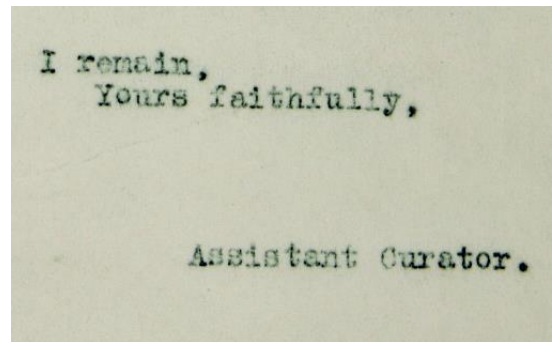
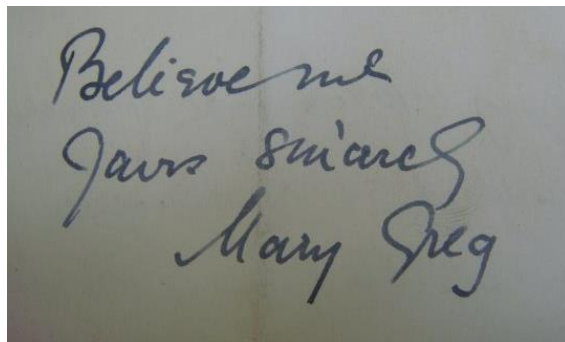
The question that emerges is how much this perception has been applied retrospectively and how much it is an inherited interpretation of a genuinely different mode of relation to material things. The Greg displays of 2002, in hindsight, seem ambivalent. While the mechanisms of display played up an oppositional relationship between Mr and Mrs Greg's collecting practices, interpretive text implied a more collaborative relationship at work. While both collections were afforded equal space in the physical gallery, the accompanying publication made no mention of Mary Greg. This thesis aims to address the underlying implications of this imbalance. In so doing, it considers the particular content and material qualities of the Greg Collections of Handicrafts of Bygone Times and Dolls and Dolls' Houses, the two groups of objects that form what is now known as the Mary Greg Collection. It situates these in the context of the wider Greg collections with which they are so closely interconnected and for which Mrs Greg was ultimately responsible after her husband's death. It examines the values, motivation and behaviour of Mrs Greg as collector, steward and arguably self-appointed curator-at-large. It similarly examines the wider aspirations, ideals and constraints that informed Manchester City Art Galleries' attitudes toward Mrs Greg and her family collections. It situates these relationships of people, place and object within the historical context of attitudes to material culture during the first half of the twentieth century, with particular

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<sup>37</sup> Macleod, ref.31, pp.4-5.

respect to everyday objects and the art museum. And finally, it considers the implications of the differing historical trajectories of the Greg collections and their contemporary Manchester context, for our understanding of the relationship between people and things within the contemporary art museum.

My title, *'Believe me, I remain...'*, is taken from the epistolary etiquette of the Greg correspondence (Figs.1.17-8). Its use here is intended to signify the interconnectedness of archive and collection, of words and things, which lies at the heart of this research. It alludes to the social and collaborative aspects of collecting as a form of relationship building, as evidenced in the Greg letters – to ideas of belonging, in terms of people, places and things. But it also lends a voice to the material itself; the 'remains' that survive within the museum, tasked with carrying the truths that museum objects are held to embody. 'Believe me, I remain' provides a reassurance of stability in the face of absence, both of the letter writer and the conditions that produced the object in the first place. But at the same time it quietly undermines such claims, in pleading for the reader's belief in them. In the end, for the purpose of this research, 'believe me, I remain' is offered as an attempt to put into words the curious combination of vulnerability and durability, surrender and resistance, that material things present to their human interlocutors.



Figures 1.17-1.18: Letters between Mrs Greg and Assistant Curator William Batho (details), Manchester City Galleries.



Figure 2.1: Patchwork cover, cotton and paper, c.1840-1870, 1922.2046 (detail).

## Chapter Two

### Methodology: Words and Things

*And this, and so much more? –  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!<sup>1</sup>*

The development of a methodological approach is an iterative process. While one must, according to academic convention, start with a problem or hypothesis, a set of methodological tools by which to investigate it, and a paradigm within which to do so, the nature of research is such that this inevitably evolves and is transformed by the very process of doing the research. It is a delicate balance between retaining a sense of direction and responding to where the research takes you. John Shotter, in his discussion of ‘aboutness’ and ‘withness’ thinking, describes this process well:

...long before we can account to others for our ‘observations’, in many spheres our ‘looking’ must go through a developmental process in which, often, we only slowly arrive at the appropriate “organizing idea” – and after that we can still have great difficulty in linguistically expressing it in a way that crucially influences others.<sup>2</sup>

This research has entailed a good deal of consideration of organizing ideas. It emerged from the relationship between a curator and a collection. I first came across Mary Greg in 1994, as a newly appointed, recently graduated, documentation assistant, going through a filing cabinet of old letters. I have known and loved the Greg collections ever since. For the next two decades they formed part of the landscape of my professional life. I spent a considerable amount of time in their company, charged with their documentation, preservation and interpretation during a period of substantial institutional change. During the mid-1990s, I worked on the digitisation of index cards as part of a profession-wide modernisation of information management. In 1998, as decorative art curator, I organised the relocation of the Thomas Greg Collection into temporary storage during the renovation of the City Art Gallery. In 2002, I worked on the decorative art collections redisplay, bringing disparate parts of the Greg collections together again for the first time in 80 years. I placed the jam jar in the Georgian dolls’ house; I wrote the text panel for the Thomas Greg display. My professional and personal history is intimately connected with this material and the institution that houses it.

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<sup>1</sup> T. S. Elliott, ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ [1915], in George MacBeth (ed.) *Poetry 1900 to 1975* (Harlow: Longman House, 1979) pp.70-74.

<sup>2</sup> John Shotter, ‘Goethe and the Refiguring of Intellectual Inquiry: From ‘Aboutness’-Thinking to ‘Withness’-Thinking in Everyday Life’, *Janus Head*, 8 (1) (2005), p.139.

In carrying out this research, however, my role has shifted; from curator to researcher, from professional to academic, or to use Ludmilla Jordanova's terms, from the doing of public history to that of academic history.<sup>3</sup> It has necessitated a re-positioning in relation to the collection; the development of methodological and conceptual frameworks appropriate to academic inquiry, the identification and questioning of assumptions built up through years of practice. Nonetheless, this prior experience informs my approach to research. It gives me first-hand knowledge of the recent history of the institution and a familiarity with the material, borne of close proximity to it over many years. It is these two elements, in fact, that provide the origins of this research. This chapter is thus divided into three sections. Part One situates the research within its context of origin, sets out my subsequent shift of focus from professional practice to academic inquiry, and outlines the multi-disciplinary basis on which I have approached it. Part Two considers the range of sources, both textual and material, on which this research is based and the relationships between them. Part Three sets out the methods by which I have undertaken the research and my approach to writing this thesis.

## **Part One: Context**

### **Origins of the research**

For Manchester City Galleries, the past twenty years have been as transformational as its early history. In 1998, the historic city centre buildings were emptied to make way for the £35 million extension and renovation of the site.<sup>4</sup> Over a century's worth of accumulated material was packed up, re-located, and subsequently re-settled within a physically and politically changed environment. Increased funding, made possible through the launch of the National Lottery and the culture policies of a new Labour government, had enabled substantial capital projects such as Manchester's, but also required the demonstration of measurable social impact. A series of national initiatives, including the Museums Designation Scheme (1997) and Renaissance in the Regions (2001), identified the potential of the UK's regional museum collections, but also the risks posed by long term under-investment. In 2005, the Museums Association report *Collections for the Future*<sup>5</sup> went further, advocating the 'rationalisation' of under-used collections as one part of the solution to a growing crisis caused by (put simply) too much stuff.

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<sup>3</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> In 2002, Manchester City Art Galleries was re-named Manchester City Galleries. Its main venue, previously known as Manchester City Art Gallery, was re-named Manchester Art Gallery. This thesis uses the historically appropriate nomenclature when referring to the institution at different points in its history.

<sup>5</sup> Helen Wilkinson, *Collections for the Future: Report of a Museums Association Enquiry* (London: Museums Association, 2005).

Manchester City Galleries subsequently embarked on its own rationalisation programme which, in spite of its inclusion in the Gallery of Craft & Design, briefly included a proposal to dispose of parts of the Mary Greg Collection. The ensuing discussion raised questions around value, significance and usefulness, about how the institution should decide what to keep and what to lose.<sup>6</sup> Within this context, the Mary Greg Collection appeared to occupy a kind of limbo. The bulk of it comprised a diverse body of anonymous, unprovenanced and, in many cases, well-worn everyday objects, amateur crafts and curiosities, more akin to the collection of a social history museum than that of a major regional art gallery. Difficult to display due to its material instability and questionable relevance, its value to the contemporary institution was deemed limited. On the other hand, as curators (myself included) argued, it was part of the institution's history. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Gregs were influential patrons of Manchester City Art Galleries. The history of the Mary Greg Collection was entwined with that of the Thomas Greg Collection, widely acknowledged to be of national significance. Severing this connection through disposal of the former could arguably diminish the latter's historical integrity. And any assessment of the collection as a whole, prior to partial disposal, would be extremely time-consuming, given its dispersal within the wider collections, across disciplines and physical sites.

The proposal was dropped and the collection stayed where it was, mostly in storage. The discussion had suggested a dual identity for the collection as both historical narrative and material entity, in which the former was more highly prized than the latter. Yet, on closer scrutiny this narrative was sketchy. Little was known about the original motivation for acquiring the collection or about Mary Greg herself, beyond her interest in children's toys and her marriage to Thomas Greg. The full extent and range of the collection was equally unclear, as original accession documentation was patchy and/or missing. Despite its initially easy identification as a candidate for disposal, the collection proved remarkably difficult to 'rationalise'.

This prompted action of another kind. *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* (2006-2011) was an exploratory research project carried out in collaboration with staff and students from Manchester School of Art. It came from a recognition of shared interests on the part of two artist-maker lecturers, Sharon Blakey and Hazel Jones, and two gallery curators, myself and

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<sup>6</sup> Conversation with Ruth Shrigley, Principal Curator: Collections Access, 12 November 2012. See also Virginia Tandy, *Manchester City Council Report for Information: Collections Rationalisation*, 11 February 2009, for the first proposed disposals under the Galleries' rationalisation programme. The Mary Greg Collection is not on this list. Discussions held in the early stages of this process appear not to have been minuted.



colleague Alex Woodall. The four of us embarked on a series of what we called ‘rummages’, explorations of the collection in storage, inviting students and staff from both institutions to join us (Fig.2.2). These store room visits yielded a growing sense of the character, range and extent of the collection, while also demonstrating the potential value of those very characteristics that, from the institution’s perspective, rendered it apparently obsolete. Its very lack of supplementary documentation, low financial value, unstable physical condition and apparently eclectic nature appeared to open up a space for creative, imaginative response.<sup>7</sup> If, as Mark O’Neill has suggested, ‘the origin of museums as temples to reason means that a key aim has been to tame objects and diminish their power’,<sup>8</sup> then the Mary Greg Collection’s apparent refusal to be defined, contained, pinned down, gave it a particular material potency. *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* re-ignited an interest in the collection, one which coincided with wider interests in contemporary art. Recent exhibitions such as Jeremy Deller and Allan Kane’s *Folk Archive* (Barbican, 2005), Grayson Perry’s *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* (British Museum, 2011), *Folk Art* (Tate Britain, 2014) and *Magnificent Obsessions: The Artist as Collector* (Barbican, 2015) all attest to a growing interest in the potency of the everyday, the popular and the amateur in the context of the art gallery, as well as a blurring of boundaries between curator and artist, centred on practices of assemblage and juxtaposition. Since 2011, successive generations of art and design students at Manchester School of Art have made use of the collection as a source of inspiration. Academics in the field of museology have begun to take an interest in the collection and its collector.<sup>9</sup> Aspects of the collection have also been selected for inclusion in exhibitions by several high profile contemporary artists, including Des Hughes, Ryan Gander and Matthew Darbyshire.<sup>10</sup>

*Mary Mary Quite Contrary* had a considerable impact on its participants. The project resulted in creative work, made in response to the collection and archive (Figs.2.3-4) and the beginnings of historical research into its little-known collector. The collection has remained

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<sup>7</sup> See Sharon Blakey and Liz Mitchell, ‘A Question of Value: Rethinking the Mary Greg Collection’ in Amanda Ravetz, Alice Kettle and Helen Felcey, *Collaboration Through Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) pp.170-185. See also MAG, *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, [www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk](http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk) [accessed 15 July 2016].

<sup>8</sup> Mark O’Neill, cited in Sandra H. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) pp.4-5.

<sup>9</sup> Kate Hill, *Women and Museums 1850-1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Des Hughes, *Everything’s Inevitable* (2012-13); Ryan Gander, *Make every show like it’s your last* (2014); Matthew Darbyshire, *An Exhibition for Modern Living* (2015).

central to both Blakey and Jones' research practice ever since.<sup>11</sup> Several published writings have considered the project from different perspectives.<sup>12</sup> Woodall subsequently left Manchester to pursue a PhD on the role of sensory engagement in art gallery interpretation, with the project as a key case study.<sup>13</sup> And in 2011, I resigned from my post as Interpretation Development Manager, with a view to pursuing further the historical research which the project had initiated.

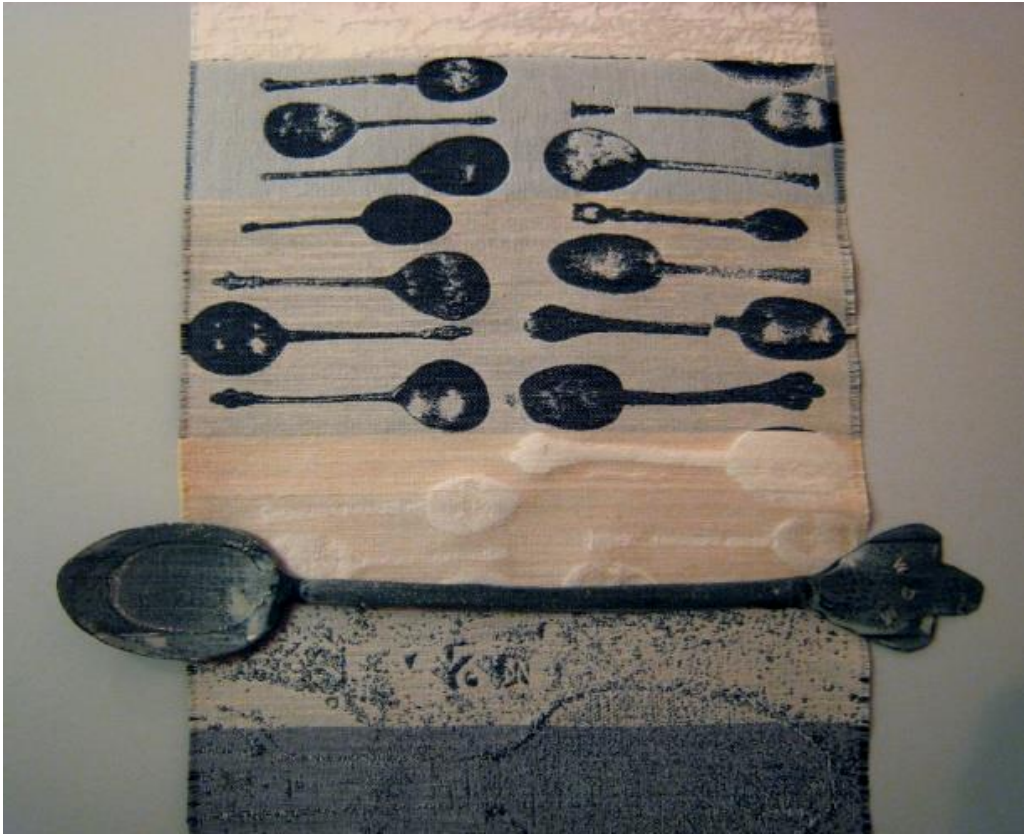


Figure 2.2: *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* project visit to the gallery stores, 2007, with (from left to right) unnamed student (MSA), Sarah Rainbow (MCG), Liz Mitchell (MCG) and Sharon Blakey (MSA).

<sup>11</sup> See Manchester School of Art, 'Sharon Blakey, Senior Lecturer, Three Dimensional Design', no date, <http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/profile/sblakey> and 'Hazel Jones, MA (RCA), Senior Lecturer, Interactive Arts', no date, <http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/profile/hjones> [accessed 21 December 2016].

<sup>12</sup> Blakey and Mitchell, ref.7; Myna Trustram, 'The Little Madnesses of Museums', in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Little Madnesses: Winnicott, Transitional Phenomena and Cultural Experience* (London: IB Tauris, 2013) pp.187-201.

<sup>13</sup> Alex Woodall, *Sensory engagements with objects in art galleries: material interpretation and theological metaphor*, unpublished PhD (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2016).



Figures 2.3-2.4: *Table Runner* (detail), made by Sharon Blakey and Ismini Samanidou (MSA), 2011; *Shopping List Capsules*, made by Hazel Jones (MSA), 2012.

## Situating the research

The findings of *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* suggested a value and identity to the collection that emerged from the very ways in which it appeared not to ‘fit’ the structures and processes of the museum. Thus my aim, in researching its history, has not been to ‘rehabilitate’ the collection within this context, but to investigate its history as a way of exploring this apparent disconnect and its implications for our understanding of the meaning and value of objects in the art museum. In writing it I am conscious that ‘when one knows how something came to be, one will often know what it presently is, and one will have a powerful voice in determining how it will develop in the future’.<sup>14</sup> This thesis sets out to assess the changing identity and function of the Mary Greg Collection within the institution that houses it, to consider how and why such changes have occurred and, given the collection’s uncertain status in recent years, to provide an informed basis for decision-making around its future use. But equally, I am interested in knowing how what ‘it presently is’ might inform our understanding of how it ‘came to be’, of how the museum itself holds its own history.

Pursuing this has required a shift of perspective. It requires a level of critical attention to museum structures and processes that practical curatorship may not even ‘see’, immersed as it is in the very enactment of them. As André Desvallées and François Mairesse admit, ‘museum work shifts back and forth between practice and theory, with theory regularly being sacrificed to the thousand and one daily tasks’.<sup>15</sup> I have found this to be the case; on leaving professional practice for academic study I was astonished to discover the wealth of theoretical writing - on museums, on collecting, on the object - that had played little or no role in my practical museum work. Moreover, as Gaynor Kavanagh, reflecting on museum-based historical research, notes in relation to the records of ‘provincial’ museums, ‘[t]heir survival is, to say the least, haphazard. Ironically, those institutions that are concerned with “heritage” are not always even conscious of their own.’<sup>16</sup> So much became clear through the Galleries’ rationalisation discussions. Kavanagh’s comment was made over twenty years ago, since when museums have become considerably more interested in their own back stories. The 2002 Gallery of Craft & Design displays marked a turning point in institutional self-awareness, but it

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<sup>14</sup> Svend Brinkmann, Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Søren Kristiansen, ‘Historical Overview of Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences’, in Patricia Leavy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.18.

<sup>15</sup> André Desvallées and François Mairesse, *Key Concepts of Museology* (Paris: Armand Colin/International Council of Museums, 2009) p.15.

<sup>16</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History*. (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994) p.4.

was of an overtly celebratory rather than investigative nature, and rested on a number of assumptions, not least the historical continuity of two discrete gender-differentiated collections.

Academic history is closely connected to the museum, but has an often uneasy relationship with the kinds of history it produces. Museums are producers of 'public history', a catch-all term for the interpretation of the past beyond academia, from heritage sites to television documentaries to neighbourhood renewal projects.<sup>17</sup> Public history has popular appeal across a diverse audience; it may thus tend toward generalisation and simplification, or be motivated by a range of political and social agendas, not all of which are necessarily explicit. Museums are implicated in complex power structures in multiple ways, as state- or commercially-funded institutions, as guarantors of authorised geographical, cultural, social identities, or as tourist attractions and purveyors of both education and entertainment. Ludmilla Jordanova consequently argues that:

...museums work in insidious ways. The past they present is highly refined, in the manner of manufactured foods. This renders both the original materials and the means by which they have been processed relatively invisible.<sup>18</sup>

Academic history, she argues, demands transparency with regard to the processes through which historical knowledge is constituted, acknowledging its situated condition. Of course, academic history may be equally subject to political bias or deployed according to particular world views, and fellow historian John Lewis Gaddis is less convinced of the discipline's methodological transparency.<sup>19</sup> However, Jordanova's point about the opaqueness of museum processes is relevant. One might argue, more precisely, that it is the particularly heightened *visibility* of a *select group* of original materials that, paradoxically, renders the museum's wider materials and processes invisible. As *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* revealed to its participants, only a fraction of the collections ever make it onto public display and these are invariably the things that best fit the institutional agenda. Moreover, as Susan Pearce observes, museums position such materials as 'the real objects, the actual evidence, the true data as we would say.'<sup>20</sup> Academic historical practice regards such material not as evidence *per se* but as the

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<sup>17</sup> See American National Council on Public History, 'About the field', no date, [www.ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/](http://www.ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/) (accessed 9 March 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Jordanova, ref.3, pp.128-9.

<sup>19</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002) p.xi.

<sup>20</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992) p.4. In the period since this book was written, museums have made increasing efforts to acknowledge and embrace multiple perspectives, for example through 'hidden histories' approaches to



'raw' material of historical analysis, as 'layered assemblages that testify in a variety of ways'.<sup>21</sup> Exchanging the museum for the university is, then, a realignment of focus. This research considers the 'original materials' *in terms of* 'the means by which they have been processed',<sup>22</sup> attempting to unpick the museological processes by which the messy and unpredictable behaviours and motivations of people have been smoothed out and reduced to a single straightforward statement: 'given by Mrs Greg, 1922'.<sup>23</sup>

Historical method is thus central to this research, at the core of which is a focus on the relationships between people and objects, and for which a body of objects is a central source. However, as the above suggests, and as Karen Harvey comments, history is not, at heart, an 'object-centred' discipline.<sup>24</sup> Its focus is on understanding and accounting for things that happened in the past, its primary method the analysis and interpretation of sources. As recently as 2009, material culture was described as an 'alternative' source for a research practice more commonly predicated on the analysis of written texts, considered with regard to the content they may yield.<sup>25</sup> Objects are not documents in this sense; they cannot be 'read', or at least not in the same way. Form and content are inseparable, meaning and significance non-verbal, implicated in the ways such things have been produced, used, interacted with. Objects bear the traces of what people *do* (or don't do) rather than what they *say*. As Christopher Tilley argues, 'the artefact through its "silent" speech and "written" presence, speaks what cannot be spoken, writes what cannot be written'.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, objects exist in a relationship of ongoing reciprocity with people; as we shape the material world according to our needs, so it shapes us, often quietly, without us noticing. Daniel Miller refers to this as the 'humility of things',<sup>27</sup> the unobserved but constantly shifting relationships between human beings and the material world that are central to our sense of self. Material culture studies, with its focus on the way material things are embedded in human lives, thus positions objects not as carriers of fixed or stable meanings waiting to be unearthed, but as active and dynamic contributors to the very production of meaning. This is particularly significant for this research,

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interpretation. However, the mechanics of much display and interpretation, on the whole, tends to position objects in this way.

<sup>21</sup> Jordanova, ref.3, p.40.

<sup>22</sup> Jordanova, ref.3, p.129.

<sup>23</sup> This is the standard credit line that appears on the index cards by which the collection was first catalogued. MCG Archive.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Harvey (ed.) *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009) p.4.

<sup>25</sup> Harvey, ref.24, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Tilley, 'Objectification', in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer, *The Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE Publications) p.62.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010) p.50.

predicated primarily on close attention to both archives and objects, but it also has wider implications for all historical sources to be considered in terms of their material as well as textual properties.

Just as history enjoys a close but uneasy relationship with the museum, so too the shared interests of material culture studies and museum studies embody a certain tension. Both are relatively young as distinct areas of study,<sup>28</sup> both have antecedents in the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology and art history, both are concerned with the relationships between human beings and the material world. Their focal points, however, differ, in that while material culture studies investigates material as an 'integral dimension of culture',<sup>29</sup> museum studies focuses on the histories, theories and practices of the museum as institution.<sup>30</sup> Both have, in the past, adopted different but related perspectives on the ways in which material things may generate 'meaning'. In 1987, Daniel Miller framed the emergent material culture focus on the relationality of objects as an attempt to move away from a museological approach 'which separated them from any social context and which amounted to a genuine fetishism of the artefact'.<sup>31</sup> Theoretical analyses of the museum during the 1990s, however, effectively dismantled longheld notions of the museum object as material 'truth', primarily through the application of Foucauldian theory. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill identified hidden power structures at work in the systems of classification that have historically constituted museological knowledge;<sup>32</sup> Tony Bennett considered the ways in which the museum constructs its audiences through the strategic management of behaviour and conduct.<sup>33</sup> Academic inquiry subsequently increasingly focused on the museum as a contested site of representation, while museums themselves, in response to changing public policy, shifted their own frame of reference away from collections and towards audiences.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in 2007, Tim Ingold attributed what he saw as material culture's ultimately reductive positioning of objects 'as the embodiments of mental representations' precisely to its 'long hibernation in the

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<sup>28</sup> See Dan Hicks, 'The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect', in Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) pp.25-98; Sharon Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) pp.1-12 for accounts of the emergence of both fields of study within the past 30 years.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher Tilley, 'Introduction', in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (eds.), *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006) p.1.

<sup>30</sup> Sharon Macdonald, ref.28, pp.5-6.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Miller, cited in Hicks, ref.28, p.70.

<sup>32</sup> Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> See for example Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe (eds.), *Theorizing Museums: Representing identity and diversity in a changing world* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

basements of museology'.<sup>35</sup> In recent years, however, the object has returned to the forefront of museological inquiry, informed both by developments in academic theory collectively known as the 'material turn',<sup>36</sup> and by a professional museums focus on the uses of collections.<sup>37</sup>

This research thus draws on the related disciplines of history, material culture studies and museum studies, in order to interrogate the history of a collection within a museum. As the museum in question is an art gallery, and the material within it thus situated in some way as 'art', it also draws on the related disciplines of art history and design history. As the early part of this chapter shows, the Mary Greg Collection occupies an ambiguous position within the institution in respect of its status as art. The category of 'decorative art', within which it currently sits, similarly embodies an uncertain identity within the wider hierarchy of the arts, as implied in the pejorative connotations of the word 'decorative'. John Potvin and Alla Myzelev describe this in terms of those objects 'whose aesthetic value and subjective investments override mundane affiliations while impeding them from attaining the coveted status of fine art in an economic and cultural system invested in maintaining hierarchies'.<sup>38</sup> The history of the Mary Greg Collection within Manchester City Art Galleries sits within the wider context of the artistic developments of the twentieth century and their impact on the art museum, from the Victorian municipal picture gallery to the modernist 'white cube' to the art museum as site of artistic intervention and critique in itself.<sup>39</sup> Thus any consideration of the collection's historical trajectory and contemporary identity must be located within the shifting debates of art and design history and practice, with particular regard to the art museum.

## Approach

This research comprises two interconnected areas of investigation: a reconstruction of the historical circumstances by which the Mary Greg Collection was assembled, acquired and

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<sup>35</sup> Tim Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14 (1) (2007) p.5.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of the various manifestations and understandings of this term see Hans Schouwenburg, 'Back to the Future? History, Material Culture and New Materialism', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, 3 (1) (2015) pp.59-72.

<sup>37</sup> See for example, Suzanne Keene, *Fragments of the World: Uses of Museum Collections* (London: Routledge, 2005); Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2010); Sandra H. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Objects: Experiencing the Properties of Things* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> John Potvin and Alla Myzelev (eds.), *Material Cultures 1740-1920: The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) p.1.

<sup>39</sup> See for example Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1999 [1986]); James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: the Museum as Medium* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009 [2001]).



subsequently deployed by Manchester City Art Galleries, and an analysis of the scope, content and character of the collection itself. The former is a sequence of events and a set of relationships that sit firmly in the past; they cannot be experienced first-hand, only pieced together from a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning and imagination, based on analysis of sources. The latter is a material entity that exists both within the past I am attempting to reconstruct and in the present where it can be directly encountered. The research draws on two main bodies of primary source material – archives and objects – and the relationships between them. Both yield different kinds of evidence; each affords a different kind of intimacy with the subject of my research, and each is thus inherently both productive and problematic in different ways.

Archive material includes institutional reports, committee minutes and memoranda, publications, and personal correspondence and diaries. Produced within a particular historical period, for purposes particular to that period, the specific functions that such documents originally fulfilled are spent but preserved, captured by their transformation into archive. Reading the archive is a first-hand narrative encounter; it has plot development, pace and momentum, moving between the perspectives of different protagonists as the story unfolds. It positions the reader as privileged eavesdropper, witness to rather than participant in the action. In so doing, it appears to offer a direct 'window' onto the past, through which its voices may speak clearly. The collection is less explicitly vocal, but it too is seductive. In the physical traces of past use, its objects may yield both corroborating and/or contradictory evidence for its own historical trajectory, but they do so in a way that is fragmented, ambiguous, more obviously open to interpretation. At the same time, as a collection of objects which have, theoretically at least, maintained a stable 'museum object' identity between 'then' and 'now', they afford an imagined identification with those whose motivations and behaviours I wish to recover – I can handle the same things which my predecessors once handled, in the same place where they once handled them, and in the same manner – as museum objects. This is a closeness that is felt bodily rather than known cognitively; it is highly evocative, but also quiet, tacit, hard to articulate.

Maintaining a balance of attention to both sets of sources thus requires care. It is easy to be carried along by the momentum of the archive as the historical 'explanation' for the collection, to be drawn into the 'content' which it seems to offer up so freely, to the point where the objects themselves seem almost left behind, rendered merely illustration to the plot. However, as both theorists and historians advise, archives must be treated with caution. Michel Foucault

and Jacques Derrida both argue persuasively that ‘archivization produces as much as it records the event’.<sup>40</sup> Foucault proposes the archive as system; the domain which makes possible the enunciation of a set of statements within a discourse. ‘The archive is the first law of what can be said’;<sup>41</sup> a law that in allowing certain statements, denies others. Carolyn Steedman further argues that while the archive’s quiet sense of order may suggest rationality and comprehensiveness, it is actually made ‘from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragmentations that no-one intended to preserve and that just ended up there’.<sup>42</sup> Thus one must pay equal attention to the quiet materiality of the archive, to its presentation, its technologies and its absences, in order to interrogate the voices that so dominate it.

Conversely, it can be difficult to know what to do with the kinds of responses which close proximity to non-textual material things may evoke; such responses occupy uncertain territory in terms of what constitutes knowledge. In her keynote address to the conference *How Do We Study Objects? Analyses in Artefact Studies*, in Helsinki in 2014, Elizabeth Edwards identified the complex and multiple identities of objects as both evidence (a conduit for historical knowledge) and affect (entangled in emotions). Material culture, she argued, ‘is a volatile and difficult source which asks many questions and is rather guarded in its responses’.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, this very volatility is potentially useful as a way of disrupting the linearity of narrative, of reflecting on the past as multiple, overlapping, contradictory, untidy. Furthermore, for the purposes of this research, objects form both source and subject matter. If Tilley is right in arguing that objects speak what *cannot* be spoken; if one accepts that what people *say* is not necessarily the same as what they *do*; if, as Jean Baudrillard and Walter Benjamin both claim, it is ‘invariably *oneself* that one collects’,<sup>44</sup> then careful attention to the material body of the collection, the assemblage of things on which so much passion, energy and commitment was once focused, must form an integral part of any investigation of its history.

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<sup>40</sup> Jacques Derrida, cited in Tom Nesmith, ‘Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives’, *The American Archivist*, 65 (2002) p.30.

<sup>41</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘The Historical *a priori* and the Archive’ [1969], in Charles Merewether (ed.), *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art*. (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel and MIT Press, 2006) p.28.

<sup>42</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) p.68.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Photographs between evidence and affect’, keynote lecture presented at: *How Do We Study Objects? – Analyses in Artefact Studies*, Artefacta: The Finnish Network for Artefact Studies, Helsinki, Finland, 8-9 May 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Jean Baudrillard, ‘The System of Collecting’, in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994) p.12 [original emphasis].

In the context of the museum the dividing line between texts and objects, between what can be said out loud and what is spoken silently, may be less clear-cut than one imagines. In *Museum Materialities*, Sandra Dudley identifies a contradiction in the way objects are situated in the museum. On the one hand, the museum is ‘supposedly the material institution *par excellence*’,<sup>45</sup> in that its currency is physical material things, in all their ‘three-dimensionality, weight, texture, surface temperature, smell, taste and spatio-temporal presence’.<sup>46</sup> And yet at the same time, there is a tendency within museums for the value of objects to be seen primarily in terms of ‘the cultural meanings which immediately overlie them and as a result of the real or imagined stories which they can be used to construct’.<sup>47</sup> In other words, the museological hierarchy prioritises information over material. In our rush to tell a story, the bodily, sensory – often wordless – experience of encountering the physical actuality of things risks getting left behind. The *museum* object, Dudley suggests, is in fact an ‘object-information package’, of which the *material* object forms just one part. By this argument, museums are holders of ‘historically established data-sets’,<sup>48</sup> comprising both the material object and the documentation that authenticates it. The authority of the museum object resides in its very authenticity, its presence as ‘the real thing’ that proclaims ‘this is how it was’, but it requires procedures and technologies to keep it in place. Elizabeth Orna and Charles Pettit argue that:

...objects without information about them have little more than an aesthetic or curio value. For a group of objects to become a museum or gallery collection there has to be the intervention of the curator to generate and record knowledge about them. It is the systems that exist to maintain this knowledge and to transfer it to the future that give museums and galleries their ultimate value.<sup>49</sup>

Knowledge is thus equated with information, placing object-level documentation as the most valuable element of the data-set; without it, the rest is of little worth. Material is translated into words, objects becoming, to use Krzysztof Pomian’s term, ‘semiophores’, or carriers of meaning within a closed system of representation.<sup>50</sup> This tension between things and words is rarely explicit in the public spaces of the museum, where objects are tagged – by name, maker, date or function – as if it were the most natural straightforward thing in the world. When

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<sup>45</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.7 [original emphasis].

<sup>46</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.6.

<sup>47</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Orna and Charles Pettit, *Information Management in Museums* (Aldershot: Gower, 1998) p.vii.

<sup>50</sup> Krzysztof Pomian [trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Porter], *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.5.

these discrete units of information are not known, however, when label-content is lacking or uncertain, the tension becomes more apparent.

This is further complicated in the art museum, where aesthetic value is of considerably higher status than Orna and Pettit's comment allows. On the one hand, the art museum is historically the place in which particular kinds of objects have been organised into a progressive narrative of periods and movements and schools. It has provided the authorised story of art, its objects guaranteed through curatorial intervention in the form of connoisseurial opinion and established provenance. However, the art museum also *makes* art; it confers the status of art on all its objects, from oil paintings to urinals to an unmade bed. The art museum is thus an integral part of the art object it displays. Furthermore, on the one hand it sets up the artist as autonomous creator, the history of art as a succession of heroic innovators and visionaries. Yet it is also a space where one is expected to have one's own contemplative, emotional, even spiritual experience; to commune on an intimate level with the thing presented. Thus disagreements abound over the degree to which artworks should be interpreted. In 1964, Susan Sontag argued that '[t]o interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world – in order to set up a shadow world of meanings'.<sup>51</sup> Instead she urged that '[w]hat is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more'.<sup>52</sup>

The art museum, on the face of it then, prioritises what Dudley describes as the second of two composite identities in which the museum object is embedded: that of the 'object-subject interaction',<sup>53</sup> in which 'emotion, affect and sensation' are uppermost, and which, because they are not dependent on prior information, 'are responses which are arguably possible for all'.<sup>54</sup> However, as Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel have shown, the aesthetic pleasures of the art museum are not equally available to all, and not all responses are equally valid.<sup>55</sup> The early history of the art museum as 'a sanctuary, a holy of holies, collected by taste, sacred to fame, enriched by the rarest products of genius'<sup>56</sup> still pervades. Art museum visiting is a signifier of class, taste, education. Being at ease with art, knowing the 'correct' way to respond to it and having the confidence to do so, in the public galleries of the art museum, is a manifest demonstration of cultural capital, of one's social position. In spite of efforts to 'widen

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<sup>51</sup> Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (London: Vintage, 2001 [1964]) p.7.

<sup>52</sup> Sontag, ref.51, p.14.

<sup>53</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.8.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997 [1991]).

<sup>56</sup> William Hazlitt, cited in Nick Prior, 'Having One's Tate and Eating It: Transformations of the Museum in a Hypermodern Era' in Andrew McClellan, *Art and its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millenium* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) p.51.

participation', art museums, arguably more than any other kind of museum, still carry a whiff of elitism that prevents many people from crossing their thresholds.<sup>57</sup> And yet, the emphasis that the art museum increasingly places on personal response, shifting from a connoisseurial and disinterested aestheticism toward a more involved subjective response,<sup>58</sup> and the multi-sensory modes of expression and communication that are characteristic of much contemporary art practice, may facilitate greater understanding and validation of the subjective, sensorial, non-linguistic response to material. The concept of 'material thinking' as proposed by Barbara Bolt may be useful here. Material thinking foregrounds 'responsiveness to or conjunction with the intelligence of materials and processes in practice'.<sup>59</sup> It proposes a relationship to material that is founded on collaboration rather than mastery, on paying attention to material properties, behaviour and response. It thus challenges the separation of 'bodily' and 'cognitive' intelligence, following Martin Heidegger's assertion that 'we come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling'.<sup>60</sup>

This research therefore pays attention to both the 'object-information package' and the 'object-subject interaction', within the context of the environment in which it is experienced.<sup>61</sup> It does so in order to unpick not only the institutional meaning-making processes that the collection has undergone, but equally how the meanings such processes produce have themselves shifted and continue to do so. It treats both the archive and the collection as simultaneously text and object, as sources that may 'speak' in different ways to each other. These elements might be considered in terms of levels of proximity to the material itself. At the furthest distance, this includes institution-level and collection-level narratives – of negotiation, interpretation and value – held in reports, publications, minutes and letters. In closer proximity, it considers the object-level documentation through which the material content of the collection has been given 'added value' by the professionals charged with its care. And it pays attention to emotional, sensorial and affective responses to objects themselves, as a way of investigating the attachment between people and things that is at the heart of collecting.

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<sup>57</sup> See Prior, ref.56, pp.57-62, for statistical evidence of UK art museum visitor demographics at the start of the twenty first century.

<sup>58</sup> See for example, Karen Raney (ed.), 'Strategic Interpretation', *engage: the international journal of visual art and gallery education*, 20 (2007), for a series of essays exploring ways of making art interpretation more inclusive.

<sup>59</sup> Barbara Bolt, 'The Magic is in Handling', in Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (eds.), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010) p.30.

<sup>60</sup> Martin Heidegger, cited in Bolt, ref.59, p.30.

<sup>61</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.5.

This approach has parallels with historical archaeology, which in its loosest definition is premised on the combination of excavated and textual sources.<sup>62</sup> As both the collection and archive are dispersed across sites and spaces, an archaeological metaphor also situates its various locations as 'depositional context' within the institutional landscape. As the collections have grown, as the institution has changed over time, so the traces of its past identities lie like strata, in layers below the surface. Working through materials in offices, archives and store rooms may be regarded as a kind of fieldwork. Dan Hicks describes how archaeology focuses on 'the taphonomic processes of residuality, durability, and sedimentation of the remains of past events'.<sup>63</sup> Archaeological methods thus operate by 'slowly working through, documenting and making sense of the assemblage, rather than standing back and explaining the whole'.<sup>64</sup> This description correlates closely with the approach I have taken.

## Part Two: Sources Objects

Material things, and how we relate to them, are at the heart of this research. Over the past thirty years, the development of material culture studies has yielded a wealth of theoretical writing on this subject. Daniel Miller has articulated the mutually constitutive nature of objects and subjects, demonstrating how 'objects make us, as part of the very same process by which we make them'.<sup>65</sup> Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall,<sup>66</sup> have developed the concept of object biography, examining the shifting dynamics of meaning-making through, for example, sacralisation and commoditization, ownership, gift-giving and performance. However, as Tim Ingold's comment cited earlier in this chapter suggests, in the last decade or so, a shift has taken place in which matter itself is afforded closer attention. The 'social lives of objects' approach has been critiqued for its privileging of fixed moments in time when social relations or particular meanings can be identified.<sup>67</sup> Theoretical developments of the early twenty-first century, including posthumanism and new materialism, have informed an approach to the study of material things that increasingly addresses the mutability of

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<sup>62</sup> Charles E. Orser Jr., 'Twenty-First-Century Historical Archaeology', *Journal of Archaeological Research*, 18 (2) (2010) pp.111–150.

<sup>63</sup> Hicks, ref.28, p.27.

<sup>64</sup> Hicks, ref.28, p.27.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, ref.27, p.60.

<sup>66</sup> Igor Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). pp.64-91; Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects', *World Archaeology*, 31 (2) (1999) pp.169-178.

<sup>67</sup> Hicks, ref.28, pp.81-82.

matter both within and *beyond* human intervention.<sup>68</sup> Thus, Dan Hicks proposes instead of object biography the notion of ‘life histories’, as incorporating aspects of activity that are not necessarily socially meaningful but that, nonetheless, constitute something ‘happening’ – ‘the kind of apparently obscure and inconsequential changes in the fill of a pit, or the silting-up of a ditch’.<sup>69</sup> Such shifts have been accompanied by an increasing focus on the materiality of human beings, informed by developments in both anthropology and neuroscience;<sup>70</sup> as Susan Pearce observes, ‘in essence, materiality is all we are and all we have. We human beings exist only in our bodies, which are themselves objects, albeit of a rather particular kind’.<sup>71</sup>

As a result, prepositions that imply an intimate and tactile relationship of equals are a feature of recent academic titles. Henare, Holbraad and Wastell are *Thinking Through Things*, as a way of engaging with artefacts ‘on their own terms’;<sup>72</sup> Sherry Turkle’s *Evocative Objects*, subtitled *Things We Think With*, argues for the role of objects as ‘companions to our emotional lives’.<sup>73</sup> ‘Things’ are more popular than ‘objects’; witness Daniel Miller’s *The Comfort of Things*,<sup>74</sup> a study of households in a London street, and Frances Larson’s *An Infinity of Things*,<sup>75</sup> a history of the collector Sir Henry Wellcome. The distinction between objects and things is significant, and a matter much theorised.<sup>76</sup> Where the word ‘object’ comes from the Latin *objectum*, ‘thing thrown before’ or ‘something interposed’,<sup>77</sup> thing is of Germanic origin, from *Ding*, meaning ‘a meeting, or the matter or business considered by it’.<sup>78</sup> Thing suggests coming together through mutual interest, whereas object is a noun (and verb) of separation. Thing is enigmatic,

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<sup>68</sup> See for example Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 2010); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency and Politics* (Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>69</sup> Hicks, ref.28, p.82.

<sup>70</sup> See Sharon Blakey and Liz Mitchell, ‘Unfolding: a dialogue in ‘material time’’, *Studies in Material Thinking*, 17 (2017), <https://www.materialthinking.org/papers/246> [accessed 06 September 2017], for further elaboration of these developments and their usefulness in thinking about bodily responses to museum objects and in art practice.

<sup>71</sup> Susan M. Pearce, ‘Foreword’, in Dudley, ref.8, p.xiv.

<sup>72</sup> Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad and Sara Wastell (eds.), *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007) p.1.

<sup>73</sup> Sherry Turkle, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007) p.5.

<sup>74</sup> Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge: Polity Press) 2008.

<sup>75</sup> Frances Larson, *An Infinity of Things: How Sir Henry Wellcome Collected the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Bill Brown is credited with developing ‘thing theory’, drawing on Heidegger’s differentiation of objects and things. See Bill Brown, ‘Thing Theory’, *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (1) (2001) pp.1-22.

<sup>77</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, ‘Object’ (2017), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.mmu.ac.uk/view/Entry/129613?rskey=s0xXPv&result=1#eid> [accessed 25 August 2017].

<sup>78</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, ‘Thing’ (2017), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.mmu.ac.uk/view/Entry/200786?rskey=oj5Gll&result=1#eid> [accessed 29 July 2017].

ambiguous; it has both generality and specificity, can denote events, qualities, objects and ideas, both resolved and 'not quite apprehended'.<sup>79</sup> Its preferential use reflects current thinking on the relationships between human and non-human 'things' as inhabiting a state of continual flux, where boundaries remain shifting and uncertain. This informs the way I have attended to the collection as a material body, examining its objects in order to gain a sense of how they cohere as a collection, as a body of inter-related things that may 'speak' to each other, and through this dialogue provide a sense of the collector who assembled them. I have considered their shared and differentiated material qualities, their form and function (where known), their physical condition. Such elements are caught up in Elizabeth Edwards' interconnected categories of evidence and affect. Thus I have paid attention to the nature of the encounter, to the responses such qualities evoke, as well as considering the material evidence they may provide for their collection and pre-collection histories.

Almost all the objects in the collection can, to some extent, be read – literally. Each one bears its unique museum number, the accession number that connects it to its place on the list. The placement, method and format of numbering, as well as the order in which objects were numbered, have been considered (Fig.2.5). Clothing and textiles have tapes sewn into corners and inside collars; framed pictures and canvas grounds are stencilled or stamped. But the majority are simply written on by hand. Some have been placed carefully, even artfully, on the object; others seem to have been added with less thought, scrawled across the object. Some are plainly visible, akin to conventions of archaeological labelling where number references the all-important depositional context; some are more akin to art labelling, tucked discreetly away to prevent contamination of the object's aesthetic integrity. There are also remnants of other numbering systems, including printed paper tickets and the remains of display mounts and labels (Figs.2.6-7). And there are marks and labels made by or for the Gregs or that reference previous collectors or dealers (Figs.2.8-2.10). As well as the marks of institutional and private collection, there are those that pre-date the object's collected status. The collection includes multiple objects bearing names and dedications, recording aspects of making, ownership and commemoration. Some comprise name, date and event (Fig.2.11), some are just initials (Fig.2.15). Some are private, not intended to be seen, some are doodles in margins, and some are public declarations (Fig.2.12).

Beyond that which can be read, there are material and spatial qualities that can only be experienced physically, through close contact: scale, volume, weight and balance, surface

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<sup>79</sup> Brown, ref.76, p.5.



texture, temperature, smell and sound when handled. There are also non-textual marks, the residual traces of use, wear, damage and repair. Examples of clothing are stained, threadbare, darned and patched (Fig.2.13-14); tools are smoothed and worn down through use. Such traces sit alongside those of the object's making, in the hand stitching of a dress or the decorator's tally mark on an earthenware mug. These kinds of marks are those that were encountered by both collector and curator in assessing the object as potential acquisition. Finally, there is the evidence of gradual, inevitable material change. Fabric is faded, metal rusted, paintwork chipped and discoloured. In many cases, it is hard to tell how much of this happened prior to the object's arrival in the museum, and how much has happened since, in spite of developing standards of conservation and collections care. These have all been considered in terms of both the specific data they may provide when cross-referenced with other historical sources, and for the ways in which they evoke a more tacit bodily response.



Figures 2.5-2.7 (from top left): Examples of institutional marks and labels (1922.1086, 1922.1515, 1922.878).







Figures 2.11-2.15 (clockwise from top): Examples of inscription, damage and repair (1922.269, 1922.1843, 1922.1962, 1922.1892, 1922.996/2).

## Object records

The museum object data-set, as has been established, comprises not just the physical object but the information record that supports it and that, arguably, upholds its value. Museum documentation, according to the United Nations International Council of Museums (ICOM), 'is concerned with the development and use of information about the objects within a museum collection and the procedures which support the management of the collection'.<sup>80</sup> It is both a repository of knowledge and a practical tool. An institution's successive collections management systems thus provide a historical perspective on its organising practices and hierarchies of value. These are the 'means' by which the 'original materials' have been and continue to be processed. As professional standards of collections care develop, so management systems are upgraded and/or re-calibrated. In some cases, existing systems remain in place, gradually adapting over time to new requirements. In others, systems are replaced wholesale, their content harvested and re-entered onto new organising systems. At Manchester City Galleries, current systems include the accessions register, in which each new acquisition is listed and the moment of its transfer into public ownership documented; the object database, which provides key information about each accessioned object in a searchable format; and the object files, in which any further information including curatorial research, references in publications, public enquiries etc, is collated over time. Previous iterations of collections management systems, still held within the institution, although now regarded as obsolete, include the card index system and the image bank of 35mm slides and transparencies.

The accessions register documents the acquisition of each and every object in the museum's collection. As each new acquisition is made, it is added to the list; a list that holds together the institution's past, present and future, for as long as it keeps collecting there will always be new entries to make. Given the centrality of the register as the master list at the heart of the institution's identity, and its continuity as an ongoing document, it is easy to interpret its data through the lens of present day practice, projecting contemporary standards onto the past. Over time, however, conventions and practices of adding to the list have changed, partly due to developing professional standards, but also possibly as a matter of pragmatism. During the period 1920-1930, a total of 6,733 objects were accessioned into the permanent collection at

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<sup>80</sup> Comité International pour la Documentation (CIDOC), International Council of Museums (ICOM), *Statement of principles of museum documentation*, version 6.2, June 2012, [http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user\\_upload/minisites/cidoc/DocStandards/principles6\\_2.pdf](http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/minisites/cidoc/DocStandards/principles6_2.pdf) [accessed 30 July 2017].

Manchester City Art Galleries. These include a number of substantial private gifts and bequests, with the Greg collections, at 3,181 objects, comprising nearly half that number. The curatorial task of processing such quantities of things must have been substantial; by comparison, during the first decade of the twenty first century, 1,438 objects were added to the collection. Thus the accessions register has been considered in terms of the format and content of data recorded, and, by mapping its content against other source material, contextually situated and examined for implicit assumptions, omissions and errors.

Once accessioned, objects are catalogued. Cataloguing is a process of empirical data capture; it is the translation of selected aspects of the material object and its history into discrete units of information, capable of being organised into structured categories and hierarchies. As Fiona Cameron and Sarah Mengler argue, however, 'as museum documentation categories have evolved into well-defined classes and nomenclatures, they lose their original flexibility and plasticity, as well as the ability to respond to new patterns'.<sup>81</sup> Thus in retrospect they may say as much about attitudes towards the material at the point of documentation, as they do about the material itself. There have been four successive cataloguing systems for Manchester's collections, all of which have, to differing degrees, brought together information intrinsic to the object with extrinsic information relating to its use, care and treatment. The first card index system is difficult to date, though handwritten annotations suggest it was in place at least by the late 1920s (Fig.2.16). Built up incrementally over time as material was acquired, the differing layouts and content of information on the index cards demonstrate gradual shifts in organisational thinking. In the early 1980s, a collections audit resulted in the creation of a new set of cards across the entirety of the decorative art collections,<sup>82</sup> in which the data-set for each object was extended and revised, with some elements prioritised, others downgraded (Fig.2.17). Until the mid-1990s these two card systems worked together, the updated cards interleaved with the originals. The development of digital information management systems, however, saw the implementation of MODESPlus, a hierarchical database, which was, in turn, replaced in 2000 with a more sophisticated object-oriented database, KE EMu, the system which remains in use today. This system is capable of storing large amounts of data, broken down into discrete units. Each object record comprises a series of individual tabbed pages each containing different categories of information, ranging from physical description to loan history to insurance valuation (Fig.2.18). Such detailed levels of documentation require

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<sup>81</sup> Fiona Cameron and Sarah Mengler, 'Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museum Collections Documentation: Emergent Metaphors for a Complex World', *Journal of Material Culture* 14 (2) (2009), pp.190-191.

<sup>82</sup> Richard Gray, ex-Director of Manchester City Art Galleries, emails to Liz Mitchell, 17-19 May 2013.

significant staff resources to input them; thus the levels of information for different areas of the collections vary widely depending on both what was known about individual objects when they arrived, and how much curatorial research time they have been deemed to warrant.

Successive generations of analogue and digital records are thus a rich source of evidence for the means by which the collection has been processed during its institutional lifetime, and the way this has shaped knowledge around it. With the development of digital software in recent years, the card index has become redundant. In theory, all content from previous systems has been integrated within its considerably more complex successor. However, tracing individual objects through the different iterations of the system reveals shifting orders of significance attaching to different units of information. It yields historical information in terms of the sequence and timing of research into the collections, with the amendment and/or addition of new data. Attention to handwriting is indicative of the involvement of individual members of staff at different times, while crossings out and corrections suggest potential disagreements or revising of opinions. Such evidence, found in the nuanced and material subtleties of the original document, cannot be captured fully by the transfer to digital, which in any case imposes a structure of its own onto the different elements of the data-set. It also throws up human error, where things have been incorrectly transcribed, missed altogether or duplicated.

Alongside the iterations of the catalogue, object files provide the main repository for further information, ranging from magazine articles, curatorial research and past display materials, to public and professional inquiries. They provide a timeline of past interest in specific objects or areas of the collection, mostly from the pre-digital era as computers and email have replaced paper-based documents and correspondence. They thus indicate levels of curatorial attention given to different aspects of the collection over time and aspects of wider public interest. One filing cabinet drawer covers both the Thomas and Mary Greg collections in terms of their specific history within the institution. It is dominated by Michael Parkinson's research notes for *The Incomparable Art* and its accompanying exhibition, and by contextual biographical information relating to the Greg family of Quarry Bank Mill. Several further filing cabinets contain information pertaining to ceramic history and individual objects in the pottery collection. There is very little for the rest of the Greg collections, beyond some articles on the history of dolls' houses and correspondence relating to the loan of dolls' house material to Quarry Bank during the 1980s. Similarly the archive of black and white photographs and 35mm slides comprises a comprehensive set of images of the pottery collection, a few images from the dolls and dolls' house collection, probably dating from the interwar period, and little else.

1922.720  
BYGONES  
HOME FITTINGS  
 Now at *65 on show*  
 Key; square hole in centre; of Oxford Gaol.  
 Length  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches.  
 Presented by Mrs. T. T. Greg.

**1922.720**  
 KEY  
 Iron, oval bow with square-drilled hole. Three collars around top of solid shank, two collars around throating.  
 ENGLISH prob. early 19<sup>th</sup> C  
 Gift of Mrs. T. Greg (1922. 720)  
 L 24.0 cm.  
 bow slightly bent  
 said by Mrs. Greg to be 'the key to Oxford Gaol'

**Catalogue (1) - Display**

File Edit Select View Tools Tabs Parts Archives Multimedia Window Help

**"key" [1922.720]** 20136

Object Details  
 Object Type:  Object Name: key  
 Object Status: accessioned Collection: 1 decorative art  
 Object Rating:  Group: 2 bygones

Accession Details  
 Accession No: 1922.720 Accession Date: 1922 Previous Accession No:

Title  
 Main Title:

Creator Details  

Creator's Name	Role	Date of Bi...	Date of D...	Nationality
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Creation Details  
 Date Created: c.1810 Earliest: 1800 Latest: 1820

Summary Title Title 2 Creation (1) Creation (2) Physical (1) Physical (2) Refe

Display Object 1 of 1 lizmitc legacy 20038

Figures 2.16-2.18: Catalogue cards and database record for 1922.720, dating from c.1929, c.1980 and 2015 respectively.

## Institutional records

The wider historical context for the acquisition and early history of the collection is based primarily on analysis of the institutional archive. What is loosely called archive at Manchester Art Gallery is, like most archives, a miscellany of things – part library, part office filing, part things that slipped through the decision-making net and are now the responsibility of both everyone and no-one. Unlike Derrida's *arkheion*, it has no designated archivist, no defined boundaries, is not catalogued, listed, nor even comprehensively gathered in one definable space, despite the existence of an underground room titled Archive.<sup>83</sup> This lack of an overt archiving process has the tendency, however, to emphasise the archive itself as a naturally occurring phenomenon, the gradual accretion of residues during the long life of the institution, still in situ within its walls. At Manchester, it would appear, there has been little *archivization* as such, more a general silting up of material. Actually, the contents of the underground archive room have only been there for a decade, having been relocated since the closure and decant of the building in the late 1990s. And, on reflection, what sits within can only be a tiny percentage of the mass of documentation produced during the institution's 190 year history. There is selection, prioritisation and the absence of what was not kept. As Steedman notes of archives in general, 'there isn't in fact, very much there'.<sup>84</sup>

At the core of the Galleries' archive is the official record in the form of guidebooks and catalogues, annual reports and committee minutes. These documents represent the most easily identifiable source of institutional history. They were written or compiled with varied functions and audiences in mind, but all with an eye to the historical record. Gallery guidebooks provide the most accessible public history of the institution and its collections. Four guidebooks covering the breadth of the collections have been produced over the Galleries' lifetime, dating from 1938 (Fig.2.19), 1956, 1982 and 2002 respectively.<sup>85</sup> Produced primarily as souvenirs, each follows the same format, comprising a short history of the institution, a selection of exhibits, and carefully composed photography of its buildings and spaces. The latter two were produced to mark key moments in the Galleries' history, its

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<sup>83</sup> Since beginning this research, staff at MCG have begun a project to list the content of the institutional archive, which is ongoing. Conversation with Hannah Williamson, 9 February 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Steedman, ref.42, p.68.

<sup>85</sup> Lawrence Haward, *Illustrated Guide to the Art Collections in the Manchester Corporation Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Corporation, 1945 [1938]); S. D. Cleveland, *Guide to the Manchester Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Art Galleries Committee, 1956); Timothy Clifford, *A Century of Collecting 1882-1982: A Guide to Manchester City Art Galleries* (Manchester: City of Manchester Cultural Services, 1983); Michael Howard, *Up Close: A Guide to Manchester Art Gallery* (London: Scala Publishers, 2002).



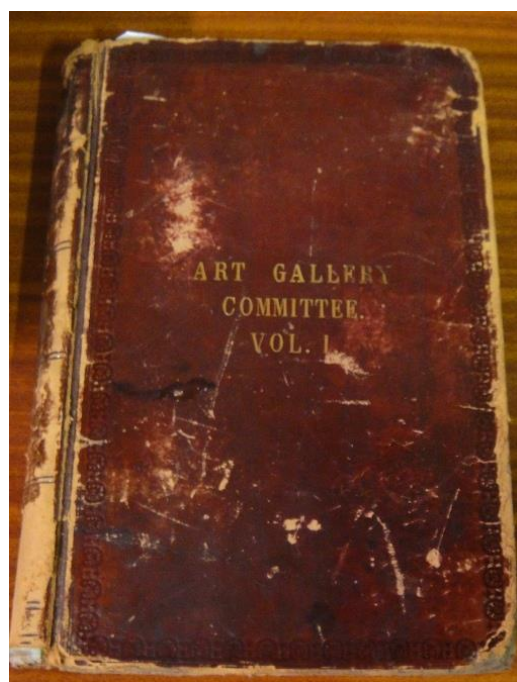
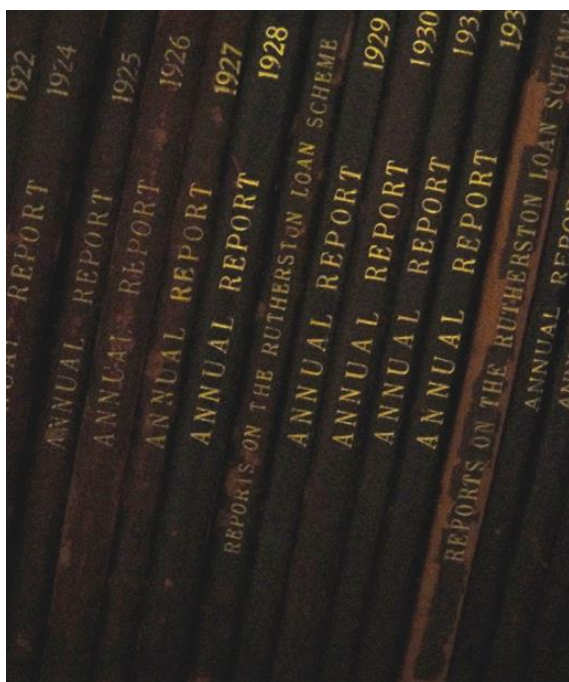
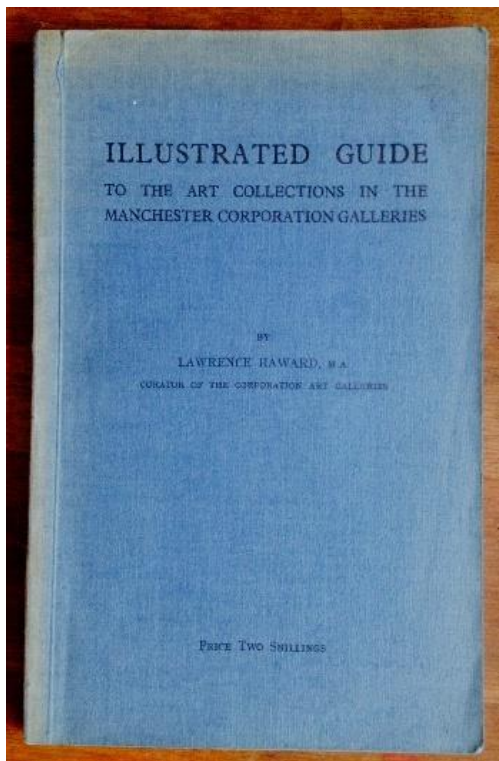
centenary in 1982 and the re-opening of the extended city centre site in 2002. The first three were written by curators and directors, and thus represent an insider's view. They give equal attention to the Galleries' collections and its buildings, celebrating not only the quality and range of the city's growing art and design holdings but its dispersal into suburban neighbourhoods through its branch galleries. The most recent guidebook, 2002's *Up Close*, however, was written and selected by art historian Michael Howard, and focuses purely on the newly extended city centre art gallery. It makes no reference to branch galleries or the breadth of the wider collections, drawing purely on the new displays for its selection of works. It marked a significant shift in institutional identity, reflected in the retitling of the site as Manchester Art Gallery. The successive iterations of the guide book thus provide a sense of how the institution has presented and re-presented its contemporary and historical identity to its different publics over a 64-year period.

In between such comprehensive guides, more modest publications have celebrated the acquisition of individual collections. During the first half of the twentieth century, most newly acquired private collections were quickly put on temporary display, accompanied by a modest catalogue or handbook. These generally comprise a list of exhibits and a preface, usually written by the Curator or Art Galleries Committee Chairman, thanking the collector for their generosity. Such publications were produced to accompany all three Greg collections during the period 1922-24. These provide important information as to the presentation and arrangement of the collections in their first public manifestation, and situate the newly acquired collection within the wider aspirations of the institution. The preface to the *Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times* also represents Mrs Greg's only published writing. Collected volumes of press cuttings complement the institutional narrative, documenting the public reception of the Galleries' exhibitions and displays, and covering wider debates relating to art and culture in the city. Compiled by Gallery staff, however, each article has been removed from the newspaper or magazine page in which it first appeared, and re-contextualised within a scrapbook history of the institution (Fig.2.20). Thus, key newspaper articles have also been traced back, where possible, to their original publication context and further searches of local newspaper and specialist arts journal archives conducted in case of any omission.

Annual Reports were produced by the Art Galleries Committee every year from its foundation in 1882 until its merger with the city-wide Cultural Committee in 1967 (Fig.2.22). Written primarily for a readership of elected council members, but also publicly available, they account

for the Galleries' activities from a position of close proximity to them. Initially comprising simply lists of acquisitions and visitor figures, from 1901 a narrative element was introduced, detailing the wider activities and aspirations of the institution. This coincides with the acquisition of land adjacent to the Royal Manchester Institution for the purposes of extension. The need for larger premises forms the backdrop to every annual report for the next forty years, evidenced not only by acquisitions and visitor figures, but exhibition programmes, lecture series, festivals and concerts, the development of loan collections, the hosting of meetings by civic societies and special interest groups, and the development of programmes for schools. The reports are thus both an official record of the year's activities and a lobbying device, repeatedly making the case for more appropriate premises, either on a new site in the city centre, or by extension of the existing buildings. Thus reports provide both the official account of the acquisition of the Greg collections and also evidence for the political context within which this decision was made, as well as possible motivations behind their deployment in the form of subsequent public display.

Guide books, catalogues and annual reports, although written from different temporal perspectives and with different readerships in mind, thus provide a mutually reinforcing narrative of institutional growth and achievement tempered by the ongoing challenge of limited space. Committee minutes and memoranda, however, reveal some of the complexities of discussion and decision-making behind this tidy narrative (Fig.2.21). As a municipal art gallery, Manchester City Art Galleries was managed by a 20-strong committee, made up of elected councillors and city elites from business, academia and the arts. The Art Galleries Committee and its various sub-committees met on average fortnightly, and discussed a wide range of matters, from acquisitions and loans to staff wages and building maintenance. These are all documented in the Curator's Instruction Book, providing an invaluable record of the relationship between the Committee and the Curator, and how decisions were made and by whom. In fact, in many ways it is easier to trace the discussions and decisions of the early twentieth century than it is a century later, as the increasing use of email and digital files managed by individuals according to their own systems, has resulted in the de-centralisation of day-to-day record keeping and archiving.



Figures 2.19-2.22 (clockwise from top left): Examples of archive material including Galleries guide book, press cuttings, Art Galleries Committee Curator's book, and Annual Reports.

## Letters

The range of archival sources so far discussed represents the formal technologies of institutional record keeping. They constitute the official archive, easily identifiable by their uniform leather-bound and sequentially numbered volumes. In the case of the Mary Greg Collection, however, there is another source which occupies a more ambiguous position, between the institutional and the personal. This is the body of correspondence, comprising 701 letters, written primarily by Mrs Greg and Manchester City Art Galleries' curatorial staff and committee members between 1920 and 1949 (Figs.2.23-24). Prior to 2009, this correspondence was held in a filing cabinet in the Galleries offices; it was not until the *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* project that its significance became apparent, at which point it was relocated to the Archive. Subsequent research for this thesis suggests that the existence of such a substantial correspondence is unusual, if not unique, in the history of British museum/donor relations.<sup>86</sup> Its scope and duration provide insights into not just the motivation and purpose behind the collection, but the inner workings, attitudes and aspirations of the institution, and the personalities and relationships of its staff over a thirty year period. It provides a personal counterpoint to the official procedural record of minutes and memoranda, and stands in marked contrast to Mrs Greg's relative invisibility in the official record beyond 1922. Written in the present, in response to immediate and particular circumstances, and with one reader, the correspondent, in mind, the letters give a sense of intimate proximity to the dynamics of events and relationships as they unfolded. They are extremely evocative, for as David Barton and Nigel Hall argue:

[L]etters, compared to other genres, may appear humble, because they are so overtly tied to particular social relations of particular writers and readers, but that only means they reveal to us so clearly and explicitly the sociality that is part of all writing – they give the game away so easily.<sup>87</sup>

As the *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* project blog demonstrates, the letters formed as much a source of inspiration to its participants as did the collection; the bringing together of these two sources really sat at the heart of this project. Similarly, the letters are central to this research.

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<sup>86</sup> An email inquiry circulated via the National Register of Archives email list, archives-nra@jiscmail, on 27 October 2014, yielded ten responses from archivists of large and small institutions, none of which could identify comparable correspondence elsewhere. A subsequent advert in the February 2015 issue of *Museums Journal* yielded no further information.

<sup>87</sup> David Barton and Nigel Hall (eds.), *Letter Writing as a Social Practice* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000) p.27.

Letter-writing, historically, is a gender- and class-related activity. In *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects*, Diane Sachko Macleod describes her puzzlement at the absence of women from the histories of art collecting. Finding little in the official record, she turned instead to private correspondence and here found evidence of the active participation of women in the art world.<sup>88</sup> During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, letter-writing became central to the pursuit of social reputation. The 'social letter' developed as the mode of correspondence appropriate for women, while the 'business letter' was the domain of men. As both men and women took up letter-writing, class was increasingly differentiated by epistolary etiquette, good breeding indicated by the ease with which the letter-writer could 'straddle the conversational and the correct, the artless and the disciplined'.<sup>89</sup>

Unlike the letters described by Sachko Macleod, however, the Greg letters *are* primarily a business correspondence, the product of a formal relationship between donor and institution. Ingrid Jeacle and Tom Brown describe the business letter as 'part of the apparatus of power in the business world, a credible document inherently invested with the professional status of the sender'.<sup>90</sup> As the basis of contractual and binding agreement in law, its legitimacy depends on the maintenance of impartiality and distance in both form and content. Correspondence between museums and their donors might be described as belonging to a subcategory of the business letter, one that negotiates relationships between business interests and the private individual. Correspondence of this kind is often a dialogue between the formality of the carbon-copied institutional letter and the handwritten, unique (i.e. no copy retained by the sender) individual letter. There is an imbalance in the roles of each correspondent, the employee writing on behalf of the institution, the individual representing themselves. Additionally, in dealing with the transfer of material possessions from private to public ownership, such correspondence involves relationships of power, between donor (owner of valuable material desired – or not – by the institution) and recipient (potential provider of status, value and long term preservation of precious personal possessions). In traversing the boundaries between private and public, such letters are a potentially rich source of evidence for the social attitudes of their period, despite belonging to a genre supposedly characterised

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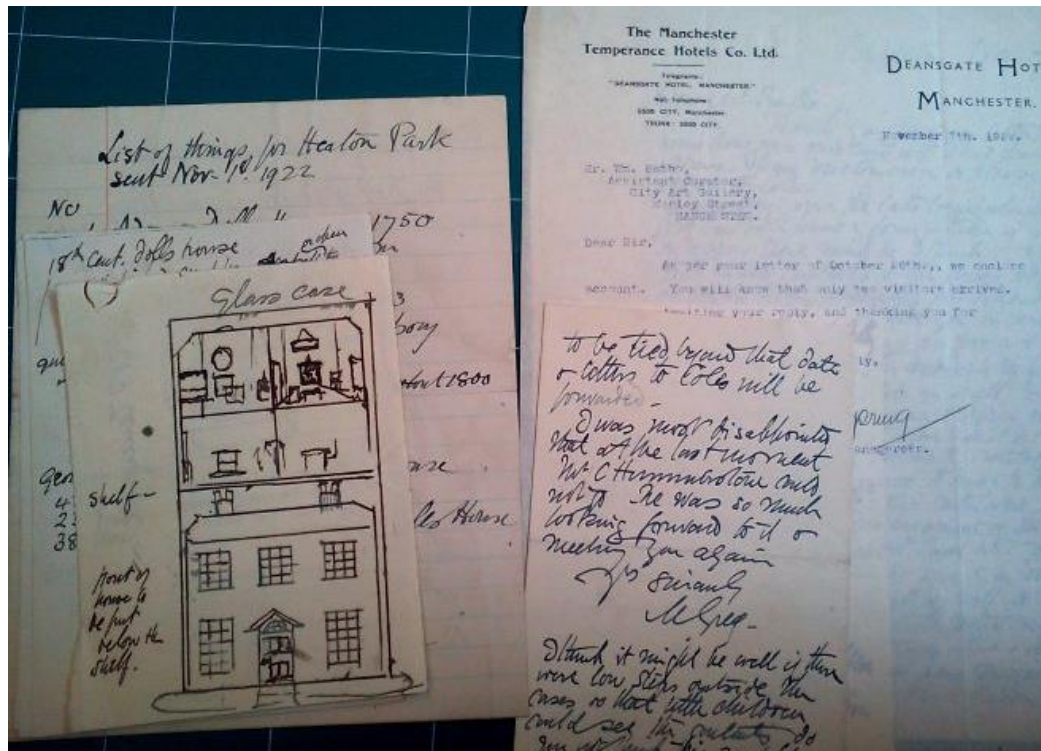
<sup>88</sup> Diane Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>89</sup> Barton and Hall, ref.87, p.35.

<sup>90</sup> Ingrid Jeacle and Tom Brown, 'The construction of the credible: Epistolary transformations and the origins of the business letter', *Accounting, Business & Financial History*, 16 (1) (2006) p.27.



by neutrality and (perhaps as a result of this) relative obscurity within the recorded history of letter writing.<sup>91</sup>



Figures 2.23-2.24: Letters, lists and notes from the Greg correspondence, 1920-1949.

<sup>91</sup> Jeacle and Brown, ref.90, p.28.

Beginning with Thomas Greg's death in 1920, at the age of 62, and continuing until 1949, a few short weeks before Mrs Greg's own death at the age of 99, the Greg letters deal primarily with the ownership, development, care and display of the Greg collections. They cover transfer of title, conditions of gift and aspects of custodianship; some of the letters are legal documents in their own right, making over bodies of objects from Mrs Greg to Manchester City Council. However, once this initial transaction was complete, Mrs Greg continued to write. Her letters discuss aspects of the care and display of the collections, suggest ways and means of developing them further, and describe further gifts she intends to make. They discuss plans for upcoming visits to see the displays, enquire after visitor responses to them, and suggest connections with other museums. The majority of the letters are between Mrs Greg and Assistant Curator William Batho, although a range of further correspondents are also represented, from members of the Art Galleries Committee to Mrs Greg's family, friends and personal staff.<sup>92</sup> Written between 1920 and Mr Batho's unexpected death in 1937, over time the formal etiquette of epistolary politeness develops into friendship, reflected in enquiries after family members, accounts of recent holidays and personal opinions on wider current affairs. Thus the letters, interweaving both business and social relationships, provide an insight into the interpersonal dynamics that official reports disguise.

## Place

The objects and documents so far identified are dispersed throughout the various sites that comprise Manchester City Galleries; finding them entails travelling to-and-fro across the city. The division of the physical collection by location corresponds in part to the division of the collection by discipline, but also in terms of 'primary' and 'secondary' material. The collections at Manchester City Galleries are divided into three disciplines: fine art, decorative art and costume. Those aspects of the fine and decorative art collections in regular use are housed, curated and displayed at Manchester Art Gallery in the city centre, a nineteenth century Classical Revival building, brought up to date by the addition of the white cube spaces of the contemporary Michael Hopkins-designed extension (Fig.2.25).<sup>93</sup> Material from the Greg collections, including ceramics, glass, silver, medals, paper-based objects and documents (approximately 280 objects), is held in two places, the large climate-controlled Art Store in the extension basement (Fig.2.26) and the Strong Room, a small, brick-vaulted room beneath the

<sup>92</sup> Out of 701 letters, 410 are between Mrs Greg and Mr Batho.

<sup>93</sup> The Royal Manchester Institution was designed by Charles Barry in the Greek Revival style in 1824-35, shortly followed by his Manchester Athenaeum building, 1837-39, in the Italian Palazzo style. Both buildings were combined into one site by architects Michael Hopkins & Partners, whose gallery extension opened in 2002. See Howard, ref.85.

historic building (Fig.2.27). Here the Greg material has been incorporated into the wider collections, organised and arranged by material. The Archive is also on this site, in an underground room along the corridor from the Strong Room, while other files, old index cards and publications are distributed throughout the building's offices.

The remainder of the fine and decorative art collections are held at Queens Park in Harpurhey, north of the city (Fig.2.28). Built in 1884, it is the only building in Manchester City Galleries' portfolio that was purpose-built as a museum, situated in one of Britain's earliest municipal parks.<sup>94</sup> Closed to the public in 1984, however, there is little information publicly available about its history or current purpose; you will not find any mention of it on the Manchester City Galleries website.<sup>95</sup> Today, Queens Park houses the Galleries' conservation studios and collections in store. It is where objects come either for physical conservation and exhibition preparation, or to go into long-term storage. Queens Park is a very still place; few people inhabit it at any one time, and those who do are mostly engaged in quiet concentrated work, in separate discipline-based conservation studios. This feels strangely at odds with its architecture and spatial arrangement, designed to welcome the public via a lofty and balconied entrance hall and central staircase leading up to what were once public galleries (Fig.2.29). Although physically the most difficult site to access due to its non-public role, the Greg collection is most materially manifest here. Dolls' houses, toys and 'bygones' (approximately 820 objects) are gathered together in metal cabinets, drawers and shelves in the Yellow Room (Fig.2.30). Here is where the collection as a physical entity feels real, in that things are gathered together in one space, in relation to each other.

Lastly, in south Manchester, there is Platt Hall, a Georgian house once set in its own lands but now within the municipal park setting of Platt Fields (Fig.2.31).<sup>96</sup> The Hall opened as a branch gallery in 1927, displaying modern paintings from the Rutherston Collection and material from the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection, but since 1947 has been home to the Gallery's costume collection. Today it houses displays of historic costume alongside modern and contemporary fashion exhibitions. A small curatorial team is based here part-time, and subsequently, archive documentation and the substantial library relating to the costume collections are also held here. The rooms at Platt Hall are domestic in scale (Fig.2.32), with collections stored in three places: in the first floor pavilions flanking the main building, behind

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<sup>94</sup> Designed by J. Allison, City Surveyor, for Manchester Corporation Parks Committee, 1883-4. Queens Park itself opened in 1846. See Clare Latimer, *Parks for the People: Manchester and Its Parks 1846-1926* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1987) pp.32-34.

<sup>95</sup> Manchester Art Gallery, [www.manchestergalleries.org](http://www.manchestergalleries.org), [accessed 23 June 2015].

<sup>96</sup> Designed by Timothy Lightoler for the Worsley family, 1764. See Clifford, ref.85.



the second floor offices, and in the third floor attic (Fig.2.33). Clothing, textiles, personal accessories, sewing implements and dolls (approximately 870 objects) from the Mary Greg Collection are held here. Storage systems are a mix of old and new, including wooden wardrobes and drawers or shelves of cardboard boxes and Solander boxes. There is a kind of stratification to the storage system and its labelling, indicative of changes in object classification and conservation practice and materials over the half-century or so in which the collection has been here. As the card catalogue system at Platt Hall indicates, collections are stored grouped together by object type, meaning the Greg material is dispersed throughout the wider collections. The content of each box or wardrobe is then arranged in accession number order. As the Greg collections were the institution's first acquisitions in these areas, Greg material is almost always at the 'start': at the bottom of the box or inside the far left of the wardrobe.

These three different locations set the tone for any encounter with the material within. Once referred to as the city's branch galleries, they reflect different aspects of the Galleries' history, revealing the layers of its past identities. During the period of Mrs Greg's involvement with Manchester, the Art Galleries added three new suburban outposts to their portfolio, making a total of seven public venues throughout the city. At different times during the 1920s and 30s, parts of the Greg collections were on display in most of them. Today, all but two are either closed to the public or used for other purposes by Manchester City Council. The history and atmosphere of these different spaces, and their different locations within the city, thus impacts directly on the nature of the encounter with the objects they contain. In the anthropology of the senses, environment plays an active role. David Howes, citing Stephen Feld, argues that 'as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place'.<sup>97</sup> Howes proposes a theory of emplacement, rather than embodiment, in which body, mind and environment are inextricably intermingled in the production of sensorial response and subsequent meaning. Furthermore, the places in which the collection resides are an integral part of its history. In archaeological terms they are the depositional context previously referred to. Thomas Gieryn argues that 'place is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game'.<sup>98</sup> Gieryn identifies three defining characteristics of place: 'geographic location', its 'unique spot in the universe', situated in relation to what surrounds it; 'material form', the physical structures and materials which shape it and through which we

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<sup>97</sup> David Howes, 'Scent, Sound and Synaesthesia: Intersensoriality and Material Culture', in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (eds.), *The Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE Publications) p.167.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas F. Gieryn, 'A Space for Place in Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (1) (2000) p.466.

experience it; and ‘investment with meaning and value’, its history, associations, identities and memories, often contested and changing over time.<sup>99</sup> The Greg Collection has a multi-layered relationship with its placement – its location today primarily yields information about hierarchies of value in collections storage, but these same locations were once public venues, providing for the city’s suburban populations who, it was felt, were unlikely to visit the city centre art gallery. The development of the Mary Greg Collection, as will be seen, was directly influenced by institutional policy in this area. Thus the spaces and places of the collection form not just an integral part of any encounter with the collection, but also significant historical source material.



Figures 2.25-2.27 (clockwise, from top): Manchester Art Gallery, exterior view; Manchester Art Gallery Art Store; Manchester Art Gallery Strong Room.

<sup>99</sup> Gieryn, ref.98, pp.464-5.



Figures 2.28-2.30 (clockwise, from top): Queens Park, exterior view; Queens Park entrance hall from the first floor balcony; open storage in the Yellow Room.





Figures 2.31-2.33 (clockwise, from top): Platt Hall Gallery of Costume, exterior view; entrance hall and staircase; collections storage in the attic.

## Part Three: Method

### Re-collecting the collection

Embarking on this research, my first task seemed to be the identification of the full extent of the collection, and subsequently its documentary imprint. The first of these seemed a basic requirement; how could I hope to understand the collection until I knew what was in it? The second was intended to provide a starting point for consideration of classificatory practices – how the collection had been organised and re-organised within the museum. The 2002 display had drawn primarily on a subset of material in storage at Queens Park – the so-called ‘bygones’ and dolls’ houses – but there was also a substantial amount at Platt Hall Gallery of Costume, as well as smaller groups of things dispersed among the fine and decorative art collections in the city centre. It also became apparent that object-level documentation varied widely across different aspects of the collection, reflecting past institutional actions on it. Recent projects, including *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* and the Gallery of Craft & Design, had resulted in certain items being researched in depth.<sup>100</sup> Earlier curatorial projects, both for display and as part of collections management processes, had also left their documentary trace.<sup>101</sup> But a significant number, primarily costume, textiles and dolls, had minimal supporting information, having remained in storage for many years.

I decided to compile an inventory of the collection as a starting point from which I would then conduct my research. I turned to the digital database and ran a search on the key term Mary Greg. However, this did not yield comprehensive results, due mainly to a combination of inconsistencies of terminology and differences in data entry by different members of staff. As the donor, Mary Greg had duplicate entries under the titles Mary Greg, Mrs M. Greg and Mrs T. T. Greg, so that different groups of objects were effectively attached to three different people. Some objects were missing altogether, apparently not yet transcribed to the digital, making it impossible to produce a reliable list of contents in this way. I then turned to the accessions register. On the page for 1922, there is a single line:

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<sup>100</sup> See for example, Nousheen Leila Saboonpaz, ‘Horn-Book (A Student Response)’, *Mary Mary Quite Contrary*, 21 July 2010, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/archives/2074> [accessed 20 October 2017].

<sup>101</sup> See for example, online record for 1922.1300, straw-work box, researched for display in the Gallery of Craft & Design, Manchester Art Gallery, ‘box’, <http://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/search/collection/?id=1922.1300> [accessed 26 October 2017].

1922.73-1922.2195 Greg Collection see separate file (Dolls and Dolls [sic] Houses Collection and Handicrafts of Bygone Times)<sup>102</sup>

It turns out the accessions register is not as comprehensive as one might expect. But it does identify the receipt of 2,122 individually numbered and sequenced objects comprising two individually named collections. Further investigation in the Galleries offices revealed facsimile copies of typewritten lists, undated, one entitled Dolls and Dolls' Houses, the other Handicrafts of Bygone Times. But this second list was incomplete. The typed entries stopped at 1922.1687, with subsequent hand-written additions in two different hands up to 1922.1700, leaving 495 objects unaccounted for.<sup>103</sup> I went back to the card index, but these are separated into departmental disciplines. Bygones and Dolls and Dolls' Houses were gathered together in accession number order, but the cards for ceramic, glass and metal objects had been removed to those categories. Cards for dolls and clothing had also been removed to the curatorial offices at Platt Hall, where the index is organised differently, by object type rather than accession number, meaning the Greg items were dispersed among the wider costume holdings. I looked at the public catalogues produced to accompany the 1922 displays. But these have their own unique numbering system which does not equate to accession numbers, and furthermore they only listed a fraction of the full number of objects given. It became apparent that there was no straightforward way to produce a list of everything in the collection, and that the only way to achieve this was to map across the various documentary sources, filling in gaps in the number sequence along the way.

Similarly, going back to the objects themselves had its own challenges. It is one thing to know that there are 2,000 objects, quite another to go in search of them all, dispersed across the city. I quickly realised this was impossibly time-consuming and therefore decided, on a practical basis, that I would not look at everything, but focus initially on those objects that had not been photographed and, by implication, had probably not been looked at for many years. This would broaden my pre-existing familiarity with those aspects of the collection that have been in more active use and have thus acquired a heavier documentary imprint. I would photograph the objects as I went through them and add these to the existing institutional photography. Through the combined process of information gathering and returning to the objects themselves, I would re-make the body of the collection through inventory.

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<sup>102</sup> MCAG, *City of Manchester Art Gallery: Stock Book of Works of Art, 1882-1931*, p.138, MCG Archive.

<sup>103</sup> The missing section of the list, detailing these remaining objects, was later found, in 2014, in a filing cabinet at Platt Hall.

As the above implies, this has not been the smooth and methodical process that I envisaged. The reality has been that the inventory has grown in fits and starts; travelling between sites, going through cupboards, resolving anomalies and looking for lost objects, reconciling numbers with objects and catalogue cards and mapping them to lists. This process has taken place alongside rather than as a precursor to other research tasks - methodological reading and research, piecing together historical narrative, following up clues elsewhere. Each has thus informed the other. Individual discoveries in store rooms and archives have necessitated a re-interpretation of other sources, a re-organising of tasks, of following up new lines of inquiry. Conversely, deepening historical knowledge and increasing methodological awareness have informed the way I approach the material. Rather than being a preparatory exercise in data gathering, or even a gradual journey through a changing landscape of material things, it has become a series of distinct, immersive encounters with different groups of things in different locations, punctuating and punctuated by other aspects of research. This led to a questioning of my assumption that in order to research the collection I had *first* to 'know what was in it'. My starting point for this research was the disconnect referred to earlier in this chapter – the sense of possibility afforded by the very lack of curatorial expertise and object-level information. I did not set out to fill in these curatorial 'gaps', to do the object research that, had the collection been afforded higher value within the institution, previous curators might have carried out. The participants in the project *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* were drawn precisely to the openness to creative response that the lack of authenticating documentation provided. Thus, my inventory on the one hand is a curatorial exercise in that it sets out to produce a comprehensive list of things. But on the other, what I have actually documented through inventory is the documentary trace (or lack of it) itself, and, through photography, my own encounters with the material. In fact, this process of 're-collecting' the collection, of 'working through the assemblage', has turned out to *be* the research. It has facilitated a shift of emphasis, from going into store rooms as a means to an end, to spending time with objects as an end in itself.

Days spent in store rooms have been mainly solitary. Armed with computer-generated lists of room contents, a notebook and a camera, I unlock the door, turn on the light, select a box, a drawer, a shelf, and work my way through, picking things up, looking at undersides and interiors, noting labels or other marks of ownership and acquisition, and ticking them off the list. With each object, I take a documentary photograph, noting the accession number and any other source of information such as box or shelf lists. This is done according to plan. But what invariably happens next is a kind of slippage, as I am drawn into a deeper intimacy with the

object before me. It happens every time, as I inspect the thing closely, noticing instances of damage or wear, marks and inscriptions and the details of how things are made. It is a sensation that reminds me of Stephen Greenblatt's description of wonder as a kind of 'exalted attention',<sup>104</sup> 'when intensity of regard blocks out circumambient images and stills all murmuring voices'.<sup>105</sup> I take more photographs, but these are of a different kind: partial details, close-up attempts to capture surface texture and the traces of human interaction that attract me so much (Figs.2.34-2.35). The camera becomes a magnifying glass, a tool for directing my vision, and I realise that my photographs have a tendency to turn objects into landscapes, contoured terrains without formal boundaries that are no longer easily identifiable as objects. This was not intentional. On reflection, I think I have been trying to capture my own sensory response through photography, aware as I do it that I am destined to fail, for as David Howes argues, 'it is precisely those qualities which cannot be reproduced in photographs – the feel, the weight, the smell, the sound – which are essential to consider'.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, I keep trying. My notes take on a reflective tone, sometimes in the form of diary entries or as lists – of descriptive terms for the way things feel or the sounds they make. Latterly, I have started drawing, attempting to capture the way things feel by holding them and closing my eyes as I draw (Fig.2.36). These activities are not entirely helpful to the process of inventory, as they slow things down considerably. Yet I am compelled to do them; they *feel* important, as a way of focusing my attention.

If, as both Howes and Dudley argue, sensory perception is primary and meaning mediated through it – if 'the material properties of the thing itself are essential to how our bodily senses detect it and thus to how we experience and formulate ideas about it'<sup>107</sup> – then these intuitive rather than pre-planned activities are integral to the research process, they sit alongside the more conventional documenting and analysis of evidence. I do not claim that they give me direct access to those in the past who handled the very same objects, but perhaps they make me more aware of what it is I am doing. As Stephen Greenblatt comments, 'the knowledge that derives from this kind of looking may not be very useful in the attempt to understand another culture, but it is vitally important in the attempt to understand our own'.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 43 (4) (1990) p.20.

<sup>105</sup> Greenblatt, ref.104, p.28.

<sup>106</sup> Howes, ref.97, p.169.

<sup>107</sup> Dudley, ref.8, p.8.

<sup>108</sup> Greenblatt, ref.104, p.32.





Figures 2.34-2.35: Close up photographs taken in the stores.

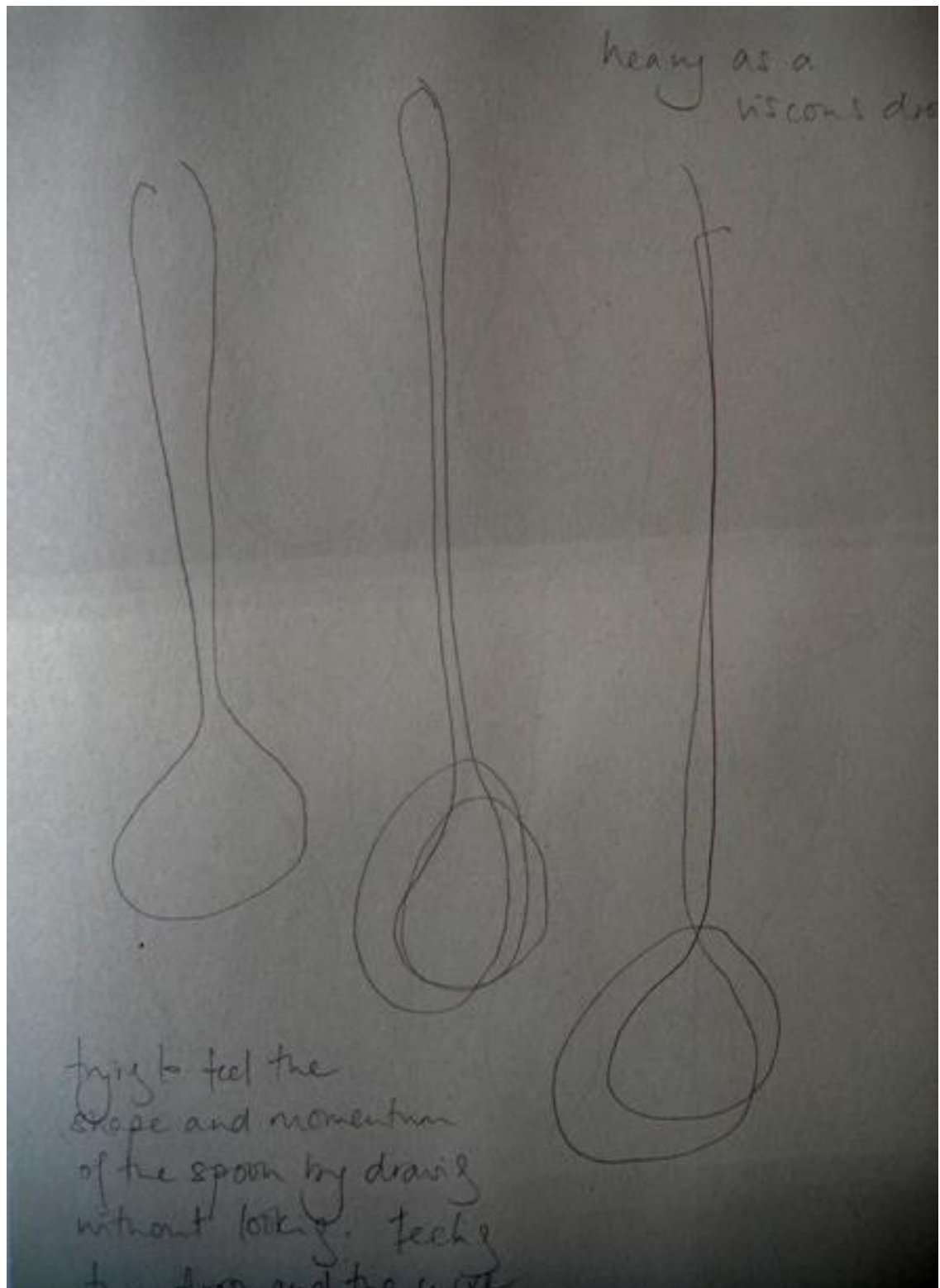


Figure 2.36: Page from my notebook, drawing spoons, 2015.

## Following the archive

Alongside time spent with objects in store rooms, I have read across the diverse range of archival sources, comparing public reports, object records, letters, press cuttings, minutes and memoranda, in order to build a picture of the early history of the collection. I have conducted basic statistical analysis of the accessions register to provide a wider context for the Galleries' acquisition of the collections, considering the numbers of objects acquired during different periods in the Galleries' history, the relationships between purchase, gift and bequest, and the different rates at which different parts of the collection developed. I have mapped references to objects in the Greg collections as they occur throughout the different sources, and back to the traces on objects themselves, in order to determine how and when they were presented and interpreted both by Mrs Greg and curatorial staff, and subsequently by the wider public. Similarly, I have traced relationships between Mrs Greg, Art Galleries staff and connected institutions and individuals represented or referred to within the Greg correspondence.

Doing so has revealed both a wide-ranging network of relationships at play in the collection, and a strategic process of 'tidying up' within the institutional record, of activities that were, in reality, less straightforward than they appear. Most significantly, I realised that the accessions register entry for the Greg Collections is deeply misleading. By present day conventions, this entry indicates that the Handicrafts of Bygone Times and Dolls and Dolls' Houses Collections were accessioned into the permanent collection in their entirety in 1922. However, other sources reveal that the collections were in fact built up incrementally over a period of more than a decade, beginning in 1922, and that they were formally transferred into public ownership in several stages. The accessions register entry was probably made sometime around 1932. This completely changes the way one reads the accessions register, not as a 'real time' document tracking the arrival of each new addition to the collection as it occurred, but as an amended retrospective account of the Galleries' collecting activities.

Furthermore, it became clear that Mrs Greg's relationship with Manchester City Art Galleries was only one of several she developed with multiple museums and galleries across Britain, and thus that the Mary Greg Collection in Manchester is only part of a much more widely dispersed body of objects. Following up archival references, I have made use of professional museums and archive networks in order to identify further archive and collection sources that either hold material related to the Gregs and/or Manchester City Galleries, or that provide useful comparators for this research. As a result, I have to date identified 32 individual

museums, societies and institutes to which Mrs Greg also gave collections and/or individual objects.<sup>109</sup> The full extent of Mrs Greg's wider museum connections does not form part of this research, but aspects of it are critical to understanding the Manchester collection, in particular her relationship with Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, a branch of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Research in the archives at Bethnal Green provides evidence for the close friendship between Mrs Greg and curator Arthur Sabin, and for institutional debate over proposed donations of material, some of which, turned down by the V&A, made its way to Manchester.<sup>110</sup> Further contextual evidence for early twentieth century museum developments in Manchester is provided by the Sir William Boyd Dawkins papers held at Buxton Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>111</sup> Boyd Dawkins (1837-1929) was an eminent archaeologist, university lecturer and Curator of Manchester Museum from 1869-1890. He was an active member of the Art Galleries Committee from 1911 to 1928, and took a leading role in the development of plans for the proposed new city museum and art gallery.<sup>112</sup> As the Galleries' archives also show, he was on close friendly terms with the Gregs and one of the key figures in securing the Greg collections for the Art Galleries.

Researching Mary Greg's own life history, about which very little was previously known, I have consulted the Sheffield-based archives of the Guild of St George, of which Mrs Greg was a member in later life, and to which she left property, objects and documents, including her nature diaries, kept from 1905 to 1922.<sup>113</sup> These, even more than the letters, provide an insight into her personality and married life in the Hertfordshire village of Westmill. I have visited Westmill, to see first-hand where she and her husband lived, and where she set up both her own small museum and the Thomas and Mary Greg Trust, to manage property in the village after her death. I have consulted Hertfordshire Archives, where Mrs Greg's private papers, including museum correspondence and documents pertaining to the sale of her home, Coles Park, are lodged.<sup>114</sup> Chester Archives provided information pertaining to Winnington Hall school in Cheshire, following up comments in letters that suggest Mrs Greg may have attended there as a child.<sup>115</sup> And contact with descendants of the Greg and Hope

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<sup>109</sup> See Appendix Two for a full list of institutions so far identified.

<sup>110</sup> Victoria & Albert Museum Registry, Nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H.

<sup>111</sup> Buxton Museum and Art Gallery, Sir William Boyd Dawkins papers, GB 1671 272Z/F.

<sup>112</sup> Brian Goodwin, *William Boyd Dawkins – Chronology*, 2014, [https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/William%20Boyd%20Dawkins%20Chronology\\_tcm44-267803.pdf](https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/William%20Boyd%20Dawkins%20Chronology_tcm44-267803.pdf) [accessed 28 February 2017].

<sup>113</sup> Sheffield Archives, Guild of St George Archive, Box GSG21; Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, Guild of St George Archive, CGSG6142, CGSG04941-2.

<sup>114</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, Mary Greg papers, D/ESm F4-7, ACC 2579 Box 4, DE/Ry B486.

<sup>115</sup> Chester Archives, A. S. Irvine research notes and correspondence re. Winnington Hall, DIC/BM 15/27.

families has enabled the gathering of further information on family history and memories.<sup>116</sup> For someone who makes little appearance in the official histories of individual museums, Manchester included, this research has identified substantial amounts of material dispersed throughout museums and archives across Britain, some of which is incorporated within this thesis, but much of which suggests potential for further research.

## Thesis

This thesis thus combines both the findings of historical research and an analysis of the characteristics and qualities of the collection as it is encountered today. Grappling with the relationship between these two elements has been a challenge throughout. Should they be treated as separate elements or woven together? How to bring them together? Should I begin with the people or the things? With the 'then' or with the 'now'? If I start from the premise that the relationships between people and things are continually shifting, their boundaries unclear, then how to separate them? The necessarily linear structure of writing requires a certain 'flattening out' of entangled relationships and networks that inevitably prioritises particular connections at the expense of others. My starting point for this research was a curatorial relationship with a collection, and the experience of sharing it with others through the project *Mary Mary Quite Contrary*. It was the situated nature of the collection within the institution, and the creative response it generated, that led me to wonder about its collector, and in turn reflect on my own practice as both curator and subsequently researcher. In terms of a contribution to knowledge, this research seeks to recover a history that was not previously known and to consider the reasons why this might be so. A substantial part of this thesis thus focuses on piecing together this history. But it also seeks to reflect on the way this history sits in the present, and how its survival in the present might offer opportunities for the future. Bearing this in mind, and conscious of the way in which, as I have argued, objects have a tendency to get left behind, I have thus tried to balance the desire to tell a story while keeping the things themselves in view.

This causes some difficulties, particularly in places where 'then' and 'now' coincide, for example in relation to differences of terminology and title. This thesis refers to both Manchester City Art Galleries/Manchester City Galleries (the institution) and Manchester City Art Gallery/Manchester Art Gallery (the venue). I have used the historically appropriate title depending on the period under discussion. It will also be noted that the historical chapters

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<sup>116</sup> Bettina Harden, Hope family descendent, emails to Liz Mitchell, January 2013-September 2014; Michael Janes, Greg family descendent, emails to Liz Mitchell, January-August 2013.

refer to Mrs Greg, while Chapter Seven addresses her predominantly as Mary Greg. This was less clear cut. However, during the period of her association with Manchester, Mrs Greg consistently identified herself, and was addressed, by this formal title. For this reason it seemed appropriate to use this form of address. The imagined historical figure who emerged from the project *Mary Mary Quite Contrary*, however, was known as Mary Greg, or even just Mary. Thus the chapter follows suit. Further complications arise in relation to the objects themselves. For example, no images have been found of the collections that date from their early history in the museum. Thus the majority of object images in this thesis are recent or contemporary, including those that accompany historical chapters. Not only does this mean that the objects in the images are considerably older, and may be in considerably worse condition, than the 'same' objects as referred to in the text, but that the image context for them, their photographic presentation, is contemporary as well. Furthermore, a century of scholarship in art and design history and visual and material culture studies has inevitably led to a wealth of knowledge across the wide range of materials and object types that comprise the collection. The original attributions and descriptions that accompanied the objects on their arrival in the museum may now seem in some cases doubtful, in others plain wrong. Indeed, some have since been amended by successive generations of curators. However, I have stayed with these original descriptions, partly because my project is not to re-catalogue the collection, but also because I am interested in how they were interpreted and understood in their particular historical context. Furthermore, in the period since the collection's acquisition, Mrs Greg's own attributions have been gradually de-valued institutionally as anecdotal and/or unverifiable. However, this research has, in several cases, found connections that support the information originally provided, raising questions about the validity of different kinds of 'expertise'.

The main body of the thesis thus comprises a close investigation of the two historical collections which make up the Mary Greg Collection, within the context of both the history of the institution during the interwar period, and biographical research into Mary Greg herself. My focus, directed both by the things themselves and the narrative of the letters that accompany them, is on a body of collected objects as the fulcrum of a relationship between collector and institution, rather than the specific histories, uses and meanings of individual objects prior to their collection. I have thus focused primarily on their acquisition, interpretation and display during the period of Mrs Greg's involvement with Manchester City Art Galleries. Reflecting the way in which I have come to know Mary Greg, the findings of biographical research come after attention to the collection itself, considering how this may

add to an understanding of the collection rather than pre-empting it. The final chapter considers the re-emergence of interest in the collection at the start of the twenty-first century, situating its material encounter within a more theoretical analysis that draws on literature in the fields of collecting, museums, place and objects. This structure is 'bookended' by short reflections on encounters with particular objects, and interspersed with images that provide a visual counterpoint to the text, in an (albeit flawed) attempt to communicate something of the multi-sensory material qualities of the collection. Appendices include the collection inventory produced through this research, a list of all the institutions so far identified to which Mrs Greg donated objects, and copies of related publications and conference papers produced as a result of this research to date.

## Conclusion: situating the researcher

In qualitative research 'knowledge *building* is viewed as generative and process-oriented',<sup>117</sup> by which it is understood that knowledge does not sit 'out there' somewhere, waiting to be discovered, but rather emerges from the conditions and relationships within which the research takes place. Such research is often described as a 'bricolage', a patchwork configuration of 'inherited methodologies, methods, empirical materials, perspectives, understandings, ways of presentation, situated responsiveness, and so on into a coherent, reasoned approach to a research situation'.<sup>118</sup> It is thus inherently multi-disciplinary in nature, positioning the researcher as an instrument of the research, selecting from the inheritance of tools as seems appropriate. As Patricia Leavy comments, '[i]n qualitative research, we are not outside of our projects but located and shifting within them'.<sup>119</sup>

The most significant shift for me has been relinquishing a position of both privilege and responsibility in relation to institution and collection. The origin of the word curator is the Latin *curare*, meaning 'to take care of'. As Kate Fowle observes, this word evolved in English to mean 'guardian' or 'overseer', and from the mid-seventeenth century came to denote 'one in charge of a museum, library, zoo or other place of exhibit'. A curator, as Fowle states, 'is someone who presides *over* something - suggesting an inherent relationship between care and

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<sup>117</sup> Patricia Leavy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) p.3 [original emphasis].

<sup>118</sup> Thomas A. Schwandt, 'Bricolage/Bricoleur', *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* [3<sup>rd</sup> ed] (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Inc., 2007), <http://methods.sagepub.com.ezproxy.mmu.ac.uk/reference/the-sage-dictionary-of-qualitative-inquiry/n29.xml> [accessed 26 January 2017].

<sup>119</sup> Leavy, ref.117, p.1.



control'.<sup>120</sup> Having shed this role, I can theoretically turn back and 'look' at it from afar. And yet I cannot approach either the collection or the institution as objects that are entirely external to me. After two decades they are part of me; as Daniel Miller argues, 'things make people just as much as people make things'.<sup>121</sup> As this chapter has set out, much of my practical method in conducting this research is not so far removed from the kinds of task I used to undertake as a curator. Since beginning this research I have spent more, not less, time with the collection. But no longer accountable to the institution for its organisation, interpretation and safekeeping, the nature of this relationship is changed.

Carrying out this research then, is as much a matter of orientation as it is of method. It involves examining my own pre-existing knowledge, experience and assumptions, paying careful attention to the kinds of understanding afforded by the material and my actions upon it, and situating this within a wider contextual analysis of institutional frameworks and histories. Returning to John Shotter, it is considering 'how to 'orchestrate' or 'organize' the complex sequence of 'mental moves' required *within oneself*, if one is to 'see' (i.e., experience) what humanly matters in the sphere of one's investigations'.<sup>122</sup> Shotter differentiates between modes of understanding he calls 'aboutness' and 'withness'. In the former, research constitutes the analysis of subject matter into 'a set of systematically related, separate, self-contained parts, subject to a certain set of laws or principles governing how they combine into larger wholes'.<sup>123</sup> This description bears some similarity to classical museum traditions of collecting and organising objects/artefacts/specimens into categories and disciplines in order to produce knowledge. Withness-thinking, however, 'is a form of reflective interaction that involves our coming into living contact with the living (or moving) of an other or otherness'.<sup>124</sup> Withness involves an 'active interplay' with the materials of study, in which 'by our going out to meet them in this way and that, moving both up close and away, looking from this angle and that' an intimacy of understanding, a 'certain kind of *expressive-responsive* understanding'<sup>125</sup> emerges that is unavailable to the detached observer. Its focus is on relationality rather than separation.

By this thinking, the tools and materials of my research are the collection (its scope, material, condition, location), the institution (its spaces, buildings, people, records) and myself (my

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<sup>120</sup> Kate Fowle, 'Who cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today', in Steven Rand and Heather Kouris (eds.), *Cautionary tales: critical curating* (New York: apexart, 2010), p.10.

<sup>121</sup> Daniel Miller, ref.27, p.135.

<sup>122</sup> Shotter, ref.2, p.144 [original emphasis].

<sup>123</sup> Shotter, ref.2, p.133.

<sup>124</sup> Shotter, ref.2, pp.145-6.

<sup>125</sup> Shotter, ref.2, p.151.

personal and professional experience, knowledge, relationships, sensibilities). These are, at one and the same time, separate entities, complex assemblages of constituent parts, and an overall assemblage of inter-related parts. Spending time with the collection and its associated documentation, in the non-public spaces of the institution, its store rooms and archives, is a process in which all three come together. This much I did not notice when I did it every day as part of my job. Paradoxically, the act of stepping away enables a kind of return in which a different kind of awareness may emerge, through a re-focusing of attention not simply on the object before me, but on the subtle relationships of interaction between subject/object/place in the moment of encounter. Thus it is, perhaps, a seeking of critical *intimacy with*, as well as critical *distance from*, the collection in order to ‘see’ it anew.

This research has been conducted within the Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design (MIRIAD), Manchester School of Art’s postgraduate research department. Given the close connections with the School of Art generated by the project *Mary Mary Quite Contrary*, it seemed logical to pursue my research here. But more than I could have foreseen, MIRIAD’s multi-disciplinary environment has brought me into contact with artists and makers, art and design historians, archaeologists and anthropologists, all engaged in forms of research. What brings these disciplinary approaches together, for my purposes, is their varied but interconnected approaches to the situated relationship between people and the material world they inhabit. This has informed my thinking, my actions and my responses to the material of my research.<sup>126</sup> This thesis considers the relationships between particular people and things during the first half of the twentieth century. It does so primarily through a close consideration of the material traces left behind by those relationships in the present, and the subsequent contemporary relationships that such traces may foster. Thus the relationship between people and things, which forms the subject of this research, also informs its method.

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<sup>126</sup> Two collaborative peer-led projects during this period informed my thinking about collections and objects. In 2013-14, *Lost and Found* was a discussion group, exhibition and publication exploring personal relationships with material things. See Sue Blatherwick, Sara Davies, Jan Fyfe, LOkesh Ghai, Liz Mitchell, Sarbjit Kaur, Ralph Mills and Derek Trillo, *Lost and Found* (Manchester: authors, 2014). In 2015, *Adoptaslide* was a participatory online artwork exploring the slide collection of Manchester Art School’s Visual Resources Centre. See Sara Davies, Jan Fyfe, Kristin Marshall, Liz Mitchell and Ash van Dyke, *Adopt a slide: Celebrating the Visual Resources Centre at Manchester School of Art*, [www.pickaslide.wordpress.com](http://www.pickaslide.wordpress.com) [accessed 25 August 2017].



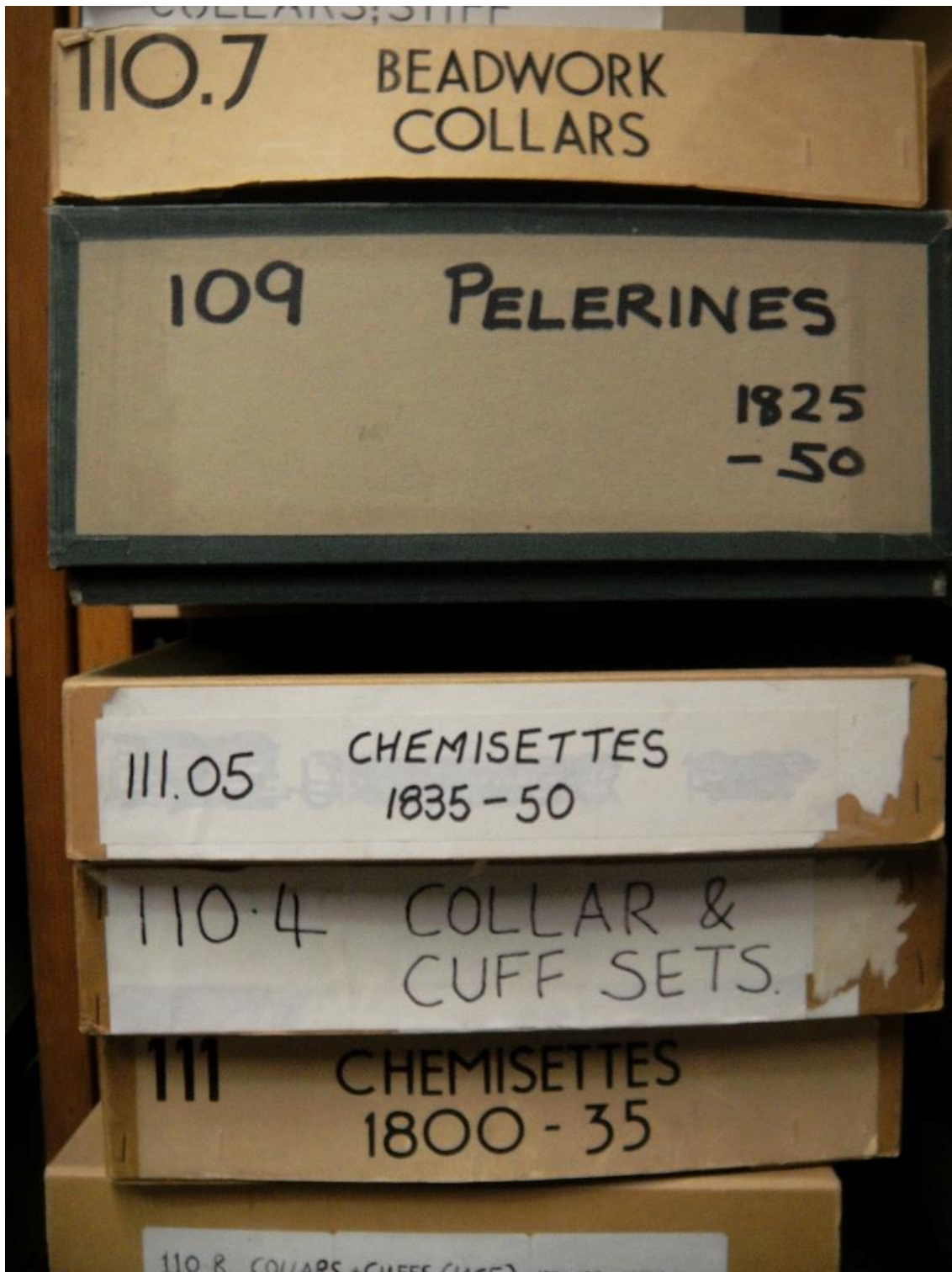


Figure 3.1: Storage in the attic at Platt Hall Gallery of Costume, 2014.

## Chapter Three

### 'The museum's abundance':<sup>1</sup>

### The Greg Collections and Manchester City Art Galleries

#### Introduction

In Chapter One of *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, Susan Pearce addresses the question 'what is a collection?'.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting the challenge of such definition, the discussion moves swiftly from *collection* to *collecting*, suggesting that the motivations and processes – personal, social, cultural and economic – by which bodies of objects are gathered into one whole are key to determining the meaning of that whole. Nonetheless, various attempts have been made at discerning rules that inhere within any body of accumulated objects sufficiently to identify them as a collection. Relationality is key: paraphrasing Durost's 1932 definition, Pearce establishes 'that collections are essentially composed of objects which bear an intrinsic relationship to each other in a sequential or representative sense'.<sup>3</sup> Connected to this is selection – the intentional inclusion (and thus exclusion) of particular things, each of which adds a new dimension to the web of relationships comprising the whole. The act of selection removes the chosen object from its utilitarian, everyday meaning in order to invest it with a special significance within this new set of relationships. Linking both of these is order, the ways in which the individual elements of a collection are arranged in order to manifest its internal relationships and overall meaning: Aristides described the collection as 'an obsession organized'.<sup>4</sup>

Collections can be amassed for private pleasure and for public display, sometimes for both. When a private collection enters a museum, what happens then? If, as Pearce suggests, the passage of a collected object into a museum represents a 'final step' in that object's life history, where 'the sacredness of collection becomes a kind of immortality',<sup>5</sup> it would be reasonable to assume that said collection might still be encountered, in much the same form, years after its entry to the museum. The Gallery of Craft & Design 'Mary Greg Collection'

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara J. Black, *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p.40.

<sup>2</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995) p.20.

<sup>3</sup> Pearce, ref.2, p.20.

<sup>4</sup> Pearce, ref.2, p.21.

<sup>5</sup> Pearce, ref.2, p.26.

display (2002-2014) and the project *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* (2006-2011) were both founded on a basic premise: the existence of a defined body of objects, collectively known as the Mary Greg Collection, given to Manchester City Art Galleries in 1922. However, as Pearce continues to argue, the shape and meaning of collections of material things are more complex and mutable than we tend to acknowledge. The particular characteristics of relationship, selection and order are not intrinsically embedded in the material content of the collection itself. They exist in the imagination of the collector, endorsed to a greater or lesser extent by the social consensus surrounding her/him. They are manifest in spatial arrangement and the interplay of juxtaposition, in the spaces between things as much as the things themselves. This renders the meaning and significance of collections vulnerable to change over time, particularly if the collector, at the centre of the collection's coherence, is no longer present.

Museums are no more static in their identity than collections. They may be defined by the practice of acquiring, preserving and making available collections,<sup>6</sup> but they are not simply buildings full of objects. Sandra Dudley and Kylie Message argue that museums are 'dynamic clusters of multiple relationships' – shifting networks of people, objects and places that 'produce, use, and attribute meaning to collections and their related infrastructures'.<sup>7</sup> Both the collection and the institution that houses it will not have the same meaning at the start of the twenty-first century as they did a century earlier. Even then, collection and museum will have held multiple, overlapping or contradictory meanings for the range of people who encountered them. Today, they are not even the same in a physical sense; most evidently for Manchester City Galleries in its consolidation of the city centre site and withdrawal from once integral suburban branch galleries. For the collection itself, changes to its spatial arrangement have been accompanied by the inevitable material decay of its content, notwithstanding the rigours of conservation and collections care.

Private collections given to a museum become part of a wider whole. Their internal integrity is ruptured as they become part of a larger body of collected things, centred no longer on the individual who first assembled them but on the institution which presides over them. Over time, the institutional collection further expands and relationships re-align themselves to accommodate new material. Significance shifts and knowledge changes. Even 'factual' information is re-calibrated as the standards and procedures of collections management

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<sup>6</sup> See the Museums Association definition of a museum, agreed in 1998. Museums Association, 'Frequently Asked Questions', no date, <https://www.museumsassociation.org/about/frequently-asked-questions> (accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Sandra Dudley and Kylie Message, 'Editorial', *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research*, 1 (1) (2013) p.1.



change, and received knowledge is passed down through generations of curatorial custodians. The Mary Greg Collection as encountered in the Gallery of Craft & Design from 2002-2014 comprised 38 objects out of what is now known to be a total of 2,289 accessioned items (Fig.3.2). These were selected through a process of exploration in storerooms coupled with database searches and the pre-existing knowledge of curatorial staff. We did not attempt an overview of the entire collection, but selected key objects that reflected what we thought we knew and that had the visual and material qualities to make an appealing display. It was only on beginning this research that the task of determining the full extent of the collection was first attempted. At this point it became clear that its dispersal across sites, departments and information systems was such that as an internally coherent, organized and documented body of inter-related objects it simply didn't exist. Furthermore, it quickly became evident from basic archive research that in 1922 there was no 'Mary Greg Collection' as such. As a distinct and titled entity within the wider collections of the institution, the Mary Greg Collection is a construct of curatorial interpretation. It emerged in 2002 as part of Manchester City Galleries, the re-titled, renewed and re-presented institution that replaced the old City Art Galleries.



Figure 3.2: Objects from the Mary Greg Collection on display in the Gallery of Craft & Design, 2014.



The material collectively known today as the Thomas and Mary Greg Collections was given to Manchester in stages, over a period of almost 30 years from 1922 until Mary Greg's death in 1949. Much of what is now known as the Thomas Greg Collection was first shown in Manchester in 1905, extending this process by a further 17 years. In total the Greg collections comprised approximately 3,650 objects,<sup>8</sup> some of which had been collected by Thomas Greg before his marriage, some by Mary Greg after her husband's death, and some by both of them during their married life. Within the museum this material was formalised into four separately titled sub-collections, identified not by individual collector but by the nature of their content. Over the intervening years these categories have shifted, their boundaries dissolving and re-forming to create two gender-differentiated collections. Thus the Thomas and Mary Greg Collections are, historically, inextricably intertwined.

This chapter, therefore, goes back to the early decades of the twentieth century to establish the historical circumstances in which the Greg collections first came to Manchester. Based primarily on archive documentation, it considers the attitudes, relationships and decision-making structures that made up the institution during a period of rapid and not uncontroversial development, and how these informed institutional collecting. It identifies key factors that informed the acceptance and positioning of the Greg collections within this context, most significantly changing attitudes towards decorative art in the museum and the development of 'branch galleries' as a way of both ameliorating overcrowding in the City Art Gallery and reaching wider audiences. A range of tensions and issues emerges from this, which arguably affected the subsequent trajectories of the Greg material and its reconfiguration in more recent times. The chapter sets these within wider social contexts, primarily that of the aftermath of the First World War, a period of slow and painful recovery from which, it was hoped, a new world might emerge, and in which the municipal art museum looked to re-define its founding purpose as a social and cultural force for good.

## **The function of art museums**

In 1922 Andrew Bonar Law was elected Conservative Prime Minister, in a general election that saw the collapse of the wartime Liberal-Conservative coalition and the rise of Labour as principal opposition party. Four years earlier, the extension of the franchise to men over 21 and women over 30 who met property-owning conditions, had seen the electorate triple from

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<sup>8</sup> This figure is based on allocated accession numbers. However, as many numbers were allocated to groups of objects, not all of which were individually listed and some of which are now lost, a more exact figure is likely to be higher but cannot be determined with any accuracy.

7.7 million to 21.4 million.<sup>9</sup> This was the second postwar election, following the 'khaki' election of December 1918, which had returned the charismatic David Lloyd George. Bonar Law was a more sober figure; his Election Address described the nation's 'crying need' for 'tranquillity and stability both at home and abroad'.<sup>10</sup> However, his administration also saw the introduction of stringent post-war spending cuts,<sup>11</sup> and can be seen as a key moment between the end of the war and the economic depression that followed. 1922 is also regarded as a pivotal year in cultural terms, the point of origin of certain phenomena that changed the cultural landscape forever. In this year, the founding of the BBC marked the start of network broadcasting and the potential to transcend the 'limitations of bodily materiality' through instantaneous communication across the globe.<sup>12</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski published *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, marking a radical shift in anthropology from the study of objects in museums to living cultures in the field.<sup>13</sup> Howard Carter first opened the tomb of Tutankhamun, just as a new nationalist government came to power in Egypt, prompting not only Western Egyptomania but also geopolitical conflict over ownership of the past.<sup>14</sup> It was the year of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*,<sup>15</sup> the 'twin towers at the beginning of modern literature; some would say of modernity itself'.<sup>16</sup> Ezra Pound proclaimed it 'Year One' of the truly modern era.

A year earlier, Lawrence Haward (1878-1957), Curator of Manchester City Art Galleries (Fig.3.3), had given a paper at the annual Museums Association conference. Haward was an active participant in national debate within the emergent museums profession and in art and design education. He too identified the moment as one of new beginnings. 'The Function of Art

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<sup>9</sup> UK Parliament, 'Representation of the People Act 1918', no date,

<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/parliamentary-collections/collections-the-vote-and-after/representation-of-the-people-act-1918/> [accessed 30 May 2017].

<sup>10</sup> Conservative Party Manifestos, '1922 Conservative Party General Election Manifesto: Andrew Bonar Law's Election Address', 2001, <http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1922/1922-conservative-manifesto.shtml> [accessed 29 June 2017].

<sup>11</sup> National Archives, 'Aftermath', *The First World War, Sources for History*, no date, [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/aftermath/brit\\_after\\_war.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/aftermath/brit_after_war.htm) [accessed 21 November 2013].

<sup>12</sup> Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p.16.

<sup>13</sup> North, ref.12, p.42.

<sup>14</sup> North, ref.12, pp.19-20.

<sup>15</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Paris: Sylvia Beach, 1922); Thomas Stearns Eliot, *The Waste Land* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1922).

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Jackson, *Constellation of Genius, 1922: Modernism Year One* (London: Hutchinson, 2012), p.1.

Museums’<sup>17</sup> set out his vision for the art museum in the modern age, one in which clarity of purpose, distinction of identity and the primacy of the art experience were key. For Haward, the art museum should be clearly distinguished from its close relatives, the technological, science and educational museums. While these might deal with the ‘historical, utilitarian, and pedagogic aspects’ of the arts, the art museum was to be primarily a place of aesthetic appreciation. Its role was to cultivate good taste in the visiting public, ‘to appeal to the average man’s latent aesthetic sense and to make him conscious of beauty so that he may love it and hate ugliness in all its forms’. This had significant wider social implications, for ‘to be sensitive to art is to be in a state of mind that is good, and to be in a good state of mind is to be a useful citizen, valuable to individuals and the State’.<sup>18</sup>

Haward’s argument was a development of the Ruskinian philosophy that had informed the foundation of Manchester City Art Gallery 40 years earlier. Indeed, he later acknowledged the debt to his predecessors, claiming that although Gallery policy had changed in the intervening years, ‘the aims of the group of men who first interested themselves in establishing a gallery in Manchester have been constantly borne in mind’.<sup>19</sup> The City Art Gallery had been created out of the declining fortunes of the Royal Manchester Institution (RMI). In 1882, the RMI offered its art collections and Mosley Street premises to the Manchester Corporation, to become the city’s municipal art gallery.<sup>20</sup> Proposals for a free art museum had first been made two decades earlier, prompted by the popular success of the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures exhibition. Like the Great Exhibition that inspired it, Art Treasures was a celebration of British industrial achievement and the transformation of wealth into culture.<sup>21</sup> However, by the 1870s, the negative impact of industrialisation was becoming a cause for concern. Anxiety over the growth of a large, potentially unstable underclass in Britain’s industrial cities led to an expansion of local government responsibility for the moral, social and physical wellbeing of its inhabitants.<sup>22</sup> Art was increasingly seen as a powerful force for good, through the provision of beauty as an antidote to the dehumanizing effects of industrial urbanization.<sup>23</sup> Art museums

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<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Haward, ‘The Function of Art Museums’, *The Museums Journal*, 21 (December 1921) pp.116-122, (January 1922) pp.135-141.

<sup>18</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.118-119.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Haward, ‘The Problem of Provincial Galleries and Art Museums with special reference to Manchester’, *The Museums Journal*, 22 (July 1922), p.11.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy Clifford, *A Century of Collecting 1882-1982* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1983); Michael Howard, *Up Close: Manchester Art Gallery* (London: Scala, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> The Museums Act of 1845, closely followed by the Public Libraries and Museums Acts of 1850 and 1855, enabled local authorities to establish their own museums.

<sup>23</sup> Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

provided an ideal site of 'rational recreation', in which serious and 'improving' leisure pursuits, centred on the civilizing effects of exposure to art, would provide working-class people with respite from the hardship of their lives and instil within them values of self-control and respectability.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, the overtly disciplinary regime of rational recreation was evolving into a model of active citizenship, in which social responsibility was increasingly located within the individual.<sup>25</sup> During the Edwardian era this was dominated by imperial themes, positioning Britain as the homeland of Empire and aligning civic responsibility with national patriotic duty.<sup>26</sup> Museums continued to position themselves as central to the development of a healthy citizenry, which would in turn make for a healthy nation. In 1912, Museums Association President Henry Balfour campaigned for a national folk museum on the basis of promoting 'love of country and pride of race'.<sup>27</sup> After the war, in the context of domestic recovery, Lawrence Haward located citizenship in terms of sensitivity to beauty. Haward had been appointed Curator in 1914, as war broke out. He remained in post for the duration of hostilities, during which time Manchester became a centre for the treatment of wounded and convalescent soldiers.<sup>28</sup> The Art Galleries' war effort included the provision of a sitting and reading room for Red Cross and military nurses and the development of an education programme to compensate for the requisition of 20 schools as military hospitals.<sup>29</sup> Haward's philosophy was arguably informed by this experience; in 1916 he observed that 'the value of art and indeed of all spiritual expression is enhanced and man's need for it increased when nations are engaged in the brute assertion of material strength'.<sup>30</sup> Six years later he likened the aesthetic sense to the ethical, 'inherent in us all' but only properly developed

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<sup>24</sup> Stuart Eagles, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914* (Farnham: Ashgate, Historical Urban Studies, 2005); Michael Harrison, 'Art and Philanthropy: T.C. Horsfall and The Manchester Art Museum', in A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts (eds.), *City, class and culture, Studies of cultural production and social policy in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp.120-142.

<sup>25</sup> Hill, ref.24, pp.145-152; Carole O'Reilly, 'From 'the people' to 'the citizen': the emergence of the Edwardian municipal park in Manchester, 1902-1912', *Urban History*, 40 (1) (2013) p.141.

<sup>26</sup> Brad Beaven and John Griffiths, 'Creating the Exemplary Citizen: The Changing Notion of Citizenship in Britain 1870-1939', *Contemporary British History*, 22 (2) (2008), pp.203-225.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Balfour, cited in Martin Myrone, 'Instituting English Folk Art', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 10 (1) (2009) p.30.

<sup>28</sup> F. A. Bruton, *A Short History of Manchester and Salford* (Manchester: Sherratt & Hughes, 1924) pp.287-288.

<sup>29</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1914-15*, MCG Archive. See also Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (Leicester: Leicester University Press: 1994) pp.82-85, for an account of this and similar wartime museum schemes.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Haward, *The Effect of War on Art and Literature: A Lecture delivered at the University of Manchester, February 28, 1916* (Manchester: Sherratt & Hughes, 1916), pp.16-17.

through 'rigorous exercise, which involves hard thinking and the constant challenging of accepted standards'.<sup>31</sup> He thus proposed an equally rigorous programme for the art museum. Displays should combine the different branches of artistic production into one harmonious whole, unencumbered by overcrowding or too much information – the role of the art museum was not the 'supply of shortcuts to history', nor the making of art 'palatable by giving it in tabloid form'.<sup>32</sup> It was to provide the visiting public with the best examples of artistic production, in an environment conducive to their proper appreciation. Give people a high standard, he argued, and they will soon accept nothing less.



Figure 3.3: *Lawrence Haward* (1878-1957), by Henry Lamb, c.1945. Manchester City Galleries 1945.288.

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<sup>31</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.136.

<sup>32</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.135.





Figure 3.4: *Advance Dressing Station on the Struma*, 1916, Henry Lamb, 1921. Purchased by Manchester City Art Galleries, 1921.4.



Figure 3.5: Mosley Street, Manchester, 1 April 1921. Manchester City Art Gallery is on the right.

## From 'old world' to 'new order'

Having established a blueprint for the ordered, harmonious and socially responsible art museum of the modern age, however, Haward continued with a wry acknowledgement that 'whilst the new order of things is being evolved on paper we have for the time being to deal with the old world as we find it'.<sup>33</sup> By 'old world' he meant the legacies of nineteenth century collecting. A further paper, given in 1922 at the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), developed this theme. Entitled 'The Problem of Provincial Galleries and Art Museums with special reference to Manchester',<sup>34</sup> it gave a lurid account of regional museums struggling with the chaos of inherited collections, indiscriminate in range and overbearing in nature. Haward described public spaces, corridors and storerooms 'blocked with certain ancient leviathans that uncoil their lengths upon the walls in the guise of battlefields, shipwrecked mariners, lighthouses, destructions of Sodom and Pompeii and so forth'.<sup>35</sup> While adhering to Ruskinian ideals of the restorative power of beauty in terms of the social purpose of the art museum, Haward was less enamoured of his predecessors' efforts to make it manifest. The Victorian municipal art collection was characterized by an approach that prioritised subject matter, narrative and, following Ruskin, the close observation of nature as a reflection of the divine.<sup>36</sup> Manchester's collecting during this period was dominated by Royal Academicians and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. When Lawrence Haward arrived in 1914, Clive Bell and Roger Fry had just introduced Britain to the work of the Post-Impressionists;<sup>37</sup> the discourse around art and beauty was changing rapidly, from the depiction of beautiful things to the material and visual expression of beauty itself.

Haward continued his critique in terms of what he saw as the art museum's haphazard approach to the collecting of decorative arts. He described the jumbled miscellany that was all too frequently the inevitable outcome:

...armour, pottery, savage weapons, electrotype coins, wood engravings, Indian mats and casts from the antique jostle each other and fight for precedence with samples from a dozen other byways of human knowledge – institutions which I

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<sup>33</sup> Lawrence Haward, ref.17, p.136.

<sup>34</sup> Haward, 'The Problem of Provincial Galleries and Art Museums with special reference to Manchester', *The Museums Journal*, 22 (July 1922) pp.8-13; (August 1922) pp.35-41; (September 1922) pp.81-85.

<sup>35</sup> Haward, ref.34, p.9.

<sup>36</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, pp.83-107.

<sup>37</sup> Fry and Bell organised the exhibition *Manet and the Post Impressionists* in 1910, followed by the *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition* in 1912, both held at Grosvenor Gallery in London. They are widely regarded as critical moments in the development of modern art in Britain.



ventured once elsewhere to say are “graced with the courtesy title of museums and are in reality little more than glorified curiosity shops”.<sup>38</sup>

His argument met with sympathy from fellow curators. Sir Whitworth Wallis, Curator of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, proposed that every curator should work to the motto ‘it is not what you accept that will make your art gallery; it is what you have the courage to refuse’.<sup>39</sup> Wallis was of an older generation than Haward; he had been appointed Birmingham’s first curator in 1885, and was thus, arguably, of the very ‘old world’ Haward was critiquing.<sup>40</sup> However, both men agreed on the problem of what Barbara Black has described as ‘the crushing burden of the museum’s abundance’.<sup>41</sup> In 1923, Tom Sheppard, Curator of Hull Museums, similarly wrote of the ‘tremendous strain, both mentally and physically’ of visiting the great national museums.<sup>42</sup> Paul Valéry, in ‘The Problem of Museums’, described being ‘lost in a turmoil of frozen beings, each of which demands, all in vain, the abolition of all the others’.<sup>43</sup> The enthusiasm with which the museums of the Victorian age had embraced the accumulation of material things had evaporated by the early 1920s, at least among those who sought to establish museum curatorship on a more professional basis, to the extent that Haward expressly envied those who had ‘the good fortune to have a comparatively clean slate’.<sup>44</sup>

Actually, the related issues of both eclectic collections and too much of them, had been a topic of debate for many years; Victorian commentators too were critical of the ‘curiosity shop’ model of collection and display.<sup>45</sup> As both Tony Bennett and Barbara Black identify, the Victorian museum was, from the start, a contradictory mix of encyclopaedia and spectacle, the rational and the sensational.<sup>46</sup> Its multiple and often contradictory projects – of producing knowledge through the scientific ordering of material things, of providing respite from an increasingly industrialised world, of improving standards of British design and manufacture, of

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<sup>38</sup> Haward, ref.34, p.10.

<sup>39</sup> Haward, ref.34, p.82.

<sup>40</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, p.30.

<sup>41</sup> Black, ref.1, p.40.

<sup>42</sup> Tom Sheppard, *The Place of the Small Museum* (Hull: Hull Museums Publications No.136, 1923), p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Valéry, cited in Black, ref.1, p.39.

<sup>44</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.137.

<sup>45</sup> George Gulliver, ‘On the Objects and Management of Provincial Museums’, *Nature*, 5 (9 November 1871), p.36; William Boyd Dawkins, ‘The Need of Museum Reform’, *Nature*, 16 (31 May 1877), p.78; Ant Fritsch, ‘The Museum Question in Europe and America’, *The Museums Journal* (offprint) (February 1904), p.252.

<sup>46</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Black, ref.1.

enhancing the prestige of city elites – were compromised as soon as they began.<sup>47</sup> In 1888, Thomas Greenwood expressed much the same horror as Haward, his ‘orderly soul’ despairing at the sight ‘of a Chinese lady’s boot encircled by a necklace made of sharks’ teeth’. Greenwood took solace, however, in the order and system he saw elsewhere, thanks to the ‘the democratic composition of the bodies responsible for governing those museums’.<sup>48</sup> Governance by committee, he believed, would prevent such foolishness and ensure a more scientific approach to museum collection and display. Thirty years later, Lawrence Haward took an opposing view.

Haward was Manchester City Art Galleries’ first independent appointment as Curator. He replaced the previous incumbent William Stanfield, an RMI man with no specialist art background,<sup>49</sup> after Stanfield’s death in 1914. Haward was 36 years old, a Londoner and a Cambridge graduate; he had studied art in Switzerland, been Librarian to the University of London and music journalist to *The Times*.<sup>50</sup> He brought an educated cosmopolitan outlook and ‘fresh impetus’ to the role.<sup>51</sup> Confident and articulate, Haward’s vision for the Galleries was predicated on curatorial authority, in which ‘the presence not merely of beauty but of order and controlling will must be felt’.<sup>52</sup> In ‘The Problem of Provincial Galleries’ he explicitly lamented the influence and purchasing power of inexpert elected committees, whose remit should be restricted to matters of general policy. ‘A decision as to any specific work’ he claimed, ‘more particularly a decision as to the relative merits of several different works, requiring, as it does, expert knowledge and taste, should never be made a matter of collective judgement’.<sup>53</sup> The question of decision making by committee had been raised previously in Manchester in 1894, when Art Galleries Committee member J. E. Phythian reported back on his meeting with Birmingham’s Whitworth Wallis. Wallis was of the view, supported by Phythian, that ‘there must be one man, the life and soul of the work, if a good collection is to be formed’.<sup>54</sup> Haward’s appointment in 1914 certainly marked a move in this direction. However, he was not, as is often commonly assumed, the Galleries’ first Director.<sup>55</sup> As Curator,

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<sup>47</sup> See also Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, and Hill, ref.24.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Greenwood, cited in Bennett, ref.46, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, p.159.

<sup>50</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, ‘Obituary: Mr Lawrence Haward’, 19 November 1957, p.19.

<sup>51</sup> MCG, *Annual Report 1914-15*, p.1. MCG Archive.

<sup>52</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.141.

<sup>53</sup> Haward, ref.34, p.37.

<sup>54</sup> Whitworth Wallis, cited in Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, p.94.

<sup>55</sup> Multiple publications refer to Haward as Director, for example, Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, p.160; Laura Gray, ‘Sydney Paviere and the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston’ in Kate Hill (ed.), *Museums and Biographies: Stories, Objects, Identities* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014) p.45; Timothy Clifford, ref.20, p.25. However, the post of Director did not come into being until 1948, at the insistence of

he was answerable to an actively involved Art Galleries Committee. Twenty-strong, the Committee comprised 13 elected councillors and a range of local elites including industrialists, artists and academics.<sup>56</sup> Key among these were Committee Chairman Councillor Frederick Todd (1860-1942) and Sir William Boyd Dawkins (1837-1929), previously Curator of the Manchester Museum and Professor of Geology at the University of Manchester.<sup>57</sup> Both men took a keen interest in the development of the Galleries' collections.

The early 1920s may thus be seen as a period of transition for Manchester City Art Galleries, in terms of identity, purpose and professionalism. It was changing from a Victorian municipal picture gallery with an overtly moralising agenda, to a modern, and modernist, space of aesthetic appreciation. Haward's appointment had been frustrated in its first years by wartime restrictions, but once these were lifted he lost no time in putting forward his vision for the future, one in which art historical knowledge and aesthetic appreciation would come to replace social reforming zeal as the organizing framework. However, such aspirations had to be negotiated, at least in the early years of his tenure, with the Art Galleries Committee, a body of mainly older men, some of whom had served on the Committee for many years and who had differing degrees of 'expert knowledge'. Curatorship as a recognised profession was still in its infancy. The Museums Association, founded in 1889, offered no training or qualifications, and as late as 1928, the Miers Report found that only 14% of museums had full-time paid curators.<sup>58</sup> Outside the capital these were often men 'appointed in middle age, without any previous training and experience'.<sup>59</sup> As a university graduate, Haward was an exception; his assistant William Batho was more typical, a council employee with no specialist art background beyond workplace experience. Batho had been Clerk to William Stanfield, Haward's predecessor, since the 1890s. He was promoted to Assistant Curator on Haward's appointment in 1914, a post he held until his death in 1937.<sup>60</sup> The dynamic between Committee, Curator and Assistant Curator, in terms of expertise, authority and ambition for the Galleries, would be central to the acquisition and subsequent organization and display of the Greg collections in Manchester.

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Haward's successor, David Baxandall. See 'Curator's Report to the Art Gallery Committee, 18 March 1948', Curator's Instruction Book 25, pp.207-208, MCG Archive.

<sup>56</sup> For example glass manufacturer Walter Butterworth; artist William Maxwell Reekie, O.B.E., and James Tait, F.B.A., Professor of Ancient and Medieval History at the University of Manchester. See MCAG, *Annual Report 1922*, MCG Archive.

<sup>57</sup> Geoffrey Tweedale, 'Dawkins, Sir William Boyd (1837-1929)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32750> [accessed 28 September 2017].

<sup>58</sup> Kate Hill, ref.24, p.62.

<sup>59</sup> Miers Report, cited in Kavanagh, ref.29, p.18.

<sup>60</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1913-14*, pp.1-2. MCG Archive.

## The Greg collections

Thomas and Mary Greg's association with Manchester City Art Galleries began in 1904, when Thomas Greg first offered his collections to the city (Figs.3.6-7). A full decade before Haward's appointment, this may account, in part, for why he appears to have had little direct involvement in negotiations for the acquisition of the collections, which were conducted almost entirely by Councillor Todd and Professor Boyd Dawkins, a family friend of the Gregs (Fig.3.8). In fact, in 'The Problem of Provincial Galleries', Haward gave an example of how, he believed, municipal museums had ended up in their present predicament:

Some wealthy citizen with an omnivorous taste for the arts amasses a big collection of miscellaneous objects, and with a fine public-spirited gesture bequeathes [sic] them to his native town. The town council, partly in the glow of righteous possession, partly to avoid seeming ungracious by picking and choosing, and perhaps, too, by way of encouraging others to do likewise, accept the gift *en bloc*, and what was confusion in the private house becomes worse confounded in the public gallery.<sup>61</sup>

This description bears remarkable similarity to the circumstances by which the Greg collections came to Manchester. Thomas Tylston Greg (1858-1920) had started collecting historical English pottery in the mid-1880s, at a time when few showed an interest in this relatively lowly form of ceramics.<sup>62</sup> Greg was a member of one of the major industrial families of the North West, the Gregs of Quarry Bank Mill, in Styal, Cheshire. Commercially successful cotton manufacturers, politically active and culturally well-connected, the Greg family exercised considerable influence within the city.<sup>63</sup> Thomas Greg did not live in Manchester, having inherited a family estate in Hertfordshire, but in 1904 had written to the Lord Mayor of Manchester to offer his substantial collection on loan to his native city. His offer was prompted by Manchester Corporation's stated commitment, two years earlier, to build a new museum and art gallery. Greg hoped to set an example, he explained, by which others too might be

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<sup>61</sup> Haward, ref.34, p.10.

<sup>62</sup> Late nineteenth century ceramics collecting focused almost exclusively on Chinese and European porcelain. Exceptions to this include Henry Willett, whose collection of pottery was given to Brighton Museum in 1903 and Lady Charlotte Schreiber whose collection mainly of porcelain also included examples of eighteenth century pottery. See Brighton Royal Pavilion & Museums, 'Willett Collection of Popular Pottery', 26 February 2015, <http://brightonmuseums.org.uk/discover/2015/02/26/willett-collection-of-popular-pottery-2/> [accessed 13 June 2017]. See also Ann Eatwell, 'Private pleasure public beneficence: Lady Charlotte Schreiber and ceramic collecting', in Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) pp.125-145.

<sup>63</sup> Mary B. Rose, *The Gregs of Quarry Bank Mill: The rise and decline of a family firm, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

persuaded to donate collections to the city. On completion of the new museum, he intended to make the loan a gift, and further suggested that more gifts would then be forthcoming:

...my wife who is also a Collector will, as well as myself, be ready to make over to the Museum Authorities if they desire it further groups of Medieval and other Antiquities and objects of interest which we have from time to time collected.<sup>64</sup>

The pottery collection duly went on display in the City Art Gallery in 1905, where it remained for the next 15 years. On Thomas Greg's unexpected death in 1920, however, the new museum remained unbuilt, and the question of the collection's ownership fell to his widow and executor, Mary Greg. Councillor Todd and Professor Boyd Dawkins embarked on immediate negotiations with Mrs Greg, attempting to persuade her that the pottery collection, by then a well-established and popular exhibit, should find its permanent home in Manchester.



Figures 3.6-3.8: Thomas Tylston Greg (1858-1920), date unknown; Mary Hope Greg (1850-1949), c.1922; Sir William Boyd Dawkins, MA, DSc (1837-1929), 1917.

Mrs Greg subsequently revived the issue of further collections that had been earmarked for the Galleries.<sup>65</sup> In December 1920, Boyd Dawkins visited Mrs Greg at Coles Park, her Hertfordshire home, to inspect the wider collections on offer. He reported back to Councillor Todd that the additional collections were both 'varied' and 'miscellaneous', and furthermore that:

Some are unsuited for the Art Gallery. Nevertheless I would advise you to accept what she offers with a view to the future exhibition in one or other of the

<sup>64</sup> Letter from Thomas Greg to Sir Thomas Thornhill Shann, Lord Mayor of Manchester, 17 June 1904, MCG Archive.

<sup>65</sup> See correspondence between Frederick Todd, Sir William Boyd Dawkins and Mary Greg, September 1920-February 1921, MCG Archive.

Manchester Institutions, of collections relating to applied industry and of anthropology.<sup>66</sup>

Two years previously, Boyd Dawkins had been instrumental in setting up a federation of Manchester museums and galleries, intended to establish complementarity between them and enable the free circulation of loans.<sup>67</sup> His recommendation to Councillor Todd would seem to have had this process in mind. The Art Galleries Committee subsequently accepted her offer; in the event, very little went elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> Thus, in September 1922, approximately 400 objects, under the collective title of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times, along with a further 50 objects titled the Greg Collection of Brass Tobacco Boxes, joined the 900 objects that comprised the Greg Collection of Early English Pottery, in the ground floor rooms of the City Art Gallery. Pottery from the medieval period to the early nineteenth century was joined by a range of archaeological, antiquarian and amateur craft objects including domestic utensils, clothing and textiles, pictures, ornaments and souvenirs, weights and measures, writing tools and documents, tobacco and snuff-related objects, games and puzzles. Mrs Greg subsequently offered the Galleries a fourth collection, explicitly of her own making. The Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses, which eventually totalled approximately 600 objects, was also accepted for the institutional collection. Comprising children's toys, books and miniature domestic objects, this was not shown in the City Art Gallery, but at Heaton Hall, one of several branch galleries situated in the city's suburban parks. The dolls' houses collection opened to the public at Heaton Hall in June 1922, followed in September by the newly combined Greg collections in the city centre. Over the next two years a series of modest catalogues was produced to accompany each of the four collections (Figs.3.9-10).

The new displays in the city centre excited much interest in the local press. 'Beauty of design, intricacy of workmanship, historical curiosity, educational value - every object has its reason for inclusion' wrote an enthusiastic *Manchester City News* reviewer. 'It is a very poor imagination that will not be stimulated by a review of the objects set out in the exhibition, many of which make the mind to leap centuries in comparison of what was then and what is now'.<sup>69</sup>

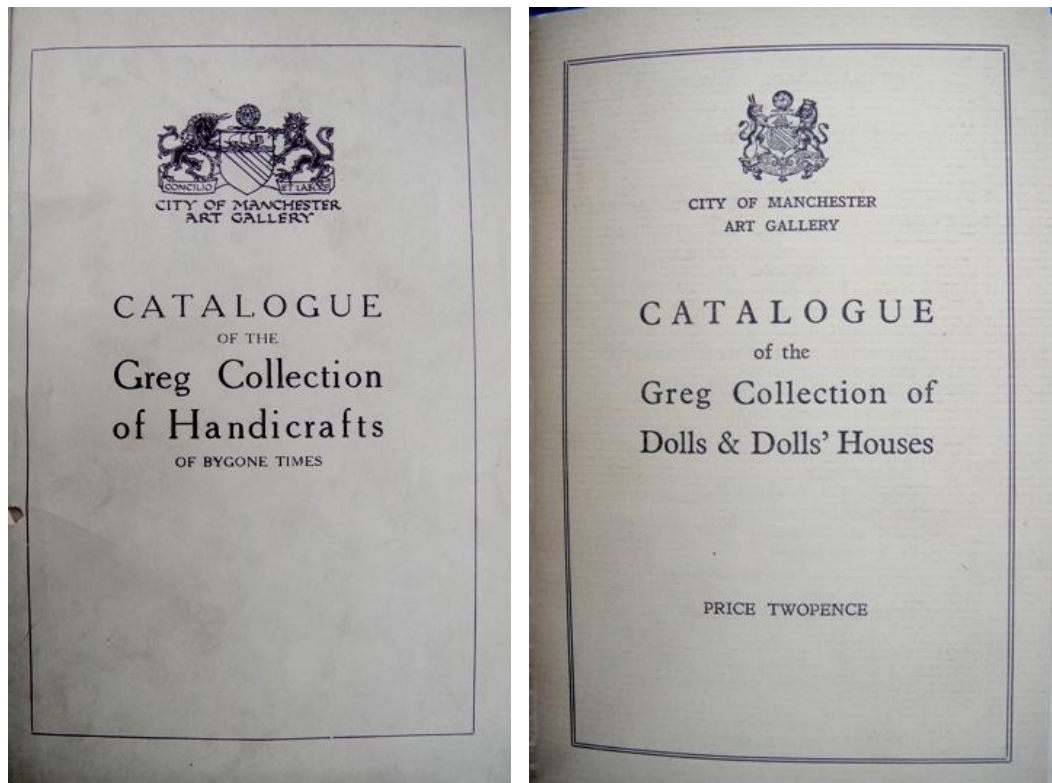
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<sup>66</sup> Memorandum from Sir William Boyd Dawkins to Councillor Frederick Todd, 7 December 1920, MCG Archive.

<sup>67</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1920*, p.5. MCG Archive.

<sup>68</sup> A 'very nice specimen of Platypus' was passed on to Manchester Museum. See letter from J.A. Coward, Acting Keeper, to William Batho, 9 January 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>69</sup> *Manchester City News*, 'A NEW EXBN \* GREG COLLN OF HANDICRAFTS', 9 December 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.



Figures 3.9-3.10: Catalogues of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times (1922) and Greg Collection of Dolls & Dolls' Houses (c.1936 [1924]).

Even so, the anonymous reviewer struggled to convey its scope:

Thumbscrews and bells, scarves and silhouettes, mirrors and parasols, waistcoats and earrings, lace and pedometers, fans and scissors, knucklebones and needlework, spoons and pipes, boxes and sundials, playing cards and glass harps, shirts and early manuscripts, all these and very many more figure in this fascination [sic] exhibition.<sup>70</sup>

This journalistic approach to listing implies an eclectic mix of riches in its deliberate pairing of apparently unrelated objects. The typographical error at the end also has the unintentional effect of making the writer appear punch-drunk, as if exhausted by so much stuff. The account paints a picture not so much of an aesthetically harmonious whole, but something more akin to Haward's 'glorified curiosity shop' than the Galleries had ever shown before.

In this vein, the *Evening Chronicle* reviewer, 'Philipant', was less enthusiastic, adopting a satirical tone in response to the collections' apparently absurd and repetitive excess of mundanity. His tongue-in-cheek descriptions of 'nutcrackers that never change' and 'thimbles through the ages' revealed to his readers that:

<sup>70</sup> *Manchester City News*, ref.69.



thimbles are much the same now as they were thousands of years ago, and Chinese girls use just the same sort of thimble as English girls use - or ought to use. Why is it? There must be a moral in it somewhere, if we could only think of it.<sup>71</sup>

The collections clearly generated public interest, even if, for some, this meant wondering what on earth all this stuff was doing in an art gallery. The dolls' house collection at Heaton Hall excited less press attention, possibly in part due to its location outside the city centre. Nonetheless, situated in Manchester's largest municipal park and opening to the public in time for the annual Whit public holiday, it received over 5,000 visitors in its first week and quickly became a popular attraction.<sup>72</sup> In the city centre, the Greg Room too proved popular; 63,730 visitors were recorded in the first seven months of 1923.<sup>73</sup>

In the context of Lawrence Haward's determined aesthetic vision for the Galleries, his rejection of the exhibition as history lesson, and Boyd Dawkins' reservations about the appropriateness of such material for an art gallery setting, however, the question does emerge as to why Manchester accepted the Greg collections in their entirety. It has been suggested that Todd and Boyd Dawkins were so anxious to secure the pottery collection for the city, that the handicrafts material at least was regarded as 'collateral damage'.<sup>74</sup> Writing to Mrs Greg in February 1921, Councillor Todd expressed his gratitude for the temporary waiving of her husband's original condition of gift; 'I was rather afraid, at one time, that it [the pottery collection] would be taken away from us. If it had been this would have been a great calamity because the citizens of Manchester have looked upon the Greg Collection, after so many years of exhibition in this institution, as belonging to the city.'<sup>75</sup> He made no reference to the other Greg collections. Six months later, in 'The Function of Art Museums', Haward wrote of the difficulty of conditional gifts and bequests, advocating that in future 'no personal or other consideration, not even the luxury of feeling grateful, should be allowed to weigh when acquisitions have to undergo the test of fitness for the collection'.<sup>76</sup>

It seems unlikely, however, that the collections were accepted merely out of courtesy or fear of offence. The proposal for a new museum had been prompted by issues of overcrowding in the RMI building, the non-pottery collections were substantial in their own right and, as will be seen, the Galleries continued to accept further gifts from Mrs Greg throughout the interwar

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<sup>71</sup> 'Philipant', 'CITY EXBN \* Some Irresponsible Comments', *Evening Chronicle*, 4 December 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 6 June 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 16 August 1923, MCG Archive.

<sup>74</sup> Discussion with Ruth Shrigley, Principal Manager: Collections Access, 29 October 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from Councillor Todd to Mary Greg, 7 February 1921, MCG Archive.

<sup>76</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.138.

period. Attention to developments in art, craft and design philosophy in the early decades of the twentieth century provides a clearer sense of the rationale for Manchester's collecting at this time. A closer examination of the development of the wider collection, particularly in the field of decorative art, situates the Greg collections across a series of inter-related debates: about the nature of art and aesthetic appreciation, about artefacts as evidence of human culture, about the usefulness of creativity in society.

## Decorative art and the municipal museum

Manchester City Galleries' collections today total approximately 50,000 objects, divided (according to the Manchester Art Gallery website) into three categories of Fine Art, Craft and Design, and Costume.<sup>77</sup> The collections have been classified in this way since the mid-twentieth century, the only difference being changes to the title of the middle category, from Applied or Decorative Art<sup>78</sup> to the recent, more contemporary-sounding Craft and Design. The shifting nomenclature of this middle category suggests a degree of instability as to its identity; each term has subtly different nuances. Decorative art is the term most consistently used throughout the Galleries' history (and thus the one I shall use) although, as will be seen, other terminology also comes into play. Isabelle Frank, in 2000, defined the plural of the term, 'decorative arts', as referring to:

all arts that, under various labels from the eighteenth century on, were excluded from the category of the fine arts (music, poetry, architecture, painting, and sculpture) but were nonetheless seen to possess their own distinctive artistic properties.<sup>79</sup>

As a definition by omission rather than inclusion, this too carries a degree of uncertainty. However, it offers a potentially appropriate way of considering the collections at Manchester City Galleries. Located in second place within the hierarchies of value the list implies, decorative art is situated somewhere between the non-utilitarian objects of fine art and the overtly functional category of clothing. This reflects John Potvin and Alla Myzelev's description of the applied art/decorative art/craft and design object as 'a liminal object which moves first between the rarefied realm of fine art and the mundane existence of everyday life, and second

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<sup>77</sup> Manchester Art Gallery, 'Our Collections', no date, <http://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/our-collections/> [accessed 5 June 2017].

<sup>78</sup> Howard, ref.20, p.14; Clifford, ref.20, p.22; S. D. Cleveland, *Guide to the Manchester Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Art Galleries Committee, 1956) p.5.

<sup>79</sup> Isabelle Frank (ed.), *The Theory of Decorative Art: An Anthology of European & American Writings, 1750-1940* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000) p.xi.

between the fine arts and non-arts'.<sup>80</sup> The content of the decorative art collection at Manchester is particularly wide-ranging. Unlike comparable institutions such as Birmingham and Liverpool, Manchester City Galleries did not develop as part of a wider museum service. Consequently, material that elsewhere might be categorised as history, archaeology or 'world cultures', has been categorised, in Manchester, as decorative art.<sup>81</sup>

The content of the decorative art collection has been organized in different ways throughout its history. It includes objects grouped by material – ceramics, glass, metalwork, ivories, enamels – and by object type – furniture, coins, armour. In previous periods, parts of it have been organised by geographical/cultural origin – 'oriental' collections – or by distance in time – antiquities. Objects have slipped into and out of these categories over time as attitudes have changed. During the first half of the twentieth century, costume was a subcategory of the decorative art collection, as it still is elsewhere;<sup>82</sup> arguably it is the collection's size, significance and discrete public identity, rather than intrinsic differences of content, that account for its treatment as a separate collection in Manchester. Reflecting Frank's definition, Manchester's decorative art collection has, in the past, acted as a catch-all category for anything that didn't fit elsewhere.

The identity and purpose of decorative art was a key debate within the nineteenth century municipal art museum. It was connected primarily to the improvement of British standards of design. The provision of examples of good design for study by local manufacturers and craftsmen, it was argued as early as 1836, would have direct economic benefits to the country through the improvement in quality of British manufactured goods.<sup>83</sup> In 1852, Henry Cole's founding of the Museum of Manufactures (which later became the Victoria & Albert Museum) established the model for decorative art collections in museums as part of a wider set of educational tools along with government-established schools of design.<sup>84</sup> The argument for collecting what was increasingly called 'industrial art' was based primarily on the training of artisans and designers. As Robert Snape argues, however, this set up a potential conflict of

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<sup>80</sup> John Potvin and Alla Myzelev (eds.), *Material Cultures, 1740-1920: The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) p.1.

<sup>81</sup> See for example Birmingham Museums, 'Collection', no date, <http://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/collection> [accessed 07 June 2017].

<sup>82</sup> Birmingham Museums, ref.81.

<sup>83</sup> Select Committee on Arts, *Report from the Select Committee on Arts and their Connexion with Manufactures*, 1836 (London: House of Commons, 1835-6).

<sup>84</sup> Anthony Burton, *Vision & Accident: The Story of the Victoria & Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publications, 1999).

purpose within the art museum, between art as the realm of spiritual contemplation, and art in the service of the very commerce from which it offered an escape.<sup>85</sup>

In Manchester in 1882, it also raised the question of whether the art museum was primarily a resource for the local population or a symbol of civic prestige in the wider world. Should the newly founded Gallery prioritise the well-established RMI programme of high profile contemporary fine art exhibitions, promoting the city's cultural credentials and ridding it of 'lingering associations with...excesses of poverty and urban misery'?<sup>86</sup> Or should it prioritise the education of the local working populace, supporting business and improving the lives of its citizens? While one might expect Manchester, as the centre of the textile industry, to have focused on developing both fine and industrial art collections from the outset, as indeed Birmingham did,<sup>87</sup> this was not the case. In spite of the efforts of Ruskinian reformers Thomas Horsfall and Charles Rowley in this direction, the only industrial art acquisition during this period was the purchase of the Bock textile collection in 1883. Displayed for a short period in the ground floor galleries of the RMI building, by 1898 it had been transferred to the Manchester School of Art; no further attempts to develop an industrial art collection were made until well into the twentieth century.<sup>88</sup> However, between 1882 and 1922, the Art Gallery did form a decorative art collection, primarily though not exclusively through the donation of private gifts. Small acquisitions included a group of contemporary Minton ceramics in 1884 and three years later, a collection of Dutch delftware, given by Committee member Alderman Philip Goldschmidt. It was the arrival of the Greg Collection of Early English Pottery in 1905, however, that marked the decisive expansion of the collections into the arena of decorative art. Informed by plans to develop a more comprehensive museum service within the city, this was in a very different vein to the concept of industrial art. It caused considerable consternation among those who had championed such developments in the preceding years.

## The Greg Collection of Early English Pottery

By 1901, the expanding art collections had filled up the Mosley Street premises. Furthermore, unlike comparable cities such as Birmingham and Liverpool, Manchester had not developed a

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<sup>85</sup> Robert Snape, 'Objects of utility: cultural responses to industrial collections in municipal museums 1845-1914', *museum and society*, 8 (1) (2010) pp.18-36.

<sup>86</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, p.101.

<sup>87</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, pp.93-97.

<sup>88</sup> The acquisition was initiated by the South Kensington Museum, seeking an appropriate home for the collection on behalf of Franz Bock. William Morris wrote in support of the acquisition by Manchester as potentially providing 'the nucleus of a Museum of Textiles'. See Frances Pritchard, 'Medieval Textiles in the Bock Collection at the Whitworth Art Gallery', *Textile History*, 32 (1) (2001) pp.48-60.

combined museum and art gallery service. The following year, the Corporation acquired the site of the old Manchester Infirmary on Piccadilly, and a scheme was proposed for a new civic complex comprising an expanded art gallery, museum and free library. The new complex would unite the city's diverse cultural bodies and enable the Art Gallery to expand its remit beyond painting and sculpture (the focus of the RMI), to include industrial art and historical objects.<sup>89</sup>

The Corporation's ambitions were almost certainly informed by contemporary developments in anthropology and folklore studies, which offered another perspective on decorative art in the museum. In 1905, the Art Galleries Committee embarked on a European research tour, taking in the museums of Munich, Berlin, Dresden, Cologne and Amsterdam. Both the Lord Mayor and Committee Chairman William Butterworth were particularly inspired by the Bavarian Kunstgewerbe Museum: 'it takes in the whole recorded history of the people; everything that has occupied the minds of the people of Bavaria through the centuries'.<sup>90</sup> Press coverage of the tour described the museum as 'typical of the new attitude to art which is being adopted by the German people',<sup>91</sup> combining fine art, industrial art and vernacular or 'folk' art. Folklore studies in Britain emerged from the nineteenth century development of anthropology, archaeology and antiquarianism as distinct but inter-connected disciplines founded on the study of material artefacts.<sup>92</sup> It was also rooted in an Arts and Crafts focus on pre-industrial craft practices and preservation of the material past, as espoused by William Morris and John Ruskin.<sup>93</sup> Raphael Samuel has described the emergence, during the 1870s and 1880s, of the concept of 'Social England', 'a history of everyday things, or "natural" history, a history with the politics left out, but with material culture, in the form of recipes, charms and cures, household chores, affectionately described'.<sup>94</sup>

Whether the museum was the place for such things was debatable, however. In 1893 Arts and Crafts architect John Sedding, writing on 'The Handicrafts in Old Days' had argued that:

a museum was not the place for us. For the handicrafts were cultivated in old days for the adornment of human life, and to add to the pleasurable of home; and

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<sup>89</sup> MCAG, *Special Report on the Infirmary Site, 1906*, MCG Archive.

<sup>90</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'Art Galleries Abroad: Hints for Manchester', 29 April 1905, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>91</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, ref.90.

<sup>92</sup> Oliver A. Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals and the Neo-Archaic, The Materialist Character of Late Nineteenth Century Homeland Ethnography', *Museum History Journal*, 4 (2) (2011), pp.223-244.

<sup>93</sup> Martin Myrone, ref.27; Siân Jones, 'Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity', *Journal of Material Culture*, 15 (2) (2010) pp.181-203.

<sup>94</sup> Raphael Samuel, cited in Myrone, ref.27, p.29.

a museum fails to convey this fact. A museum is a place for odds and ends; for things that have drifted; for the flotsam and jetsam of the wrecked homes of humanity, and the major part of the apparatus of home-life; the home itself is not there.<sup>95</sup>

Nonetheless, initiatives such as the Peasant Arts Society, established in Haslemere, Surrey, in the 1880s, brought together craft practice with the private collecting of European 'peasant' artifacts, leading to the foundation of the Peasant Handicrafts Museum (later Art Museum) in 1910.<sup>96</sup> Ethnographic collections such as the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, founded in 1884, included material from both geographically and temporally distant cultures and those closer to home, organized in such a way as to demonstrate the evolutionary progress of culture.<sup>97</sup> During the early twentieth century this evolved into the campaign for a national folk museum, spearheaded from 1901 by Henry Balfour, Curator of the Pitt Rivers and latterly President of the Museums Association. In 1912, he was at the head of a group of museum professionals who wrote an open letter to *The Times*, arguing for the national importance of providing 'a ready means of comparing the conditions of life and the aesthetic perceptions of the people at various former periods with those of the present'.<sup>98</sup>

Inspired by the German model, something similar had been suggested in Manchester in 1905. On this basis, Thomas Greg offered his pottery collection, outlining a vision of the new museum as:

...a public building containing under one roof natural objects, objects of art and objects of handicrafts of by-gone times, neither wholly artistic nor wholly scientific - a museum where men and women of multifarious interests, and of no interests at all, might have their sense of wonder, which is the protoplasm of education, aroused and quickened.<sup>99</sup>

Greg's invocation of the sense of wonder harks back to the celebratory enthusiasm with which Victorian collectors and museum makers attempted to bring all the world under one roof in the universal survey museum.<sup>100</sup> His comments also situate the collection somewhere between 'art' and 'science', not quite fulfilling the requirements of either. It was not a gift for the

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<sup>95</sup> John Sedding, *Art and Handicraft* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trünner, 1893) p.57.

<sup>96</sup> Alla Myzelev, 'Collecting peasant Europe: peasant utilitarian objects as museum artifacts', in John Potvin and Alla Myzelev (eds.), *Material Cultures, 1740-1920: The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) pp.171-190.

<sup>97</sup> Douglas, ref.92.

<sup>98</sup> Henry Balfour, cited in Myrone, ref.27, p.30.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, *A Contribution to the History of English Pottery* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1907) pp.i-ii.

<sup>100</sup> Black, ref.1.

narrow purposes of design education, nor simply aesthetic contemplation. *The Manchester Guardian*, however, applauded it in explicitly aesthetic terms, drawing attention to the ‘strong, hearty colours of cauliflower ware’ and ‘wonderfully finished reliefs’ of salt-glazed stoneware as ‘filling a blank in the Manchester art collections’ (Figs.3.11-16). Furthermore, its patriotic evocation of British history was reflected in the creamware figure of a ‘gallant brown-flecked trooper’ (Fig.3.17) and commemorative portraits of ‘the Great Admiral Vernon and redoubtable Commodore Brown’. A connoisseurial tone runs throughout the article, describing individual objects as ‘fine examples’ and ‘rare specimens’, comparing them favourably to collections at both the South Kensington and British Museums.<sup>101</sup>

However, once on display, the collection prompted an alarmist response in the *Manchester Evening News*, which stressed the necessity of differentiating art objects from historical ones:

Few of the examples have even considerable beauty; not a few of them are decidedly ugly; some are mere freaks. This must be borne in mind, otherwise such a collection may do more harm than good. It may be described as belonging to the natural history of art. Nature provides for the survival of the fittest. The unfit are killed off.<sup>102</sup>

The article warned of the threat posed to the Gallery’s ‘confiding public’ if it encouraged aesthetic admiration of material which, in artistic terms, deserved unequivocal condemnation. Charles Rowley, who had previously championed decorative art collecting by the Gallery, was particularly horrified, writing to *The Manchester Guardian* in December 1905:

In nearly every instance it is bad in design, workmanship, colour and utility, no piece childlike, with the charm of native pottery; it is all childish. The place for it, if shown at all, is somewhere in the Potteries, so that it be carefully labelled as classics of what to avoid.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, ‘Mr Greg’s Gift’, 4 April 1905, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>102</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, ‘Mr Greg’s Gift of Pottery’, 18 November 1905, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>103</sup> Charles Rowley, letter to *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 December 1905, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.





Figures 3.11-3.16: Objects from the Greg Collection of Early English Pottery (left to right, from top): moneybox, lead-glazed earthenware, 16<sup>th</sup> century (1923.112); caudle cup, slipware, 1700 (1923.176); plate, delftware, 1688 (1923.248); teapot, salt-glazed stoneware, 1740s (1923.447); teapot, lead-glazed earthenware, 1760s (1923.656); jug, printed and painted earthenware, c.1824. (1923.971).



Figure 3.17: Figure of a horseman, creamware, 1760s (1923.704).

The ferocity of this response suggests a fundamental conflict over the purpose and identity of decorative art within the museum, and over criteria of aesthetic value. The collection marked a significant departure in the Art Gallery's collecting practices. For some, this undermined the basis on which they had campaigned for the Gallery's very founding: the provision of Manchester's working population with an object-lesson in beauty and good design, based on a classical model. The coarseness of medieval English earthenware did not compare well, on this model, with Italian Renaissance maiolica or Greek Attic vases.<sup>104</sup> As art, the collection was deemed so dangerous that both the *Manchester Evening News* and Charles Rowley recommended certain pieces be locked away, accessible only to those with sufficient expertise to interpret them correctly. As the *Manchester Evening News* suggested, that interpretation should be an explicitly ethnographic one.

The collection's existence was justified in evolutionary terms, as a linear progression from the crude to the sophisticated. The paradigm of progress, from the past to the present, from the primitive to the civilised, had become central to the classification and arrangement of ethnographic material in museums during the late nineteenth century.<sup>105</sup> Evolutionary models of display, first seen in natural history collections, were increasingly applied to rapidly expanding ethnographic collections.<sup>106</sup> Thomas Greg's pottery collection did not contain the artefacts of geographically distant foreign cultures; it was 'English'. But the nature of its contents did not fit with classical concepts of beauty and aesthetic refinement. Temporal rather than geographic distance had to be invoked, to render the alarmingly 'primitive' nature of some of its contents palatable. J. F. Thorpe, of the University of Manchester, thus emphasised the collection's demonstration of innovation, experimentation and development, as 'a chapter in our national history of which we can all be justly proud'.<sup>107</sup> This also helped to realign its relationship with design education in terms of a pioneering national spirit.

Martin Myrone has observed a shift in the interpretation of folk art objects during the twentieth century, from the ethnographic to the aesthetic.<sup>108</sup> No images of the 1905 display survive, but press coverage suggests it was a chronological arrangement of objects in cases. As Kate Hill has observed, 'for art galleries, the practice of hanging in chronological order of schools was now seen as the correct pedagogical strategy, but for archaeological and,

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<sup>104</sup> Rowley, ref.103.

<sup>105</sup> Alison Petch, 'Muddying the Waters: The Pitt-Rivers Collection from 1850-2011', *Museum History Journal*, 4 (2) (2011), pp.161-180; Bennett, ref.46.

<sup>106</sup> Hill, ref.24, p.114.

<sup>107</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 December 1905, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>108</sup> Myrone, ref.27.

especially, ethnographic objects, there was little precedent, and it was not entirely clear how objects designed to illustrate the principles of design should be displayed'.<sup>109</sup> While attempts to justify the Greg collection in evolutionary terms would appear to support Myrone's argument, its placement within the City Art Gallery and its conflicted identity as both art and ethnography, suggest this transition was not so straightforward.

If the purpose and identity of the Greg Collection within the Art Gallery was unclear in 1905, by 1920 it had become a much-valued asset, indicated by Councillor Todd's correspondence with Mrs Greg.<sup>110</sup> Annual visitor figures for the Greg Room were regularly around 25 per cent of the total number of visits.<sup>111</sup> Subsequent gifts and bequests had established the beginnings of a broader decorative art collection that focused on the connoisseurial and the antiquarian, including historical European porcelain, silver, glass and furniture, Asian ceramics and metalwork, and a small amount of contemporary art pottery. In addition, the immediate aftermath of the First World War saw a renewed interest in the role of industrial art.

## Industrial art and craft revival

In 1918, the Art Galleries Committee revived the question of industrial art, aligned directly to post-war economic recovery:

The importance of industrial art in this country has hitherto been too little appreciated. One result of the war has been to stimulate a number of public men to take up the question in order that we may in future be organised as France and Germany have been in the past, for the closer co-operation of designer and manufacturer.<sup>112</sup>

They were referring to the work of the Design and Industries Association (DIA), founded in 1915 on the model of the Deutsche Werkbund, itself a response to the British Arts and Crafts Movement. The DIA was formed by disaffected members of the Arts and Crafts Society, in response to its perceived failure to engage with industry and its growing detachment from the design reform agenda that had informed its beginnings. It had become insular, anti-commercial and overly focused on the designer-craftsman.<sup>113</sup> Instead, the DIA aimed to improve the quality and efficiency of British design through the engagement of craft sensibilities with industrial production. Alongside this, the Arts and Crafts philosophy of hand-

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<sup>109</sup> Hill, ref.24, p.113.

<sup>110</sup> See ref. 75.

<sup>111</sup> MCAG, *Annual Reports 1905 –1923*, MCG Archive.

<sup>112</sup> MCAG *Annual Report 1918*, p.5-6, MCG Archive.

<sup>113</sup> Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999), pp.15-27.

making as a source of personal fulfilment had, around the turn of the century, informed the development of handicraft as an educational and uplifting leisure pursuit in its own right.<sup>114</sup> In the aftermath of the war, handicraft was thus deployed as both a therapeutic practice for convalescent soldiers and a possible means of their future employment through the setting up of craft workshops. Similarly, developments in contemporary art began to blur the boundaries between art, craft and design. Roger Fry's Omega Workshops, established in 1913, invited contemporary artists to experiment with design for production, 'allowing free play to the delight in creation in the making of objects of common life'.<sup>115</sup> Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Wyndham Lewis numbered among its members, producing expressive abstract painterly designs in textiles, ceramics and furniture. The project was short-lived but marked the start of a period in which art and design became more closely connected. Such developments enabled Lawrence Haward to re-interpret aspects of the decorative art collection in terms of the aesthetic appreciation of formal qualities. In 1921, in a direct reference to the Greg pottery collection, he thus spoke expressively of 'the liquid curve of a Sung bowl...the piquant rococco [sic] charm of a Dresden shepherdess' and 'the sturdy humour of a Toft dish'.<sup>116</sup> Three years later, arch-modernist Herbert Read would similarly claim that 'pottery is plastic art in its most abstract essence'.<sup>117</sup>

The resurgence of interest in industrial art and, more specifically, in craft practice as a source for both contemporary design and fine art offers an important context for the wider Greg collections. The philosophy of the DIA looked to the past to inform an economically viable approach to the future, bringing together aspects of nineteenth century design reform and the growing interest in folk art and national identity. In 1916, Harry Peach, one of its founding members, drew on the Werkbund philosophy of excellence in everyday articles to propose a shift in the collecting and display programmes of museums. He described the Werkbund's exhibitions strategy:

When these collections are on loan in a town the local museum endeavors to supplement them with specimens from its own collections illustrating the old as linking up with the new, not with the "museum specimens," but with the everyday article of the past. Some of us rather feel that the term "museum specimen"

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<sup>114</sup> Pat Kirkham, *Harry Peach: Dryad and the DIA* (London: The Design Council, 1986) p.70.

<sup>115</sup> Omega Workshops brochure, cited in Harrod, ref.113, p.20.

<sup>116</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.119.

<sup>117</sup> Bernard Rackham and Herbert Read, *English Pottery* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1924), p.4.

needs suppressing. We have had too much of it; it is too far removed from every-day life to be of use or inspiration to the ordinary craftsman.<sup>118</sup>

Peach was the founder of Dryad Handicrafts, which promoted hand-making as a hobby throughout the interwar period. He went on to form his own substantial study collection of craft objects from all over the world, a collection which had parallels with the Greg handicrafts collection.<sup>119</sup> Manchester formed the first regional branch of the DIA in 1915, with both Lawrence Haward and Councillor Todd on its founding committee. Manchester supported the DIA strategy of exhibitions, hosting several overtly pedagogical shows over the next four years that included *Commercial Printing* (1917), *Textiles* (1919) and *Cottage Furniture* (1919).<sup>120</sup> However, these were not explicitly linked to the permanent collection. The identity of applied art in the museum was still contentious; Thomas Greg was as dismissive of industrial art as Rowley had been of historical pottery, commenting disparagingly on the Cottage Furniture exhibition, that it resembled nothing so much as a 'Tradesman's Advertisement show'.<sup>121</sup>

Haward and Todd were, however, formulating the beginnings of what would become a key feature of the Galleries' interwar collecting. In 'The Function of Art Museums', Lawrence Haward had set out his aim of awakening the 'latent sense of beauty' he believed was in all people. Central to this was the provision of beautiful surroundings in all aspects of life, not just in the rarefied halls of art. He thus argued that modern art galleries 'which at one end of the scale include the rarest and most precious treasures devised for man's pleasure, at the other end should not neglect the simplest and humblest objects of every-day use'.<sup>122</sup> He further explained:

Art Museums should in fact make it a feature of both their exhibitions and of their various forms of cultural propaganda to include in their survey good designs in all the things that confront us in our daily work – in furniture, crockery, metal-work, textiles, printing, and so forth. For it is of little use to ask the average man (or indeed anyone else) to keep his mind sensitive to the beauty of ancient Greece or Italy if we do nothing to help him have good well-designed things around him at home in his private life. Art, like charity, should begin at home.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Harry Peach, 'Museums and the Design and Industries Association', *The American Magazine of Art*, 7 (5) (1916), p.198.

<sup>119</sup> Kirkham, ref.114, p.84.

<sup>120</sup> MCAG *Annual Reports 1918-1919*, MCG Archive.

<sup>121</sup> Letter from Thomas Greg to Art Galleries Committee Chairman Frederick Todd, 10 August 1919, MCG Archive.

<sup>122</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.121.

<sup>123</sup> Haward, ref.17, pp.120-121.

It took another nine years for this philosophy to be put into practice in terms of collecting, but in 1930 the Galleries embarked on the creation of a dedicated Industrial Art Collection. The Industrial Art Collection was to include examples of contemporary mass-produced ceramics, glass, furniture, textiles and commercial print, acquired directly through gifts and purchases from manufacturers (Figs.3.20-24). Its stated aim was to improve standards of taste and design awareness in the buying public, through which manufacturers would be forced to improve the quality of their products.<sup>124</sup> This suggests a changing, if conflicted, relationship between the art museum and the outside world. If, as Amy Woodson-Boulton argues, the Victorian art museum deployed beauty as an escape from the inevitable ugliness of the industrial world, framing the museum as a space apart, then initiatives such as the Industrial Art Collection offered a direct challenge to such inevitability, by engaging directly with it. At the same time, however, an increasing focus on formal art appreciation and art historical narrative, replacing the Victorian emphasis on narrative subject matter, was setting up the art museum as a space apart in a different way, in terms of the modernist notion of art's autonomy.

The acquisition and development of the Greg Collections of Handicrafts of Bygone Times and Dolls and Dolls' Houses through the 1920s and into the 1930s coincides with the development of a DIA-inspired Galleries policy of collecting and displaying well-designed contemporary 'everyday things' (Figs.3.18-19).<sup>125</sup> As the following chapter will demonstrate, the content of the Greg collections might well be described in terms of Harry Peach's account of 'every-day articles of the past', the 'non-museum specimen' quality of which he explicitly praised in 1916 as a valuable comparator to those of the present. Lawrence Haward's 1921 reference to 'the simplest and humblest objects of everyday use' also resonates with Mrs Greg's later description of her collecting interests in terms of 'things of the least'.<sup>126</sup> However, although they developed to some extent in parallel, there was never any overt connection made between the Greg collections and the collecting of contemporary everyday things. In fact, by the time the Galleries launched the Industrial Art Collection initiative, the non-pottery Greg collections were no longer displayed in the City Art Gallery.

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<sup>124</sup> Jane Fraser and Liz Paul, 'Art, Industry and Everyday Things: Manchester City Art Gallery and Industrial Art Between the Wars' *The Decorative Art Society Journal*, 22 (1998), pp.43-57.

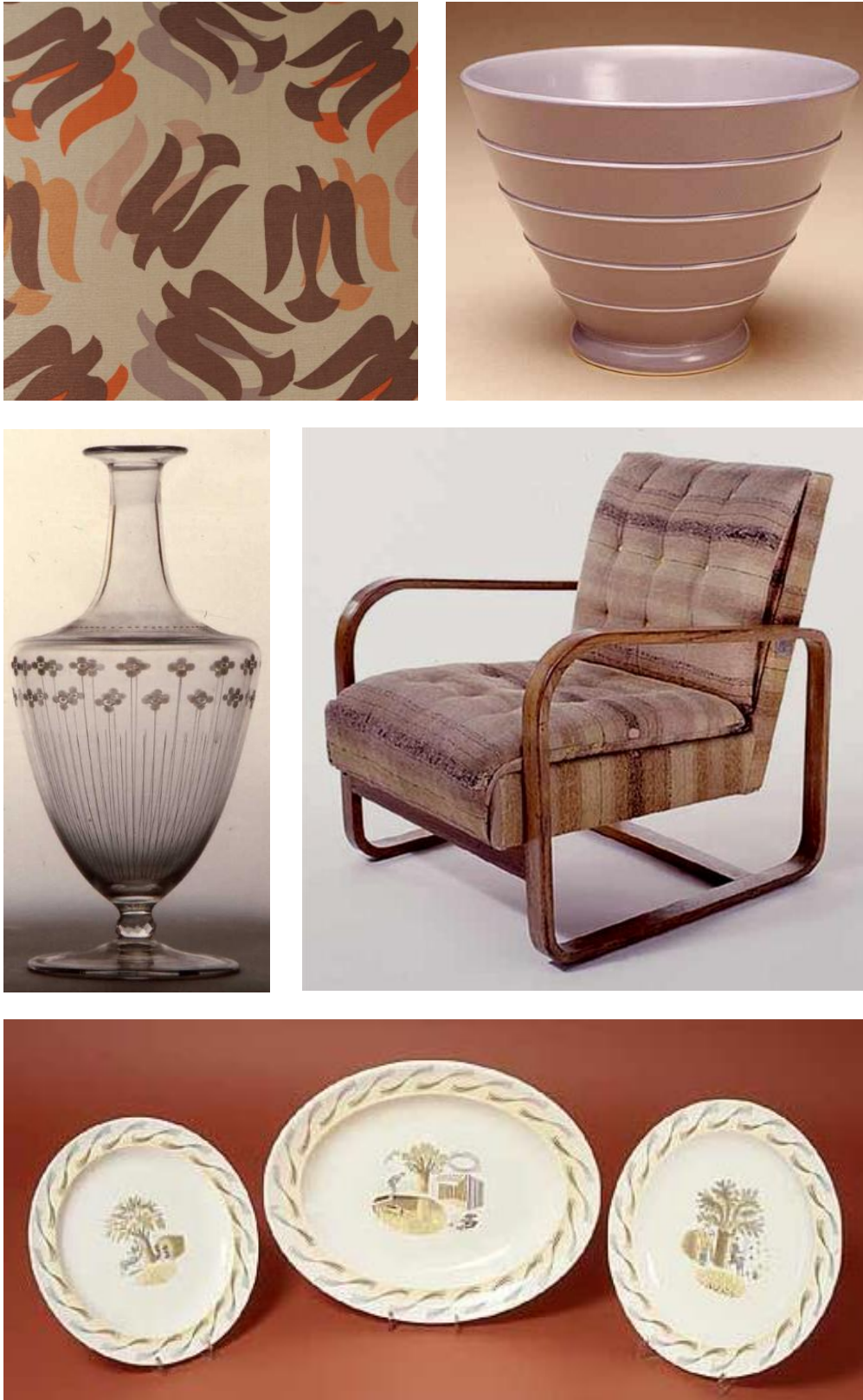
<sup>125</sup> The title of a 1936 RIBA-organised exhibition of contemporary design. See Fraser and Paul, ref.124.

<sup>126</sup> The origins and implications of this phrase are discussed in Chapter Six, pp.258-9.





Figures 3.18-3.19: Exhibition of British Industrial Art, Manchester City Art Gallery, 1933; RIBA Exhibition of Everyday Things, Manchester City Art Gallery, 1936.



Figures 3.20-3.24: Objects from the Industrial Art Collection (clockwise, from top left): *Aircraft*, printed linen and rayon, designed by Marion Dorn for Old Bleach Linen, 1938 (1940.517); bowl, printed earthenware, designed by Keith Murray for Wedgwood, 1933 (1933.99); armchair, designed by Serge Chermayeff for Plan Ltd, 1933 (1933.106); *Garden* plates, earthenware, designed by Eric Ravilious for Wedgwood, 1937 (1939.244-6); decanter, engraved glass, Soho and Vesta (John Walsh), 1930 (1930.91).

The combined Greg display of 1922 was broken up in 1926. While the pottery collection remained on site for another 12 years, the handicraft and brass tobacco box collections were relocated to the newly acquired Platt Hall branch gallery south of the city centre. Similarly, the Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses was never shown in the city centre, but at Heaton Hall in the north of the city. The use of these two venues by the Galleries was ostensibly a temporary measure to ameliorate overcrowding in the RMI building while the proposed new museum complex was in development. Between 1906 and 1930 five sites in the city's suburbs were transferred to Galleries' management for this purpose. Though never intended as a long-term strategy, they were to become central to the Galleries' public identity during the mid-twentieth century. The character, scale and location of these venues, four of which were period houses, also informed the development of the collections that were shown within them, including those given by Mrs Greg.

## Branch galleries

In 2002, a full century after plans had first been announced for a purpose-built city centre museum, Manchester Art Gallery opened to the public. *Up Close: A Guide to Manchester Art Gallery*<sup>127</sup> was published to celebrate the achievement of this long-held aim. It focused exclusively on the history of the city centre site and its revitalised displays of contemporary and historic fine and decorative art. It made no mention of the costume collection, housed at Platt Hall, or the wider history of suburban branch galleries, from which the institution was gradually withdrawing. In contrast, previous guidebooks had celebrated both the breadth of the wider collections and their accessibility to a diverse audience through changing displays in seven venues across the city.<sup>128</sup>

At its peak in the mid-twentieth century, the portfolio of sites that comprised Manchester City Art Galleries included eight buildings spread throughout the city. In 1906, Queens Park Museum and Heaton Hall had been transferred to Art Galleries management from the Parks Committee. Queens Park was a purpose-built museum in a municipal park, opened in 1884 in the working-class district of Harpurhey, north of the city centre (Fig.3.25). Heaton Hall was an eighteenth century neoclassical country house, one-time seat of the Earl of Wilton, set in 650 acres of parkland on the city's northernmost outskirts (Fig.3.26). In 1918, this was added to by the acquisition of The Old Parsonage, a nineteenth century Gothic 'cottage-ornée' style house

<sup>127</sup> Howard, ref.20.

<sup>128</sup> Lawrence Haward, *Illustrated Guide to the Art Collections in the Manchester Corporation Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Corporation, 1945 [1938]); S. D. Cleveland, *Guide to the Manchester Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Art Galleries Committee, 1956); Timothy Clifford, ref.20.

in the affluent southern suburb of Didsbury, bequeathed to the city by Alderman Fletcher Moss (Fig.3.27). In the same year, the Galleries also took over management of the Manchester Art Museum in the city centre district of Ancoats. Established by Thomas Horsfall in the 1870s, the museum was an overtly Ruskinian attempt to improve the lives of families, especially children, living in Manchester's most notorious slum (Fig.3.28).<sup>129</sup> Under Galleries management, and renamed the Horsfall Museum, it continued to maintain this role. During the interwar period, two further branches were added in the south of the city. Platt Hall, a red-brick Palladian Georgian house, home of the Worsley family, in Platt Fields, Rusholme, was acquired in 1926 (Fig.3.29); and Wythenshawe Hall, a half-timbered manor house dating back to the 1450s with later additions, acquired in 1930 from the sale of the Tatton estate for the development of new housing (Fig.3.20).<sup>130</sup> Finally, in 1938, the Manchester Athenaeum building, adjacent to the RMI, was acquired as an annexe to the City Art Gallery.<sup>131</sup>

As the collective name 'branch galleries' might suggest, Manchester's branches were not initially acquired for their intrinsic historical or architectural significance.<sup>132</sup> They were venues for encountering the city's art collections. The 1905-6 Annual Report presented the acquisition of Queens Park and Heaton Hall as a means by which to 'bring within easy reach of citizens in different localities examples of fine art'.<sup>133</sup> Changes were thus made to domestic interiors, with walls and architectural details removed in order to create larger exhibition spaces in which fine and decorative art could be displayed. Decorative schemes were plain and designed to complement displays rather than recreate period style. Changing displays enabled the circulation of collections throughout the city, 'in order to give those in the district a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with the pictures possessed by the Corporation'.<sup>134</sup> It was, in effect, an early form of outreach. However, as each venue had its own character and differing local audience, the branch galleries did acquire their own particular identities.

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<sup>129</sup> Harrison, ref.24.

<sup>130</sup> See Clare Latimer, *Parks for the People* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1987) for a more detailed account of each.

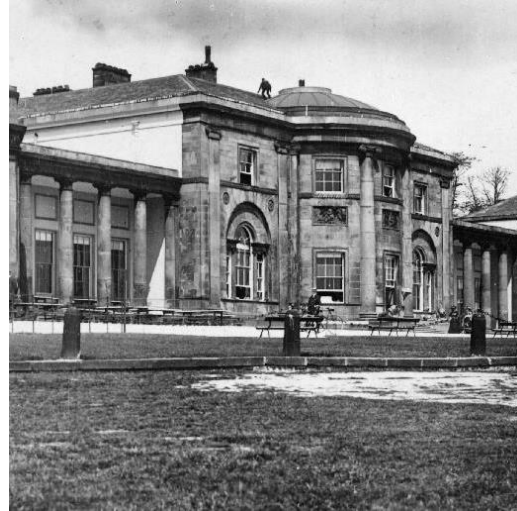
<sup>131</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1938*, pp.6-7, MCG Archive.

<sup>132</sup> See Clifford, ref.20, p.16.

<sup>133</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1905-6*, p.1. MCG Archive.

<sup>134</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1922*, p.12. MCG Archive.





**Figures 3.25-3.30: Branch galleries (from top left): Queens Park Museum, Harpurhey (photograph 1900), and Heaton Hall, Prestwich (photograph 1905), acquired in 1906; the Old Parsonage, Didsbury (photograph 1955), and Manchester Art Museum (photograph 1900), acquired in 1918; Platt Hall, Rusholme (photograph 1955), acquired in 1926, and Wythenshawe Hall, Northenden (photograph 1955), acquired in 1930.**

Queens Park, already well-established as a local museum in 1906, became the focus of a busy programme of lectures, concerts, festivals and school visits in the midst of a densely populated neighbourhood. Displays included an antiquarian collection of 'Relics of Old Manchester and Salford' and a dedicated 'Childhood Room'. Heaton Hall hosted displays and loan exhibitions more fitting to its aristocratic context: historical musical instruments, fine bookbinding, and from 1910 the Earl Egerton Collection of Oriental Weapons and Armour.<sup>135</sup> During the interwar period, Wythenshawe Hall and the Fletcher Moss Museum (Old Parsonage) became the focus of antiquarian and local history displays, while the elegant Georgian setting of Platt Hall became increasingly associated with the Galleries' growing costume collections.

Thus, during the first three decades of the twentieth century, Manchester City Art Galleries expanded not just in terms of collections, but in terms of its physical presence and identity across the city. Director Timothy Clifford was not exaggerating when in 1982 he described the institutional title of 'Art Galleries' as misleading.<sup>136</sup> More than just a picture gallery, it became, in effect, a dispersed museum service. Although intended as satellite versions of the City Art Gallery, the range of material on display in the branches was more diverse than that in the city centre. The acquisition of both Queens Park and the Manchester Art Museum brought with it the collections that each had independently acquired, including archaeological and natural history specimens, as well as art objects. The individual histories of those branches that had once been homes attracted related acquisitions; original furnishings and objects associated with the families that had lived in them. And the domestic character and history of the individual buildings was never entirely erased. Aspects of architectural detail were retained, for example the Georgian double staircase and rococo plasterwork of the dining room at Platt Hall. And while ground floor rooms at Heaton Hall were turned into a 'Long Gallery', the first floor bedrooms provided more intimate display spaces. In 1925, on being told of the dolls collection's relocation to the larger ground floor space, Mrs Greg expressed some disappointment, for she had 'felt the semi-dark upper room was so congenial a setting for the dolls! More homely!'.<sup>137</sup>

Initiated as a temporary measure, ongoing delays to the new museum project during the 1920s led to the branch galleries becoming policy in their own right; correspondence between Mrs Greg and the Galleries Committee reveals a growing sense of pride in them. Although this must be seen in the light of Mrs Greg's repeated enquiries as to progress on the new museum

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<sup>135</sup> Haward, ref.128, p.24. See also MCAG, *Annual Reports 1903-4 to 1908-9*, MCG Archive.

<sup>136</sup> Clifford, ref.20, p.18.

<sup>137</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 May 1925, MCG Archive.

and the meeting of her late husband's original condition of gift, it suggests the branches were becoming key to the Galleries' identity. In 1927 Councillor Todd noted that 'no other city in the country can boast of any branch galleries'.<sup>138</sup> Two years later a deputation of curators from Liverpool came to see Manchester's arrangement 'with a view to making similar use of three or four mansions in their possession'.<sup>139</sup> Mrs Greg also saw the benefits of this dispersed approach. In 1930 she responded positively to the relocation of part of the Handicrafts of Bygone Times collection to Queens Park, in spite of her longer term wish that all the Greg collections should be together:

I am very glad to know that the Bygones etc look so well at Queens Park & that they are enjoyed by the working class – that is just what we want – the rich can go about to see things so I feel quite satisfied that for the present anyway the things from Platt Hall are in the midst of those who work!<sup>140</sup>

With the exception of the period 1922-26 when three of the four Greg collections were displayed together in the City Art Gallery, the non-pottery Greg collections were only ever exhibited in the branches. The Dolls and Dolls' Houses Collection was a permanent fixture throughout the interwar period at Heaton Hall, where it was popular with the large numbers of visitors that flocked to the park during the summer season. Throughout the 1920s Mrs Greg continued to add new material and the collection expanded to become one of the Hall's main attractions. On Heaton Park's requisition for war purposes in 1939, it was transferred to Platt Hall and thence to Wythenshawe Hall until 1945 when the building was closed for structural work and the collection went into storage. In 1926, the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection was re-located to the newly acquired Platt Hall, a move that prompted the further development of this collection, as Mrs Greg gave new material that developed the costume and textile element of the collection. In 1930 the more antiquarian aspects of the collection were moved to Queens Park, while Platt focused on the growing costume collection that would eventually become a museum in its own right. Meanwhile, the tobacco box collection was incorporated into the antiquarian displays at Fletcher Moss Museum. The pottery remained in place in the City Art Gallery throughout, with the exception of its temporary removal to Queens Park in 1934 to enable the exhibition of the newly acquired John Yates collection of Chinese jades. This was only done with the express permission of Mrs Greg, who otherwise insisted on the pottery remaining in place until her husband's original conditions

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<sup>138</sup> Letter from Councillor Todd to Mrs Greg, 17 March 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>139</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 18 February 1929, MCG Archive.

<sup>140</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 June 1930, MCG Archive.



had been met. She maintained a similar degree of authority over all the Greg collections for the duration of her lifetime, in spite of the fact that technically they no longer belonged to her.

The creation of a dispersed gallery through the use of suburban branches may thus be seen as substantially influencing the development of both the Greg collections and the wider institution during this period. It created a series of diverse environments in which to encounter the Galleries' collections, embedded within local neighbourhoods, as well as in the more formal civic arena of the city centre. It blurred the distinction between the concepts of private and public space in both the proximity of the branches to people's homes and the fact that several of them previously had been homes. Their domestic scale was well-suited to the display of domestic material, as Councillor Todd commented to Mrs Greg in December 1926.<sup>141</sup> All six branch galleries were also either situated within public parks or had gardens attached to them, bringing together different forms of recreation and leisure. Visitors might combine a trip to the museum with any one of a multitude of outdoor activities that were available in Manchester's parks during this time. This certainly had an impact at Heaton Park which, during the 1920s, was the site of the annual White Heather Summer Camps, established for the children of Manchester's poorest families, resulting in the presence of thousands of children in both the park and hall during the summer season. The development of the handicrafts and dolls collections in terms of the addition of new material by Mrs Greg, was shaped by their presentation and reception within the branch galleries. Moreover, the collections' dispersal across different venues also indicates the beginnings of a separation that later came to be identified by gender. The material that became known as the Thomas Greg Collection was that which remained together, as a body of objects, in the city centre. As this thesis will show, the remainder – including the tobacco box collection, which was as much Thomas Greg's own project as the pottery – went to the branch galleries, where it went through multiple iterations and further development across different sites. As the role of the branch galleries shifted in nature and importance over time, it became increasingly dispersed, and consequently, increasingly invisible. This is the material that came to be known as the Mary Greg Collection.

## Conclusion

Amy Woodson-Boulton and Kate Hill both argue that, although late twentieth century theorising of the 'disciplinary' museum has been fundamental to understanding its inherent power structures, the history of museum development during the late nineteenth and early

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<sup>141</sup> Letter from Councillor Todd to Mrs Greg, 17 December 1926, MCG Archive.

twentieth century is characterised by compromise and contradiction.<sup>142</sup> 'Order and controlling will' were an aspiration rather than a reality.<sup>143</sup> This would certainly seem to be the case with regard to the development of Manchester's art collections and more specifically the acquisition and subsequent interpretation of the Greg collections. The development of both the institution and its collections was a matter of ongoing negotiation, between Committee, Curator, and collectors and patrons. The meaning and value of non-fine art objects within the Galleries was subject to intense and sometimes ferocious debate, further complicated by the city's frustrated ambitions to develop a more comprehensive museum service. Correspondence between Mrs Greg and Assistant Curator William Batho during the 1920s makes frequent reference to the different 'sections' planned for the new museum; an ethnographic section, an industrial section, a textile section.<sup>144</sup> Material acquired during this period was, to some extent, intended to fit this projected orderly classification. In the event, however, the new museum did not materialise, and collections acquired with wider ambitions in mind had to be accommodated within the different categories of art.

Instead the Galleries expanded through the opportunistic acquisition of a diverse array of buildings throughout the city. The history, character and location of these buildings informed their individual programmes and the development of collections displayed therein. They also brought an overtly domestic quality to the art gallery experience. The nineteenth century concept of the 'separate spheres' of public and private life has been much debated in recent years as an ideal that was more complex in reality.<sup>145</sup> While the emotional privacy of the ideal middle-class home was identified as a predominantly feminine space, in opposition to the overtly rational and public masculine world of work, the relationship between the two was considerably more ambiguous. Woodson-Boulton identifies the 'cult of domesticity' as foundational to the Victorian art museum, as a public/private space set apart from the wider public space of industrial capitalism:

Like a civic version of the ideal Victorian home – a place of moral refuge and repose, outside the hurly-burly of the marketplace – city art museums would provide a domesticated public space for beauty.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Amy Woodson-Boulton, "'Industry without Art is Brutality': Aesthetic Ideology and Social Practice in Victorian Art Museums', *Journal of British Studies*, 46 (1) (2007) pp.47-71; Kate Hill, ref.24, pp.4-6.

<sup>143</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.141.

<sup>144</sup> See for example, letters from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 20 November 1926, 13 December 1926, MCG Archive.

<sup>145</sup> A key essay here is Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *The Historical Journal*, 36 (1993) pp.383-414.

<sup>146</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.23, p.5.

The symbolic values of home, family, sanctuary and care, were employed in the museum as a way of providing both respite and respectable recreation for a wide range of visitors. In the early twentieth century the relationship between the public museum and the concept of home became more explicit. Collections of historical domestic objects were used to invoke a sense of national and imperial homeland identity; in the postwar context of 'domestic' recovery they also helped reassure people that in the face of so much loss, there was a past worth cherishing.

The First World War changed the social, economic and political landscape of Britain; three-quarters of a million men didn't return home, and nearly two million of those who did were permanently scarred. The concept of citizenship acquired genuine agency as the size of the electorate increased; subsequent decades saw the increasing mobilisation of working-class political activism.<sup>147</sup> Changes in global boundaries, as empires fell, were increasingly matched by the development of mass communication, and by the questioning of psychological boundaries between self and other.<sup>148</sup> James Clifford, in *The Predicament of Culture*, invokes the poetry of William Carlos Williams to suggest a 'feeling of lost authenticity' as 'a truly global space of cultural connections and dissolutions' became increasingly imaginable.<sup>149</sup> As Williams' now-famous phrase 'no ideas but in things' indicates, there is in much of the art and literature of the 1920s a dwelling on the surfaces of everyday life as vehicles for contemplation: on time, on loss, on existence. In Eliot's 'The Wasteland', it speaks of alienation, boredom and despair. In Virginia Woolf's writing it combines both melancholy and solace. The middle section of 1927's *To the Lighthouse*, titled 'Time Passes', suggests the unbridgeable chasm of the First World War in the stillness of an empty house and its abandoned objects. But at the same time the senselessness of death is held at arm's length, in parentheses, while the house offers a tiny modicum of consolation: '[w]hatever else may perish and disappear what lies here is steadfast'.<sup>150</sup> As the interwar period progressed, artists and writers such as John Piper, Paul Nash and John Betjeman developed a peculiarly English modernism that combined a modernist aesthetic with a romantic attachment to idiosyncratic symbols of national identity and tradition: to churches, village greens and changeable weather.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, in design, iconic British manufacturer Wedgwood could commission both architectural modernism from Keith

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<sup>147</sup> Beaven and Griffiths, ref.26.

<sup>148</sup> North, ref.12; Jackson, ref.16.

<sup>149</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988) p.4.

<sup>150</sup> Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Penguin, 1964 [1927]) p.144. See also Bryony Randall, 'Modernist Literature and the Everyday', *Literature Compass*, 7 (2010) pp.824-835.

<sup>151</sup> Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010).

Murray and suburban whimsy from Eric Ravilious, brought together under the advertising slogan 'A Living Tradition'.<sup>152</sup> As the following chapter will show, the development of Manchester's collections during the 1920s, in both fine and decorative art, responded directly to such interests.

Developments in design reform in the interwar period also focused increasingly on both the home and the agency of the individual, by targeting the consumer as the means of improving standards of design. The DIA exhibitions of the 1910s and the Industrial Art Collection of the 1930s framed their content as objects one might purchase from a department store, rather than as study examples for trainee designers. Thus, while in the 1920s the domestic rooms of the branch galleries were being turned into exhibition galleries, a few short years later design exhibitions turned galleries into room settings. In 1922 Andrew Bonar Law had identified stability and tranquillity as the country's 'crying need'. Through the work of the DIA and other related bodies,<sup>153</sup> craft, design and manufacture was promoted as an essential part of post-war reconstruction, the past co-opted to support the development of economic stability in the future. Museums, along with commercial galleries and, later, department stores, were key sites of 'cultural propaganda' in this respect.<sup>154</sup> Further into the decade, developments in contemporary British art and the studio craft movement increasingly blurred boundaries between fine and decorative art, as contemporary artists incorporated craft production into their practice and were even commissioned to design for manufacture.<sup>155</sup>

However, while Lawrence Haward believed on the one hand that art, 'like charity, should begin at home',<sup>156</sup> he was also critical of the risks that 'confusion in the private house'<sup>157</sup> presented to the orderly space of the art museum. Arguably the Victorian art museum's efforts to bring domesticity into public space became, in the interwar period, the intervention of the art museum on domestic space. Modern room settings in the galleries in the mid-1930s were not hampered by historical inheritance, but provided an idealised version of the entirely contemporary 'well-designed' home. Haward's contempt for the 'glorified curiosity shop' also drew a line under a particular model of public and private collecting that went back to the seventeenth century 'cabinet of curiosities'. Fifteen years earlier, Thomas Greg had explicitly celebrated this model in his stated aim of invoking wonder through the bringing together of

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<sup>152</sup> Fraser and Paul, ref.124, p.49.

<sup>153</sup> Including the British Institute for Industrial Art (1918-1933) and the Rural Industries Bureau (1921-1968).

<sup>154</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.120.

<sup>155</sup> Harrod, ref.113.

<sup>156</sup> Haward, ref.17, p.121.

<sup>157</sup> Haward, ref.34, p.10.

diverse objects. In 1922, by which time the Art Galleries were inextricably committed to the Greg collections, the age of *omnium gatherum* was ostensibly over. And yet, between 1920 and 1940, Manchester City Art Galleries added 6,733 objects to a collection of 4,288.<sup>158</sup> Of these, approximately half came from Mr and Mrs Greg.

This is the context in which a 70-year-old widow embarked on a relationship with a major regional art museum – a relationship that lasted almost 30 years, until her death at the age of 99. The Greg collections sit on the cusp of a transition from ‘old world’ to ‘new order’, informed by nineteenth century concerns but deployed according to twentieth century ones. The Greg Collections of Early English Pottery and Brass Tobacco Boxes remained fixed in terms of content from this point. Both had been Thomas Greg’s projects and the treatment of the tobacco boxes as a separate collection is probably due to Greg’s preparation of a detailed manuscript catalogue for them prior to his death.<sup>159</sup> Otherwise this small group of objects would probably have been regarded as part of the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection, which included multiple similar objects. This latter collection, numbering approximately 400 objects on its arrival in 1922, tripled in size over the ensuing decades. What began as a joint collecting project between Mr and Mrs Greg was substantially developed by Mrs Greg after her husband’s death, in the context of institutional development and in collaboration with Galleries staff. Similarly, the Dolls and Dolls’ Houses Collection, initiated by Mrs Greg alone, grew incrementally during this period, while in-situ at Heaton Hall. These two collections formed the basis of what is now known as the Mary Greg Collection. The following two chapters thus consider the content, organisation, interpretation and reception of each in more detail.

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<sup>158</sup> These figures are calculated from individual accession numbers as recorded in the accessions register. Thus they are not completely accurate in terms of numbers of objects, but in terms of accessioned ‘lots’. See MCAG, *City of Manchester Art Gallery Stock Book of Works of Art*, MCG Archive.

<sup>159</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, *Catalogue of a Collection of Brass Tobacco Boxes 1760-1780* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1923).



Figure 4.1: Iron sucket spoon (detail) (1922.867).





Figure 4.2: Silver travelling spoon (detail) (1922.808). Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times, cat.182, 'Travelling spoon in green case'.





Figure 4.3: Latten (brass) spoon (detail) (1922.874). Thomas Bateman Collection, List L.I. 75P, 'Two SPOONS of the seventeenth century, found in London.'

## Chapter Four

### 'Knucklebones and needlework':<sup>1</sup>

#### The Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times

*...we owe it to those who have preceded us and have left us those specimens of their painstaking and beautiful work, and to those who will come after us to do likewise...*<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

The Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times comprises approximately 1,700 objects. It is hard to be precise about this figure for several reasons. Firstly, because it was given in stages over several years, and thus had multiple iterations. Attempts to organise and re-organise an increasingly diverse and growing number of things during this period make it difficult to pin down in any definitive form. Secondly, surviving documentation is partial and in places contradictory; this research has attempted to unpick conflicting accounts as far as possible, but some information simply does not survive. Thirdly, some of its content has been lost or destroyed in the intervening century. And fourthly, it is not always clear where the boundaries fell between this and the other Greg collections, as Mrs Greg continued to make gifts to the Galleries without always specifying to which collection they belonged. Nonetheless, the existence of a defined body of objects known as the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times is a matter of historical record. It might thus be more accurate to say it comprised rather than comprises.

This chapter and the next consider in closer detail the handicrafts and dolls' houses collections, the two historical collections that today make up the Mary Greg Collection. To use Sandra Dudley's concept of the museum object 'data-set',<sup>3</sup> collection is understood here to mean the physical objects, their supporting documentation and the relationships between them. In order to make sense of the multi-layered, partial and sometimes contradictory nature of the data-set, and the dispersal of the collection across sites, departments and information systems, this research has involved the creation of an additional data layer, in the form of inventory. Appendices 1-3 reconstruct both the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone

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<sup>1</sup> *Manchester City News*, 'A NEW EXBN \* GREG COLLN OF HANDICRAFTS', 9 December 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Greg, 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1922) p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Sandra H. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) p.3.

Times, and the Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses. They bring together and cross-reference diverse sources of information in order to build a picture of each collection and the trajectories of its content for the first time. Key sources for this include two undated typewritten lists which set out the content of each collection in accession number order; the accessions register, which provides information relating to individual gifts year by year; the collection card index used throughout the interwar period, which documents key object information and attempts to classify the collections by theme; and exhibition catalogues, first produced in 1922 for the handicrafts collection and 1924 for the dolls and dolls' houses, which give a sense of how the collections were first displayed and interpreted for the public. The objects themselves have also been examined for evidential traces of their past lives, both within and without the museum, and in order to gain a material sense of the collections as once inter-related wholes. Where there were no pre-existing images, objects have been photographed for the purposes of creating a visual record of the surviving collections in their entirety. The resulting inventory has also been cross-referenced with the Greg correspondence, which provides a narrative account of the collections' arrival and subsequent development, from the perspectives of both institution and collector.

Several significant findings emerged from this process. The two collection lists identify a total of 1,510 individual objects or groups of objects in the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection, and a further 615 in the Dolls and Dolls' Houses Collection. Objects in both lists are itemised in accession number order, each number beginning with the year prefix 1922. This links back to the single entry in the institutional accessions register, for which reason, as noted in the previous chapter, it has long been assumed that the collections were given in their entirety in this year. However, while the Greg correspondence suggests that all objects given in 1922 went on display in the same year, the accompanying catalogues only include a fraction of the material listed.<sup>4</sup> Further attention to the correspondence reveals that accession numbering must have been done retrospectively, as multiple objects on both lists are identified in the letters as having been given up to ten years later than the 1922 prefix would suggest.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the earliest gifts were not formally transferred into Galleries ownership until 1924, with a further group in 1926 and smaller gifts thereafter.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of 92 pieces of lace and several articles of furniture which were treated separately, everything that

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<sup>4</sup> The Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times, for example, includes 377 entries, less than a quarter of those itemised on the typewritten list.

<sup>5</sup> The latest reference found is to a child's cot sheet given in 1932, but subsequently numbered 1922.2190. See letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 17 February 1932, and undated inventory c.1932, MCG Archive.

<sup>6</sup> Letters from Councillor Todd to Mrs Greg, 24 November 1924; 17 December 1926. MCG Archive.

was given up to 1932 was subsequently numbered 1922. Those items given after this date were numbered according to the year in which they arrived; thus these do not appear on the lists which otherwise provide the most complete account of the collections. Adding these to the '1922' lists, the two collections total 2,642 objects.

This changes the positioning of the collections within the institution. The delay of up to a decade before they were formally accessioned, and the decision to backdate the numbering of objects, suggests a retrospective attempt to 'tidy up' an otherwise potentially unruly body of objects that had arrived in a piecemeal manner over a lengthy period. It also chimes with the expressions of uncertainty as to collecting policy discussed in the previous chapter. Were these collections intended for display in the Art Gallery, for distribution among Manchester's federated museums, or for the new city museum? Furthermore, it reveals that although the origins of the handicrafts collection lie in Thomas and Mary Greg's shared private collecting, three quarters of it was assembled by Mrs Greg alone, within the context of the museum, after her husband's death.

This chapter thus considers the scope and content of the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection and its development during the interwar period. It considers the shaping of the collection in terms of its public manifestations, from the 1922 City Art Gallery display to its subsequent relocation to Platt Hall and later dispersal across the city's branch galleries. Considerable attention is given to the collection's first public showing. Supervised directly by Mrs Greg, working with Galleries staff, the 1922 Greg Room display represents the collection's most prominent public presence and provided the framework for its later display elsewhere. Accompanied by a catalogue containing case lists and a short preface written by Mrs Greg herself (her only piece of writing for public consumption) it also provides the richest source of archival evidence for how the collection was organized and interpreted.

## **The Greg Room, 1922**

In September 1922, the re-displayed Greg Room, now containing three of the four Greg collections, opened to the public. Three months later, the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection was the first of the four collections to be published in catalogue form. In the preface Mrs Greg re-iterated her late husband's vision of a museum 'containing under one roof objects of art and objects of handicrafts of bygone times neither wholly artistic nor wholly scientific'.<sup>7</sup> These words provided the title for the new collection, serving also to emphasise her husband's

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Greg, ref.2, p.6, citing Thomas Greg, *A Contribution to the History of English Pottery* (Manchester City Art Galleries, 1907) pp.i-ii.

involvement with its creation despite his death two years earlier.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the original use of the phrase was almost certainly in reference to the pottery collection, the ‘art’ status of which was heavily contested when it first arrived in Manchester in 1905.<sup>9</sup> The close relationship between these two collections, and the collaborative husband-and-wife partnership behind them, is further indicated by the promise, in Thomas Greg’s 1904 offer, of ‘groups of Medieval and other Antiquities and objects of interest which we have from time to time collected’.<sup>10</sup> His choice of words suggests the joint accumulation of a diverse range of objects over a lengthy period.

In 1904, Thomas and Mary Greg had been married for nine years, though they had not yet taken ownership of Coles Park, the family estate which Mr Greg inherited in 1906. By 1920, when Mrs Greg offered up ‘the things which Mr Greg and I proposed to give to the City of Manchester’<sup>11</sup>, they had a large house full of antiquities. An inventory carried out for probate purposes after Mr Greg’s death lists the contents of every room.<sup>12</sup> Among the books, silver, ornaments and other items to be expected in a large country house, the inventory identifies a number of individual ‘collections’: for example ‘old English and continental spoons, combs and curios’<sup>13</sup>, ‘old Staffordshire cream salt glaze’<sup>14</sup> and ‘old Roman glass tear bottles and Bristol and Nailsea glass’.<sup>15</sup> Material that was soon to be acquired by Manchester under the title handicrafts of bygone times was thus, in the Gregs’ own home, intermixed with material that would later be allocated to the pottery collection. In addition, one such sub-group was subsequently retained as a collection in its own right. Thomas Greg’s collection of 54 brass tobacco boxes and other memorabilia commemorating the Seven Years War (1756-63) was accompanied by a detailed manuscript catalogue prepared by Mr Greg shortly before his death. This was later published separately as, in effect, the fourth Greg collection. In 1920, however, all of this material was in the single ownership of Mrs Greg.

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<sup>8</sup> See letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 9 May 1922, requesting that the collection be publicly credited as ‘The Gift of TT Greg and Mrs Greg of Coles Buntingford Herts without saying “the late”’. MCG Archive.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter Three, pp.93-97.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Thomas Greg to Sir Thomas Thornhill Shann, Lord Mayor of Manchester, 17 June 1904, MCG Archive.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Councillor Frederick Todd, 6 January 1921, MCG Archive.

<sup>12</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, ACC2579 Box 4. Hampton & Sons (Auctioneers), *Inventory of Knights Hill Cottage and Coles Park – furniture, china, glass, pictures, books, silver, plated articles, wine, wearing apparel, etc., the property of the late T. T. Greig [sic] Esq., and made for Probate purposes*, October 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Hampton & Sons, ref.12, p.49.

<sup>14</sup> Hampton & Sons, ref.12, p.58.

<sup>15</sup> Hampton & Sons, ref.12, p.63.

Gallery correspondence from the months prior to the exhibition reveals Mrs Greg's insistence that the pottery, handicrafts and tobacco boxes be shown together in the ground floor 'Greg Room'.<sup>16</sup> It also shows that she took an active role in decision-making as to groupings, layout and interpretation.<sup>17</sup> In April 1922, at Mrs Greg's suggestion, Mr Batho paid a visit to London to research ideas for the collection's display, spending 'a most interesting two hours' at the London Museum, 'getting many tips as to how to display the spoons, etc., to the best advantage'.<sup>18</sup> In June, accompanied by her niece Miss S. P. Hope, Mrs Greg came to Manchester to oversee the collection's installation. No photographs of the 1922 display have been found. The catalogue, however, provides a list of contents case by case, giving a sense of the groupings that were presented to the visitor. Eleven display cases presented loosely thematic groups of objects relating to domestic life, clothing and craft, across period, material and place. Archaeological finds ranging from Roman styli to a fifth century bronze hair comb and Tudor and 'Cromwellian' keys were interspersed with more recent examples of type. Eighteenth and nineteenth century English men's, women's and children's dress was shown alongside Turkish, Indian and Chinese accessories, and framed samples of Flemish, French and Italian lace. Pincushions, thimbles and needlecases in one case were juxtaposed with samplers and embroidered fragments in another. And vernacular and domestic crafts such as glass novelties and straw-work, paper cut-outs and collages, were shown alongside educational and work-related artefacts – alphabet hornbooks, mathematical reckoning tables, weights and measures, a shepherd's crook.

This diverse assemblage must have provided a contrast to the strictly chronological English pottery arrangement, which told a story of design evolution from the 'Romano-British' period through to the end of the eighteenth century. The overarching linear narrative suggested by medieval pitchers, vernacular slipware, blue and white delftware, and later stoneware and creamware, must have been substantially disrupted by the addition of several hundred objects that juxtaposed period, place and material within every showcase. The 1923 pottery catalogue lists a total of 918 objects; added to the 377 entries in the handicrafts catalogue (several of which are groups of multiples) and the 54 brass tobacco boxes, this makes a total of over 1500 objects, ranging in scale from a single ear-ring to a dress, on display in a room 8m x 24m. It is

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 23 April 1922: 'You will I am sure do your best to keep all the things together in one room in the Mosley Street Gallery – I most specially desire that this should be the place chosen', MCG Archive.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho: 14 July 1922 (design of object labels); 1 August 1922 (placement of objects); 3 November 1922 (height of display cases); 26 December 1922 (cleaning of objects). MCG Archive.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 26 April 1922, MCG Archive.

not clear how the three collections occupied this space in relation to each other, but the visual impact of the whole must have been overwhelming. Housed in the ground floor gallery, it was also the only part of the permanent collection on public display during the autumn of 1922, as the enfilade of first floor galleries hosted a major loan exhibition, *The Art of the Theatre*.<sup>19</sup> In light of ongoing uncertainty over the planned new museum, it is tempting to see this density of display within a secondary space of the building as a strategic attempt to demonstrate visibly the problems of overcrowding. The Greg letters certainly refer to the arrangement as a temporary measure, until the new gallery could be ready.<sup>20</sup>

Identifying the specific content of the display is not straightforward. The catalogue has its own numbering system that does not correspond with Gallery accession numbers. Individual entries range from the precise to the generic, making it difficult to match entries to surviving objects. However, the comparison of phraseology in the catalogue with the later typewritten list has enabled the identification of certain objects (Figs.4.4-5). In addition, some objects still bear printed tickets that correspond to the catalogue numbering system, and in some cases, exhibition labels have also survived, kept with their respective objects (Figs.4.6-8). Cross-referencing these has enabled a partial reconstruction of the original exhibition case groupings.<sup>21</sup> Close attention to these groups, alongside press reports, letters and other archive material, reveals a layering of successive generational attitudes to the material culture of the recent domestic past, from nineteenth century antiquarian sensibilities, to a Ruskinian focus on material authenticity, to the emerging interwar fascination with the everyday. This transition, shaped through wider social and cultural influences including the Arts and Crafts Movement, the developing discipline of anthropology, the growing conservation movement and the global upheaval of the First World War, is aptly reflected in the particular choice of words used to describe the miscellany of objects within the collection as 'handicrafts of bygone times'.

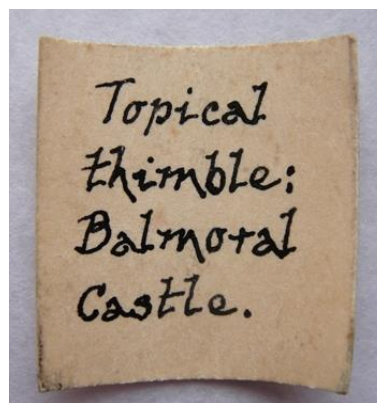
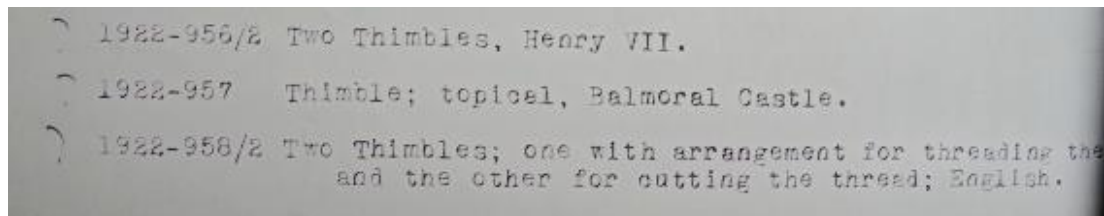
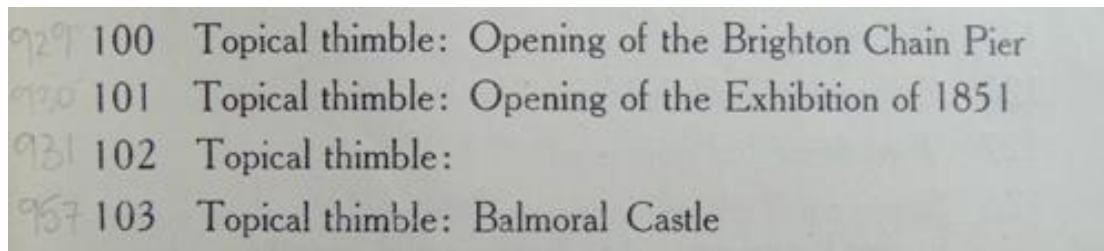
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<sup>19</sup> See letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 21 October 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>20</sup> See letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 22 May 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>21</sup> Of the 377 catalogue entries, 302 have been matched against accession numbers, some definitively, others on balance of probability, based on similarity of phrase and position on the list. See Appendix 1: Inventory of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times, on accompanying CD.





Figures 4.4-4.8 (left to right): *Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times*, p.11 (detail); The Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times undated inventory, p.11 (detail). Interior of thimble 1922.923, showing accession number and 1922 catalogue number (detail); handwritten 1922 exhibition label; commemorative thimble, showing Balmoral Castle (1922.957).

## Bygones: 'the remoteness of the immediate past'<sup>22</sup>

The development of social history as an academic discipline, and the concomitant collecting of everyday objects, has been identified by Gaynor Kavanagh as a primarily post-World War II phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> But, as indicated in the previous chapter, it can be traced back to late-nineteenth century Arts and Crafts interests in 'folk art', and the development of museum-based homeland ethnography.<sup>24</sup> The word 'bygone' was once common parlance in museums. As Robin Emmerson noted in 1999, however, it is 'a term at which social historians now

<sup>22</sup> Rev. G. Montagu Benton, 'Some "Bygones" from Cambridgeshire and Adjacent Counties', *The Antiquary*, 7 (3) (1911) p.93.

<sup>23</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *History Curatorship* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Martin Myrone, 'Instituting English Folk Art', in *Visual Culture in Britain*, 10 (1) (2009) pp.27-52; Oliver A. Douglas, 'Folklore, Survivals and the Neo-Archaic, The Materialist Character of Late Nineteenth Century Homeland Ethnography', *Museum History Journal*, 4 (2) (2011) pp. 223-244.

shudder',<sup>25</sup> carrying pejorative connotations of nostalgic indulgence, the collectibles market and the commercialisation of heritage.<sup>26</sup> Its use as an adjective, simply to describe something that happened in the past, can be traced back at least as far as Shakespeare.<sup>27</sup> However, it acquired a particular museological usage as a noun during the early twentieth century, to describe objects of domestic life.<sup>28</sup> Its use in relation to the Greg collection demonstrates this transition from adjective to noun; initially described as 'handicrafts of bygone times', much of the collection was later institutionally catalogued under the more concise heading of 'bygones'.

In 1911, the Reverend G. Montagu Benton wrote a series of short articles for *The Antiquary* in which he explained:

[t]he term "bygone" has not unappropriately [sic] been applied to those objects which were in common use from fifty to a hundred and fifty years ago, but which are now either obsolete or no longer made by hand.<sup>29</sup>

Benton discussed such varied objects as knives and other cutting implements, nutcrackers, gingerbread moulds, amulets and charms, wrought ironwork, and agricultural items such as breast ploughs and sickles (Fig.4.9). In so doing, he acknowledged that '[t]he exceedingly miscellaneous character of these late antiquities renders them difficult to group',<sup>30</sup> his phraseology foreshadowing that of William Boyd Dawkins in relation to the Greg collections nine years later. For the purposes of his article, he thus restricted his selection to objects of 'local interest' held by Cambridge University's Museum of Archaeology. A footnote added by collector W. B. Redfern also explained that although 'Cambridge fully realizes the value of these "late antiquities"...there are many gaps in the University collection'. As Manchester hoped to do, Cambridge was in the process of building an ambitious new museum, and

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<sup>25</sup> Robin Emmerson, 'Museums and Regulated Work in the Crafts', in *Obscure objects of desire: Reviewing the crafts in the twentieth century* (London: Crafts Council, 1997) p.262.

<sup>26</sup> See for example, 'antiques and collectables centre' Bygone Times, in Chorley, Lancashire, <http://bygonetimes.co.uk/> [accessed 31 July 2017].

<sup>27</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, 'bygone', (2017 [1989]), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.mmu.ac.uk/view/Entry/25557?redirectedFrom=bygone#eid> [accessed 31 July 2017]. The word appears in *The Winter's Tale* (1623) i. ii. 32, 'This satisfaction, The by-gone-day proclaym'd, say this to him'.

<sup>28</sup> Kate Hill, 'Collecting Authenticity: Domestic, Familial and Everyday "Old Things" in English Museums, 1850-1939', *Museum History*, 4 (2) (2011) p.203.

<sup>29</sup> Montagu Benton, ref.22, p.92.

<sup>30</sup> Montagu Benton, ref.22, p.93.

Redfern thus urged readers who might come across any objects, 'however trivial, which are now obsolete or fast becoming so', to donate them to the museum.<sup>31</sup>

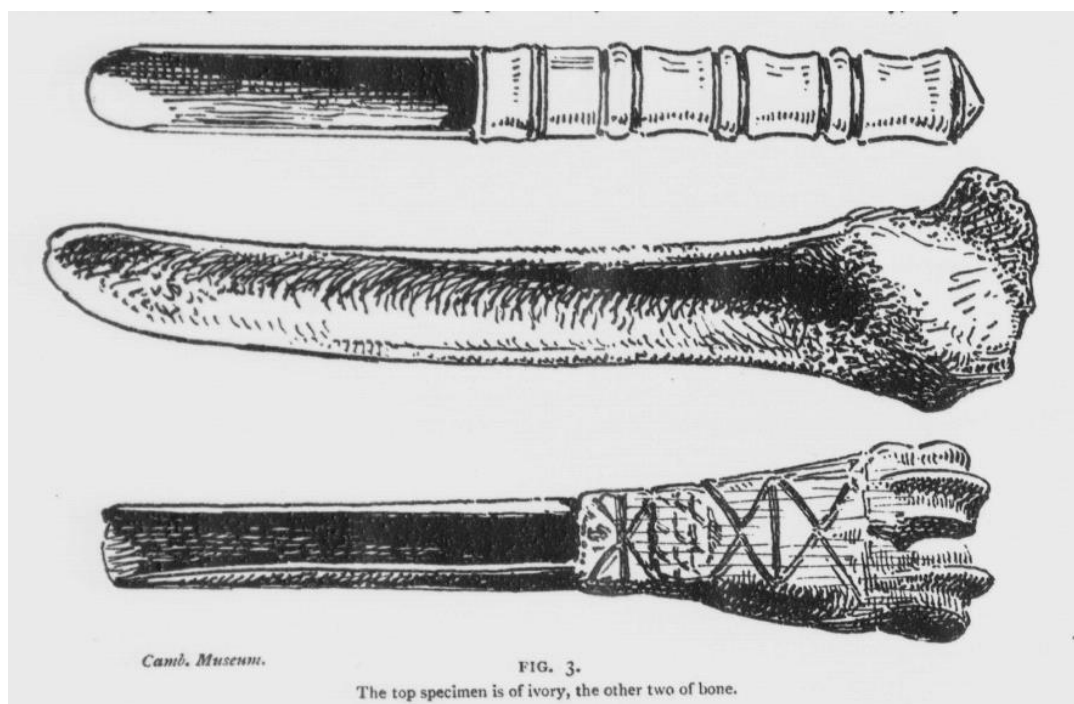


Figure 4.9: Apple scoops illustrated in Rev. G. Montagu Benton, 'Some "Bygones" from Cambridgeshire and Adjacent Counties', *The Antiquary*, 7 (3) (1911) p.94.

Thomas Greg first used the term 'bygone' in relation to the Greg collections in 1906. Two years earlier, he had described the non-pottery collections as 'antiquities and objects of interest',<sup>32</sup> prefiguring Benton and Redfern's use of the phrase 'late antiquities' in 1911. The interchangeability of such phrases indicates the close relationship between the bygone and the longer history of antiquarianism. Benton, Redfern and Greg were all members of antiquarian or archaeological societies which, since the early eighteenth century, had brought together gentleman amateurs in the collection and study of the past through material remains.<sup>33</sup> The dividing line between 'late' antiquities and the remains of earlier times was not, therefore, always clearly defined, despite Benton's timeframe of 50-150 years. The 1922 exhibition included a diverse range of everyday objects from both the recent and more distant past. The majority of objects were of British and European origin, from the medieval period to the early twentieth century, but there was also some material from earlier periods, and a small number

<sup>31</sup> Montagu Benton, ref.22, p.94.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Thomas Greg to Sir Thomas Thornhill Shann, Lord Mayor of Manchester, 17 June 1904, MCG Archive.

<sup>33</sup> Benton and Redfern both belonged to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, while Benton was also a member of the Essex Archaeological Society. Thomas Greg was a member of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

of things from non-European cultures including India, China and Africa. In the catalogue preface, Mrs Greg explained that she and her late husband's overarching aim had been to demonstrate, through the things of daily life, how '[i]n the past, as in the present, the old order gave place to new, fashions and ideas changed'.<sup>34</sup>

Themed groupings thus reflected different aspects of daily life, not explicitly titled as such but implied by their arrangement. Cases 5 to 7, for example, combined personal accessories and equipment related to the themes of work, learning, play, daily rituals and social habits. Case 5 included fob seals and ink wells; alphabet primers for children; pocket knives, tools and scissors; cutlery and domestic utensils; pipes and smoking-related objects; several dice and a pair of 'fighting cock spurs'<sup>35</sup> (Figs.4.10-14). Case 6 contained a set of painted wooden platters or roundels, 'relics of the domestic life of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries';<sup>36</sup> snuff and tobacco boxes; wax seals; sundials, weights, scales and measures; and two sets of 'Napier's bones or old English Reckoning Tables', noted as coming from the collection of 'antiquary' Thomas Bateman<sup>37</sup> (Figs.4.15-18). Case 7 included a small group of fire and light making appliances – tinder boxes, rushlight holders, 'three specimens of early Lucifer matches'<sup>38</sup> and a variety of lamps, lanterns and candlesticks (Figs.4.19-23). Multiples of particular objects, from thimbles to scissors, pipe-stoppers to watch-keys, were arranged *en masse* in a more overt comparison of forms. Case 9, for example, included 71 keys. These ranged from ancient Etruscan, Roman and Egyptian examples, to keys 'made by an English blacksmith, about 1500',<sup>39</sup> an Indian latch key (undated) and the key for the Borough Bank of Liverpool, dated to 1820. The catalogue lists archaeological 'find' sites for several keys, from London and the Thames to various ruins, including the Temple of Diana at Ephesus.<sup>40</sup> A group of heavily corroded iron keys still bear small labels showing that they too had previously been in the collection of Derbyshire archaeologist and collector Thomas Bateman (1821-1861) (Figs.4.24-27).

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<sup>34</sup> Mary Greg, ref.2, p.5.

<sup>35</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.14, cat.183.

<sup>36</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.16, cat.218.

<sup>37</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.16, cat.214.

<sup>38</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.17, cat.246.

<sup>39</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.21, cat.319.

<sup>40</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.20, cat.296.



Figures 4.10-4.14: Selection of items in Case 5 (clockwise from top left): cat.195, 'Old inkhorn found in London. 16<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1260); cat.150, 'Chinese scissors' (1922.900); cat.192, 'Apple corer, 1746' (1922.832); cat.178, 'Pipe: carving Adam and Eve...1751. Dutch' (1922.1174); cat.147, one of several 'Hornbooks: two of brass, one of copper, one late German, two ivory, one printed' (1922.1209).



Figures 4.15-4.18: Selection of items in Case 6 (clockwise from top left): cat.218, 'A set of Roundels or Fruit Trenchers. Relics of the domestic life of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries' (1922.836); cat.227, 'Old English scales' (1922.1238); cat.215, 'Box in ivory, piqué. French' (1922.1162); cat.214, 'A set of wooden Napier's bones', or old English Reckoning Tables, with the original oak case...From Thos. Bateman's collection' (1922.1229).





Figures 4.19-4.23: Selection of items in Case 7 (clockwise from top left): cat.256, 'Brass snuffers' (1922.779); cat.244, 'Lantern with flint glass' (1922.774); cat.233, 'Oil lamp' (1922.791); cat.234, 'Old candlestick. End of 18<sup>th</sup> century. From Glenquich, Perthshire' (1922.781); cat.240, 'Flint tinder box' (1922.796).



Figures 4.24-4.27: Selection of items in Case 9 (clockwise from top left): cat.321, 'Six keys. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.695); cat.291, three of 'Five ornamental keys. 17<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.694); cat.293, 'Key of the Borough Bank of Liverpool. Cut steel. About 1820' (1922.707); cat.316, 'Key found in the ruins of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus' (1922.691).

Such groupings reflect nineteenth century approaches to ethnographic collecting and display pioneered by the likes of Edward Tylor (1832-1917) and General Augustus Henry Fox Lane Pitt Rivers (1827-1900). Both men believed that a classificatory approach to the study of comparable everyday items from a range of societies would yield evidence for the evolutionary progression of human culture.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Greg began collecting in the 1880s; he was thus a contemporary of Pitt Rivers and other collectors such as Frederick Horniman (1835-1906) and Sir Henry Wellcome (1853-1936), all of whom were acquiring large amounts of material that would form the basis of future museum collections.<sup>42</sup> Thomas Bateman's extensive collection was sold at auction in 1893; objects from the sale found their way into the Greg handicrafts and pottery collections, but also the Pitt Rivers Museum, the British Museum, the Wellcome Collection and others.<sup>43</sup> Several objects also bear labels showing that Greg was frequenting the same circle of antiquarian dealers as these men.<sup>44</sup> He must have been much the smaller player; while men like Henry Wellcome set out to 'collect the world',<sup>45</sup> Greg focused on British and European artefacts, and eventually made English pottery his specialism. In 1907, he wrote of the 'fierce stress of the auction room and the sheer bullion weight of collectors, whose commissions run to the "get-at-any-price" figure'.<sup>46</sup>

As Montagu Benton indicated in 1911, interest in the domestic objects of the recent past, rendered increasingly obsolete by the spread of industrialisation, was expanding rapidly. The very ordinariness of such material paradoxically contributed to its rarity value:

it is only in the last few years that museums and private collectors have realized the importance of these relics, and owing to their having been, when discarded, destroyed as useless, many objects which were formerly to be found in almost every household are now rarely met with.<sup>47</sup>

This aspect of the handicrafts collection is thus comparable, on a smaller scale, to material that is also found in the overtly ethnographic contexts of the Pitt Rivers and Horniman Museums. However, although loose themes can be discerned from the catalogue listings as indicated above, there is not the same sense of an overarching classificatory scheme as was evident in

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<sup>41</sup> Douglas, ref.24.

<sup>42</sup> See Frances Larson, *An Infinity of Things: How Sir Henry Wellcome Collected the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> I am grateful to Sharon Blakey for information from her research into the Bateman collections.

<sup>44</sup> See for example 1922.854/3, a pair of knives and 1922.1174 (cat.178), a pipe holder, both bought from Fenton & Sons of Oxford Street; 1922.1531 and 836 (cat.218), a set of roundels bought from Sotheby's.

<sup>45</sup> Larson, ref.42.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Greg, *A Contribution to the History of English Pottery* (Manchester City Art Galleries, 1907) p.81.

<sup>47</sup> Montagu Benton, ref.22, pp.92-93.



the pottery display. Visibly related groups of things, for example lamps, lanterns and candleholders, were also interspersed with objects that seem, on the face of it, unrelated – a horseshoe, a spinning whorl, glass charms for curing cattle, a nutcracker and the fragmentary remains of two medieval shoes (Figs.4.28-31).



Figures 4.28-4.31: Selection of items in Case 7 (clockwise from left): cat.231, 'Horse Shoe' (1922.1237); cat.247, 'Spinning whorl' (1922.876); cat.262, 'Two pointed shoes dug up in London, one with hay in it...Henry V 1413-1422' (1922.1804); cat.245, 'Charms put into the water which cattle drink to make the animals more prolific. Anglo-Saxon' (1922.1284).

Even where objects were grouped in sets, the catalogue gives little sense of an internal logic to the set. The case list for the collection of keys appears to have no obvious order – it is not organised by chronology, geography, material, size or complexity of design – suggesting the arrangement may have been more aesthetic than typological. Similarly, the catalogue is inconsistent in its approach to attribution. Where dates are given, they are inconsistently applied, ranging from specific years and approximated centuries to loose period descriptors, from 'Empire' and 'William and Mary' to 'Modern' and even 'old'. Much is undated. The same is true of geographical origin, which is only given for non-British objects or archaeological find sites. The overall effect suggests not so much a display for 'reading', in terms of historical narrative or cross-cultural comparison, but rather a series of interconnected material 'glimpses' into an otherwise undifferentiated field that might be loosely termed 'life in the past'. This is further enhanced by the inclusion of occasional anecdotal snippets in the otherwise cursory catalogue: the monk wearing his medieval chain, the shepherd 'catching the leg of a run-away

sheep'.<sup>48</sup> In this light, the *City News* review seems particularly apposite in its description of the exhibition as stimulus for the imagination rather than the provision of a history lesson.<sup>49</sup>

### **'The Clothes of Another Century'<sup>50</sup>**

In addition to the domestic and work-related objects so far discussed, the display also included a substantial amount of clothing and related accessories. In fact, nearly a quarter of the objects on display were items of dress or what is known as OPUA (objects of personal use and adornment).<sup>51</sup> Dress provided the new display's publicity images, in the form of outfits modelled by Assistant Curator Mr Batho and another member of staff, Miss Wild (Fig.4.32). As the largest items in a room full of small things, clothing must have dominated. It would certainly have been the first thing visitors to the Greg Room encountered. Case 1 contained examples of eighteenth and nineteenth century British clothing, including seven dresses, a man's smock 'made by an old Shropshire woman of 80 in 1910',<sup>52</sup> and a range of bodices, waistcoats, shoes, bonnets, gloves, jewellery and accessories. The ensembles worn by Mr Batho and Miss Wild were all taken from this case. Both outfits exhibited a loose approach to historical accuracy. Miss Wild's late eighteenth century brocaded overdress was matched with a mid-nineteenth century bonnet, mittens and parasol. Mr Batho wore the Shropshire smock, an item of rural workwear, paired with a gentleman's top hat in grey silk, made in London in 1844 – another item that had previously belonged to Thomas Bateman.<sup>53</sup> The case itself, as far as can be judged, did not display its contents in the form of assembled outfits but as individual items. Overall, although examples of men's and children's clothing were included, its contents were predominantly feminine, 27 out of the 38 catalogue entries being examples of fashionable women's clothing and accessories (Figs.4.33-38).

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<sup>48</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.14, cat.173, p.21, cat.333.

<sup>49</sup> *Manchester City News*, 9 December 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive. See Chapter Three, p.86.

<sup>50</sup> Caption to a publicity image in the *Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1922, p.6.

<sup>51</sup> Out of 377 catalogue entries, 129 are clothing, OPUA or textiles. Of these 87 are clothing or OPUA.

<sup>52</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.8, cat.27.

<sup>53</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.8, cat.28.



Figure 4.32: Cutting from *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1922, showing Mr Batho and Miss Wild modelling costume from the collection. Press cuttings book, MCG Archive.





Figures 4.33-4.38: Selection of items from Case 1 (clockwise from top left): cat.11, 'Child's bonnet, 1849' (1922.2085); cat.10, one of 'Cameo and other early Victorian brooches' (1922.1987); cat.25, 'Waistcoat. 18<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1793); cat.7, overdress from 'Quilted satin skirt and brocade overdress, 18<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1886); cat.21, 'Pair of evening boots. 19<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1766); cat.1, one of 'Three dresses. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1760).

In fact, the first four cases on display in 1922 were dominated by clothing, textiles and associated objects. Complementing the larger items of clothing, Case 2 included embroidered garments such as caps, gloves, collars and bags, mostly dated from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Case 3 brought together jewellery, accessories and sewing equipment, including Berlin ironwork 'made during the Napoleonic war when the German women gave up their gold for iron'<sup>54</sup> and, among more than 30 examples of ear-rings 'of various periods',<sup>55</sup> three pairs of nineteenth century glass earrings '[b]rought by the Breton sailors for their sweethearts'<sup>56</sup> (Figs.4.39-41). The only explicitly masculine object was a '[g]entleman's watch holder',<sup>57</sup> undated. Case 4 comprised a group of 13 hair combs from Britain, India and Benin, and a 'collection of twelve fans of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' (Figs.4.42-46).<sup>58</sup>

There is no mention of clothing or textiles in either the 1920 probate inventory or Thomas Greg's papers. None of the garments, textiles or needlework equipment in the collection have dealers' labels fixed to them; instead they have individual names, sewn and written into linings. Montagu Benton and his antiquarian colleagues did not include clothing *per se* in their definition of the bygone. Moreover, references in the Greg correspondence indicate that throughout the 1920s friends and relations who knew of Mrs Greg's interest gave her examples to add to the collection;<sup>59</sup> this is corroborated by attention to objects themselves, several of which are inscribed with family names.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Thomas Bateman's hat was not an article from his collection but a personal accessory. Such observations suggest that this aspect of the collection was developed substantially after Thomas Greg's death and that it was, in part at least, dependent on familial and friendship networks. While there was an established market for antiquarian everyday things through the highly competitive and overtly masculine arena of auction houses and dealers' rooms,<sup>61</sup> the collecting of everyday clothing and needlework operated via different systems of exchange, through family inheritance, gifts and the domestic networks to which women had access.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.10, cat.74.

<sup>55</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.9, cat.69.

<sup>56</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.9, cat.68.

<sup>57</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.10, cat.71.

<sup>58</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.12, cat.138.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 1 August 1925; 11 December 1926; 10 November 1928. MCG Archive.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, 1922.2140, sampler inscribed Emily Hird Jones (Mrs Greg's mother), 1922.2190, child's bed inscribed T. A. Hope (Mrs Greg's father).

<sup>61</sup> See Larson, ref.42, p.59, for a discussion of the gendered space of the auction room.

<sup>62</sup> Hill, ref.28, p.209.





Figures 4.39-4.41: Selection of items in Case 3 (clockwise from top left): cat.68, 'Three pairs of blue glass earrings. Brought by the Breton sailors for their sweethearts. End of 19<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.965); cat.128, one of 'Seven small pincushions' (1922.895/7); cat. 122, one of 'Four beaded bags and two woven' (1922.982).



Figures 4.42-4.46: Selection of items in Case 4 (clockwise from top left): cat.138, two of 'A Collection of twelve fans of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' (1922.1052, 1922.1055); cat.141, 'Bronze comb, dug up in London, Holborn Viaduct 1866' (1922.1074); cat.142, 'Comb dug up in Aylesbury, wooden' (1922.1073); cat.140, one of 'Eight combs of the Empire period' (1922.1046).

If clothing was not included in the category of the bygone, neither was it actively collected at this point by art museums. As Lou Taylor observes, before the employment of female curators, well into the twentieth century, 'fashionable European dress was rarely allowed in through the doors of museums of industrial/decorative arts'.<sup>63</sup> Prior to 1922, dress had neither been acquired nor exhibited by Manchester City Art Galleries.<sup>64</sup> Few museums were collecting dress at all; smaller museums might accept donations that reflected local history and the London Museum from its inception in 1911 acquired clothing as representative of the social history of the city.<sup>65</sup> However, as Madeleine Ginsburg, the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A)'s first Curator of Dress, later recalled, it was 'not considered "nice" for gentlemen [curators] to collect [ladies'] dress'.<sup>66</sup> Some garments did make their way into major museum collections, but these were acquired primarily either as ethnographic specimens or for their demonstration of craft skill and textile design. Thus articles of clothing or personal adornment that spoke of particular rituals or practices might be collected by the likes of Wellcome and Pitt Rivers, while museums such as the V&A acquired examples of dress that demonstrated particular forms of pattern, weave, or embroidery skill. According to Taylor, however, as a serious subject of study in itself, the history of European fashionable dress 'was quite simply neither understood nor accepted'.<sup>67</sup>

The Greg display of 1922 both adheres to and departs from these observations. The ratio of clothing to other material on display suggests it occupied a dominant position in the collection in its own right. Much of it was also British or European, eighteenth to nineteenth century, and primarily middle-class. Most of it, though not all, was female. And Mrs Greg's catalogue preface placed fashion centre-stage, as she compared pointed medieval boots with blunt-toed Tudor shoes in order to make the wider point that 'in the past, as in the present, the old order gave place to new, fashions and ideas changed'.<sup>68</sup> However, such material was also situated in a broader context of more overtly ethnographic and antiquarian objects, in some instances displayed alongside it. Case 4, for example, included women's tortoiseshell hair combs of the 'Empire period' along with more geographically and temporally distanced examples of the same object type: Indian and African combs and archaeological specimens excavated in

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<sup>63</sup> Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) p.105.

<sup>64</sup> Although the Galleries did show textile exhibitions and had briefly acquired the Bock collection (see previous chapter).

<sup>65</sup> Other major dress collections, eg. the Bath Fashion Museum and National Museums Scotland are all post-1922. See Taylor, ref.63, pp.105-155; Hill, ref.28.

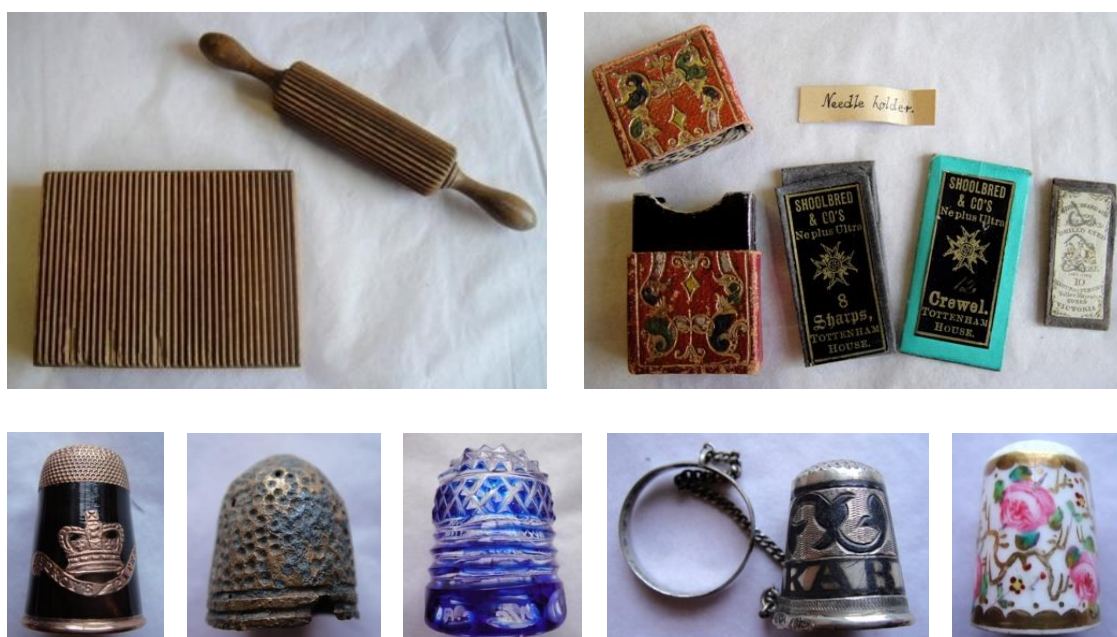
<sup>66</sup> Taylor, ref.63, p.118. Ginsburg was appointed Curator in 1957.

<sup>67</sup> Taylor, ref.63, p.105.

<sup>68</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.5.



London and Aylesbury.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, nineteenth century children's shoes and pattens were shown alongside medieval shoe fragments, an excavated pair of horsebone skates and a Tudor spur 'used at tournaments' in Case 7.<sup>70</sup> Case 5 included a small number of domestic bygones related to the care and maintenance of dress, such as a frill presser 'for gentlemen's shirts', two busks and a wig curler,<sup>71</sup> amongst the pocket knives, clay pipes and ink horns. And Case 3 also included domestic equipment associated primarily with needlework. Pincushions, needleholders, bodkins and scissors, mostly undated, were displayed along with the collection of 61 thimbles that had so amused the *Evening Chronicle's* 'Philipant' (Figs.4.47-53). Such material provided an implicit link between clothing and the wider range of everyday tools and implements of the past that characterised the developing category of bygones.



Figures 4.47-4.53: Selection of items in Cases 3 and 5 (clockwise from top left): cat.171, 'Frill presser, for gentlemen's shirts' (1922.1076); cat.129, 'Needle holder' (1922.878); cat.89, 'Thimble. Coalport' (1922.921); cat.115, one of 'Three Russian thimbles' (1922.910); cat.107, 'Glass Thimble. 19<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.935); cat.80, 'Thimble. Probably 15<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.897); cat.91, 'Thimble, Piercy's Patent' (1922.925).

Further examples of clothing and textiles on display conveyed a more explicitly ethnographic message, in that they focused on other cultures. Case 10, towards the end of the catalogue, appears to have offered a counterpoint to Case 1 in that it too included examples of full garments and a range of accessories. While the first case focused on British dress, the penultimate case contained Eastern European, Mediterranean and Asian clothing. It included ecclesiastical garments from Catholic nations, a 'sash worn by a Turkish Railway Official' and a

<sup>69</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.12, cats.139-143.

<sup>70</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.14, cat.174; pp.17-18, cats.231, 243, 258, 260, 262.

<sup>71</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.14-15, cats.171, 184, 189.

'Bulgarian peasant woman's dress'<sup>72</sup> (Figs.4.57-62). However, along with complete garments, the case also included multiple fragments of garments and strips of 'Rhodian work' and 'Turkish embroidery',<sup>73</sup> suggesting that workmanship, rather than wear, was the dominant theme. The ethnographic study of 'peasant' societies, deployed in the revival and development of craft skill, was central to other projects of the period including the Haslemere Handicrafts Museum and Harry Peach's Dryad study collection. It is less overt in the Greg collection as a whole, which did not explicitly differentiate between cultures. Nonetheless, the relationship between the practices of daily life 'elsewhere' and making skill is embodied in the combination of the words 'handicrafts' and 'bygone'. The crossover between the two, and the potential for ambiguity of meaning this might incur, is neatly summed up in a hand-written note on the catalogue card for the Shropshire smock: 'it is difficult to know whether this example was intended for proper rural wear, or as an example of traditional skilled needlework'<sup>74</sup> (Figs.4.54-56).



Figures 4.54-4.56: cat.27, 'Man's smock made by an old Shropshire woman of 80 in 1910' (1922.1789).

<sup>72</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.22, cat.357.

<sup>73</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.22, cats.346, 359.

<sup>74</sup> Manchester City Galleries, 1922.1789 display label,

<http://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/search/collection/?id=1922.1789> [accessed 31 March 2016].





Figures 4.57-4.62: Selection of items in Case 10 (clockwise from top left): cat.357, 'Bulgarian peasant woman's dress, 1870' (1922.2066); cat.349, 'Child's bodice. Spanish' (1922.2108); cat.358, 'Sash worn by a Turkish railway official, 1871' (1922.2107); cat.348, 'Two pieces of embroidery for vestments. Spanish' (1922.2110); cat.367, 'Turkish work' (1922.2049).

## Handicrafts: ‘the adornment of human life’<sup>75</sup>

Benton’s 1911 definition of the bygone included not only the obsolete, but also those objects ‘no longer made by hand’ as a result of increasing industrialisation. He acknowledged aesthetic value in this respect, identifying the wares of the local blacksmith and carpenter as examples of workmanship that once possessed ‘a distinct individuality and charm, before industries became centralized and the introduction of machinery deadened the artistic faculty’.<sup>76</sup> The demise of artisanal craft skills and traditions as a result of increasing industrialisation was a key concern of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In 1888, William Morris posed a binary opposition, that of ‘machinery *versus* handicraft’.<sup>77</sup> He drew on Marx’s *Capital* to differentiate between the medieval age of ‘pure handicraft’<sup>78</sup> – characterised by equal citizenship, the autonomy of the skilled worker, and the subservience of tool to hand – and its gradual degradation through the emergence of the capitalist employer, division of labour, and the subsequent transformation of individual artisans into cogs in a machine. Five years later, in a lecture to the Whitechapel Guild of Crafts, architect John Sedding described ‘the handicrafts in old days’<sup>79</sup> in terms of the once harmonious integration of life and work. He conjured up a pre-industrial world of indeterminate date, in which profound sensibility to material, function, form and surface – the combination of beauty and usefulness – was at the heart of community life.

The antiquarian bygone collector and the Arts and Crafts polemicist thus had common ground, albeit with different priorities. For Benton the historian, archaeological value came first, for the insights it offered into the wider practices of life in the past. For Sedding, however, it was the embodiment of a design sensibility, and the lesson it might offer to the future. The Whitechapel Guild of Crafts was one of several institutions founded on medieval guild models in an attempt to create new communities of learning in traditional art and craft disciplines.<sup>80</sup> But with a difference – his audience was not trainee carpenters, but ‘men and lads, who, after earning their livelihood...during the day, elect to spend their leisure-hours in learning how to make art’.<sup>81</sup> Sedding regarded the committed amateur as the standard carrier for a way of working that might no longer be viable in economic terms, but was rich beyond

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<sup>75</sup> John Sedding, ‘The Handicrafts in Old Days’, *Art and Handicraft* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trünner, 1893) p.57.

<sup>76</sup> Montagu Benton, ref.22, p.93.

<sup>77</sup> William Morris, ‘The Revival of Handicraft’, in *Fortnightly Review*, 44 (263) (1888) p.603 [original emphasis].

<sup>78</sup> Morris, ref.77, p.605.

<sup>79</sup> Sedding, ref.75, pp.50-81.

<sup>80</sup> For example, John Ruskin’s Guild of St George, founded in 1871; the Century Guild of Artists, 1882; the Art Workers Guild, 1884; the Guild of Handicraft, 1888.

<sup>81</sup> Sedding, ref.75, p.53.

measure in emotional and spiritual value. 'It is the industries of our leisure hours', he claimed, 'that are the hinge upon which our destiny turns'.<sup>82</sup> The role of the amateur maker as legitimate descendent of the pre-industrial artisan was not a Morrisian ideal, but nonetheless gained currency during the period. The Home Arts and Industries Association (HAIA) was founded in 1884, with the aim of teaching 'the minor arts to the working classes, thus spreading a knowledge of artistic handiwork among the people'.<sup>83</sup> The Association's purpose was not to develop work skills or employability, but rather to improve people's quality of life through worthwhile leisure activity. In 1897, the founding of the Educational Handwork Association (EHA) extended this debate into schools. Its members argued that older children should be taught handicrafts in place of more vocational 'manual training', in order to develop innate creative expression and produce well-rounded individuals.<sup>84</sup> Reviewing the HAIA exhibition at the Albert Hall in May 1900, Mabel Cox observed the growing public interest in 'the revival of art in industry and in handicraft'<sup>85</sup> neatly separating out the two.

By 1906, therefore, when Thomas Greg first referred to 'handicrafts of bygone times', the word handicraft – along with its close relations, handwork and homecraft – resonated with philanthropic Arts and Crafts-based notions of moral and spiritual wellbeing in the production of good, honest objects and time well-spent, once upon a time by the anonymous artisan, but increasingly by the committed amateur. The objects that went on display in 1922 not only provided a sense of the history of daily life but also, wrapped up in this, an implicit object lesson in ways of making as an integral part of life. Towards the end of the catalogue preface, having established the historical intent of the collection as set out by her late husband, Mrs Greg added her own emphasis on the importance of handwork. 'Machine-made things can never take the place of hand-made ones' she claimed. 'We cannot put our love of beauty or true work into a machine-made article. We can make useful, true, accurate things but the higher, nobler satisfaction is only to be found when we work with our head, hands and heart'.<sup>86</sup> Thus, while the collection as history appears to have been Thomas Greg's primary motivation, the collection as making was arguably Mary Greg's. In this, she did not reject the machine-made, but advocated a complementary relationship that placed the value of the machine in the utility of its products, and the value of the handmade in the impact of its processes. This echoes Sedding's suggestion, made thirty years earlier, of an almost co-

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<sup>82</sup> Sedding, ref.75, p.53.

<sup>83</sup> Mabel Cox, 'The Home Arts and Industries Association', in *The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record of Arts, Crafts and Industries* (American Edition), 28 (247) (1900) p.145.

<sup>84</sup> Pat Kirkham, *Harry Peach: Dryad and the DIA* (London: The Design Council, 1986).

<sup>85</sup> Cox, ref.83, p.145.

<sup>86</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.6.

dependent relationship between the necessary drudgery of the day-job and the consequent freedom of the night-school, where work might be its own reward.

However, as many historians have noted, the ideological and practical distinctions between head, hand, heart and machine during the later nineteenth century were considerably more complex than such arguments might suggest.<sup>87</sup> The Greg collection included objects made by varying combinations of hand and machine, for various purposes including both income and leisure, and in varying environments, including the home, the workshop and the factory. In this respect, it was indeed a 'varied' collection. Ironwork, cutlery and keys were all examples of work clearly deriving from paid labour in a workshop or factory, yet as Glenn Adamson notes, the lock-making industry 'was still an intensive handcraft in the middle of the nineteenth century' and continued to be so for many years.<sup>88</sup> Equally, many so-called 'home arts', such as embroidery and lace-making, were historically organised according to industrial production models, as piecework 'put out' to workers at home, offering little scope for individual creativity.<sup>89</sup> In fact, the indeterminate and problematic boundaries between the categories of mass-production, artisanal work, paid labour, domestic work, leisure pursuit and amateur craft are all frequently traversed within the collection, sometimes within the same object.



Figure 4.63: cat.369, 'An old lace pillow, with bobbins, complete, on stand' (1922.1324).

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Christopher Frayling, *On Craftsmanship: towards a new Bauhaus* (London: Oberon Books, 2011).

<sup>88</sup> Adamson, ref.87, p.4.

<sup>89</sup> Pamela Sharpe, 'Lace and Place: women's business in occupational communities in England 1550-1950', *Women's History Review*, 19 (2) (2010), pp.283-306.



Case 11, the final display case in the exhibition catalogue, exemplifies this. The entire case was given over to '[a]n old lace pillow, with bobbins, complete, on stand' (Fig.4.63), along with two samples of lace. The second of the two publicity images printed in *The Manchester Guardian* shows Miss Wild seated at the pillow, apparently making bobbin lace (Fig.4.64). The newspaper caption to the pair of images makes no attempt to hide the historical anachronism depicted, stating comfortably that:

The lady's quilted satin gown with a flower brocade overdress belongs to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and her poke bonnet dates from 1818. The parasol is mid-Victorian, and the lace pillow with its bobbins, is very old. The man's smock was made in Shropshire.<sup>90</sup>

Mr Batho in his smock was thus rendered timeless but regional, a generic representation of the rural worker of the past (neatly glossing over the fact that the smock was only ten years old). Miss Wild's outfit, meanwhile, encompassed nearly a century of changing middle-class female fashion. Dressed in fine satin and gazing serenely into the middle distance (rather than concentrating on her handwork) she also presented, in the right hand image, an ideal of the leisured lace worker.

Both Pamela Sharpe and Elaine Freedgood identify a late-nineteenth century re-framing of the history of lace-making as a 'time-honoured traditional artisan craft'.<sup>91</sup> While the village blacksmith became the model of pre-industrial masculine craftsmanship,<sup>92</sup> lace-makers, 'seated blissfully by their pillows at the doors of ivy-clad cottages'<sup>93</sup> might be considered a female equivalent (Fig.4.65). As a home-based practice, lace-making was seen as respectable, clean, delicate, and non-industrial in that it was also conducted as a leisure pursuit by women of higher social class. Lace united class through gender, and mid-century lace books traced an aristocratic, even royal lineage, citing Catherine of Aragon and Queen Victoria as both lace-makers and patrons.<sup>94</sup> But the postcard images of elderly lace-makers were staged, produced for tourists in the lace-making towns and villages. Lace was primarily pauper employment, made in dark, damp rooms (to avoid light or soot damage) by young women and children, whose eyesight had not yet been damaged by long hours of poorly lit work. It was a large-scale industry in which home and factory, hand and machine, were closely intertwined – hand-made Devon lace sprigs were mounted on machine-made net, and in Nottinghamshire, machine lace

<sup>90</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1922, p.6.

<sup>91</sup> Sharpe, ref.89, p.284.

<sup>92</sup> Adamson, ref.87, pp.79-82.

<sup>93</sup> Elaine Freedgood, "'Fine Fingers': Victorian Handmade Lace and Utopian Consumption', in *Victorian Studies*, 45 (4) (2003), p.633.

<sup>94</sup> Freedgood, ref.93.

was sent out to be finished by hand.<sup>95</sup> The 1922 newspaper image of Miss Wild, unlike that of the nineteenth century lace-maker, is set against a neutral background. It does not situate her activity within a wider lived environment, idealised or otherwise, but places the historically imprecise costumed figure purely in relation to her work, in a way that is reminiscent of Franz Boas' ethnographic photography of North Coast American Indians, made for the purposes of museum diorama in 1894 (Fig.4.66).<sup>96</sup> But more akin to the Devon lace worker than the Kwakiutl Indian woman, Miss Wild is not absorbed in her work; instead she appears to be lost in a kind of reverie.



Figures 4.64-4.66 (clockwise from top): Postcard of Devon lace worker, late nineteenth century; Miss Wild as pictured in *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1922; Kwakiutl Indian woman spinning, British Columbia, 1894, photograph by O. C. Hastings for Franz Boas.

<sup>95</sup> Sharpe, ref.89.

<sup>96</sup> Ira Jacknis, 'Franz Boas and Photography', *Studies in Visual Communication*, 10 (1) (1984) pp.33, 41-2.

## The power of making

Mrs Greg's emphasis on the personal fulfilment to be found in the making of things – following Sedding's account of amateur craft as a means to self-actualization – suggests that, for her at least, the historical conditions of making and use as evidenced in the collection were of less importance than its role as a stimulus to future creativity. The catalogue preface presented readers with a direct call to arms, borrowed from Thomas Carlyle: “‘whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might, work while it is called today’”, Mrs Greg wrote, ‘so that what you make may be beautiful and worth handing on’.<sup>97</sup> In 1928, she responded enthusiastically to reports of high visitor figures, commenting:

I am glad indeed to hear so many visitors have seen both the collections. How glad I should be - we all should - if we could know if any of them ever make a single thing as a result which will be a delight to themselves or their children and also for those who come after.<sup>98</sup>

Her sentiments clearly resonated more widely. In 1922, the *City News* reviewer commented:

If anything can plead with unanswerable eloquence for the revival of craftsmanship which is being started in England it is an exhibition of this sort. Manchester owes Mrs Greg a debt of deep gratitude for enabling it to enjoy the collection.<sup>99</sup>

The origins of the collection may suggest an Arts and Crafts-informed romantic view of the handicrafts of the past, but the redemptive potential of handwork also took on a particular resonance in the aftermath of the First World War. The war years and the immediate post-war period saw the founding of several government and non-government bodies that took a particular interest in issues of design and making. The Design and Industries Association (DIA, 1915), the Women's Institute (WI, 1915), the British Institute of Industrial Art (BIIA, 1920) and the Rural Industries Bureau (RIB, 1921) all took an active interest in handicraft, either as a stimulus to better industrial design and ‘good taste’, or as part of a raft of activities intended to aid the nation's psychological recovery. In 1922, the year the Greg collection went on display, a Parliamentary Select Committee drew up a list of philanthropic craft workshops.<sup>100</sup> Building on pre-war ideas of the essential ‘goodness’ of hand-making, organisations such as the Leeds Tuberculosis Ex-Servicemen's Co-operative and St Dunstan's (for blind ex-servicemen) taught convalescent war veterans skills such as woodwork and basket weaving.

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<sup>97</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.6.

<sup>98</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 23 September 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>99</sup> *Manchester City News*, 9 December 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>100</sup> Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) p.27.

Harry Peach established Dryad Handicrafts in this context, supplying craft materials to schools, institutes and hospitals. Dryad became the major supplier for amateur craft activities during the interwar period, fostering a handicrafts boom through the production and distribution of materials, kits, and instruction manuals. From 1920-1930, Dryad published information pamphlets on a huge range of topics including rush- cane-seating, painted wood, papier mâché, pattern making with paper shapes, weaving, clay modelling, stencilling, toy carving, vegetable dyeing and rug making. The study collection he amassed alongside this totalled some 3,000 items by the time of his death in 1936. It included basketwork, woodcarving, textiles, clothing and ceramics from all over the world. Grounded in his reading of ethnographic and archaeological studies, the collection provided an object lesson in construction, materials and decorative form, for use as inspiration by other makers, both professional and amateur.<sup>101</sup>

Similarly, aspects of the Greg collection illustrated a range of technical, material and decorative possibilities. Case 8 included pictorial objects in paper, metal, glass, straw, bone and horn, many of which used cutting to decorative effect. Paper cut-out silhouettes sat alongside a brass and silvered glass cutwork candleholder and a glass casket with clear cartouches cut into an opaque white outer layer. A group of straw-work marquetry objects including decorated boxes and plaques were attributed to 'French Prisoners in the Napoleonic War'<sup>102</sup> (Figs.4.67-70). Also attributed to prisoners-of-war were examples of cut rolled paperwork and a model of a ship made from carved bone. Such objects demonstrated the creative application of pre-existing or self-taught skills to a limited range of materials, and the useful occupation of enforced leisure. In the context of postwar recovery they also showed how practical handwork might provide a means of combating trauma, or even how creativity might emerge from it. The pictorial theme extended to other decorative techniques – a landscape scene worked in human hair; a picture of the Battle of Ravenna made of glass beads and 'one of the earliest specimens of machine-made lace',<sup>103</sup> with a repeat pattern of figures and scrolling floral sprays. A small number of ornaments included a blown glass harp and moulded glass portraits (Figs.4.71-75). Thus the contents of this case demonstrated a range of approaches, techniques and materials for two- and three-dimensional decorative work. It included objects that could only be made by the skilled maker in a workshop (glass and metalwork), but also how such approaches might be applied to objects made with less specialised materials and equipment (paper cut-outs and straw-work).

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<sup>101</sup> Kirkham, ref.84, pp.70-88.

<sup>102</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.19, cat.270.

<sup>103</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.19, cat.276.



Figures 4.67-4.70: Selection of items in Case 8 (clockwise from top): cat.264, 'A Fox Hunt. Cut out in paper' (1922.1677); cat.265, 'Candlestick, cut work, silver and brass' (1922.792); cat.283, 'Glass casket' (1922.1321); cat.270, one of '11 pieces of inlaid straw work done by the French prisoners in the Napoleonic war' (1922.1297).





Figures 4.71-4.75: Selection of items in Case 8 (clockwise from top): cat.268, 'Beaded work. The Battle of Ravenna. Italian' (1922.1848); cat.281a, one of 'Two drinking horns: one showing mail coach attacked by Lion, and the other portrait of a lady' (1922.806); cat.276, 'One of the earliest specimens of machine made lace. English. 1800' (1922.1847); cat.269, 'Cards with the signs of Zodiac' (1922.1278); cat.273, one of 'Two glass harps' (1922.1292).



Case 2 also showed examples of decorative work, but here focusing almost exclusively on skill with fabric and needle (Figs.4.76-79). Two samplers worked in coloured silks and human hair, were shown alongside examples of diverse embroidery processes. Ribbonwork, 'old English *petit point*',<sup>104</sup> beaded work, openwork and corded quilting were all displayed through fabric samples, fragments and finished items of clothing, dating from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. On the nearby wall, further examples included drawn thread work, several lengths of Chinese embroidery and framed groups of Italian, French, Flemish and English lace. These were displayed next to collaged fabric pictures, and an embroidered scene sewn by Mrs Greg herself (Fig.4.80). This is the only object in the catalogue credited to Mrs Greg as maker, although she later gave further examples of work by herself and other family members.<sup>105</sup> The content of Case 2, celebrating the domestic art of needlework, thus spoke primarily to the female visitor. It ranged from nineteenth century samplers sewn by young girls, to contemporary embroidery carried out by an elderly woman. It showed what might be achieved with the tools on display in the adjacent case, demonstrating different techniques that required different levels of expertise. It combined the purely decorative and the more functional clothing-related, and suggested a continuity of endeavour over a 300-year period.

The gendered history of needlework has been much debated since Roszika Parker's 1984 study, *The Subversive Stitch*, in which she argued that from the medieval period onward, embroidery has been used as a means of 'educating women into the feminine ideal'.<sup>106</sup> As already indicated with regard to lace, nineteenth century needlework was characterised as a gendered, home-bound occupation, but has also been used by women to process and sometimes subvert the bounded nature of their lives. In this respect it is possible to draw parallels with work carried out by prisoners-of-war. Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum argue that World War II prison camp internees used creativity to visually and materially engage with the challenges of enforced incarceration. Like Parker with regard to female domestic crafts, Carr and Mytum challenge what they regard as the false dichotomy of 'utilitarian' and 'artistic' creativity, arguing for the intrinsic validity of artwork that has traditionally been disregarded as merely 'frivolous activities that serve only to occupy leisure time'.<sup>107</sup> The status of the mid-Victorian household was determined, in part, by its level of ornamentation, in the form of lace,

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<sup>104</sup> Catalogue, ref.2, p.9, cat.54.

<sup>105</sup> See 1922.2140, sampler by Mrs Greg's mother, Emily Hird Jones; 1922.1859-60 embroidered panels by Mrs Greg.

<sup>106</sup> Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the making of the feminine* (London: The Women's Press, 1984) p.vi.

<sup>107</sup> Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum (eds.), *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012) p.4.

ribbons, fringing, coverings and a wide range of other homecraft products that signalled the woman of the house's accomplishments and leisure time. But, as Talia Schaffer argues, Arts and Crafts reformers such as William Morris and Charles Eastlake were scathing of contemporary female handwork, regarding the stencilling, painted furniture, embroidery and *papier collé* (cut and pasted coloured paper pictures) that filled Victorian homes as 'transient fashions' compared to the age-old authenticity of artisanal 'antiques'.<sup>108</sup> Morris was interested in the revival of pre-industrial modes of production, not amateur creativity. Even John Sedding, while celebrating the free will of the amateur maker and claiming home and church as the authentic sites of 'the handicrafts of old days', did not address domestic crafts as practised by women. As an architect, he focused on building details - masonry, brickwork, carpentry and ironwork. The female amateurism of home was not afforded the kind of reverence given to the predominantly male amateurism of night-school. In Manchester in 1922, however, Arts and Crafts-approved artisanal bygones such as wrought-iron work and carved wood were shown alongside domestic crafts such as embroidery, rolled paper work and fabric collage.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the HAIA, the EHA, and latterly the WI, had helped to give home crafts and their makers greater profile. These female-dominated associations organised charitable events, exhibitions and bazaars, selling the wares of amateur makers. However, hierarchies of value applied. Described by Tanya Harrod as operating 'at the other end of the spectrum'<sup>109</sup> from design reform bodies such as the DIA and BIA, such work was regarded with a degree of distaste by professional makers who, nonetheless, occasionally exhibited with them. In 1964, textile designer Phyllis Barron recalled *The Englishwoman Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts* (a popular London-based event that ran from 1910 to 1939) as 'a rather terrible sort of Christmas bazaar. A lady next to me sold brooches made of fishbones, and one on the other side decorated jam jars with oil paint'.<sup>110</sup> Neither Barron nor the painters of jam jars were included in the handicrafts collection, although the latter sit in closer proximity to the makers of sheep bone apple corers and glass bead pictures. Handicraft in this context had more in common with the ethos of the HAIA than the DIA. The anonymity of much of the collection's content attests to this. Some objects are attributed to generic types of maker - 'an old Shropshire woman', 'an English blacksmith', 'French prisoners', 'an amateur'. A smaller number have named makers, mainly where these appear as an integral part of the object (samplers, for example), but they are little more than a name. Mrs Greg's

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<sup>108</sup> Talia Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000) p.81.

<sup>109</sup> Tanya Harrod, ref.100, p.127.

<sup>110</sup> Phyllis Barron, cited in Harrod, ref.100, p.128.

embroidered picture is the only item in the catalogue to which the visitor could attach a known individual, the person who spoke to them from the preface.



Figures 4.76-4.79: Selection of items in Case 2 (clockwise from top left): cat.53, 'Sampler work by Jane Elizabeth Underwood, 18<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1822); cat.45a, 'Ribbonwork satchel. About 1850' (detail) (1922.1823); cat.54, 'Old English *petit point* work. William and Mary period' (1922.1821); cat.49, 'Child's cap, corded work. 17<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1833).

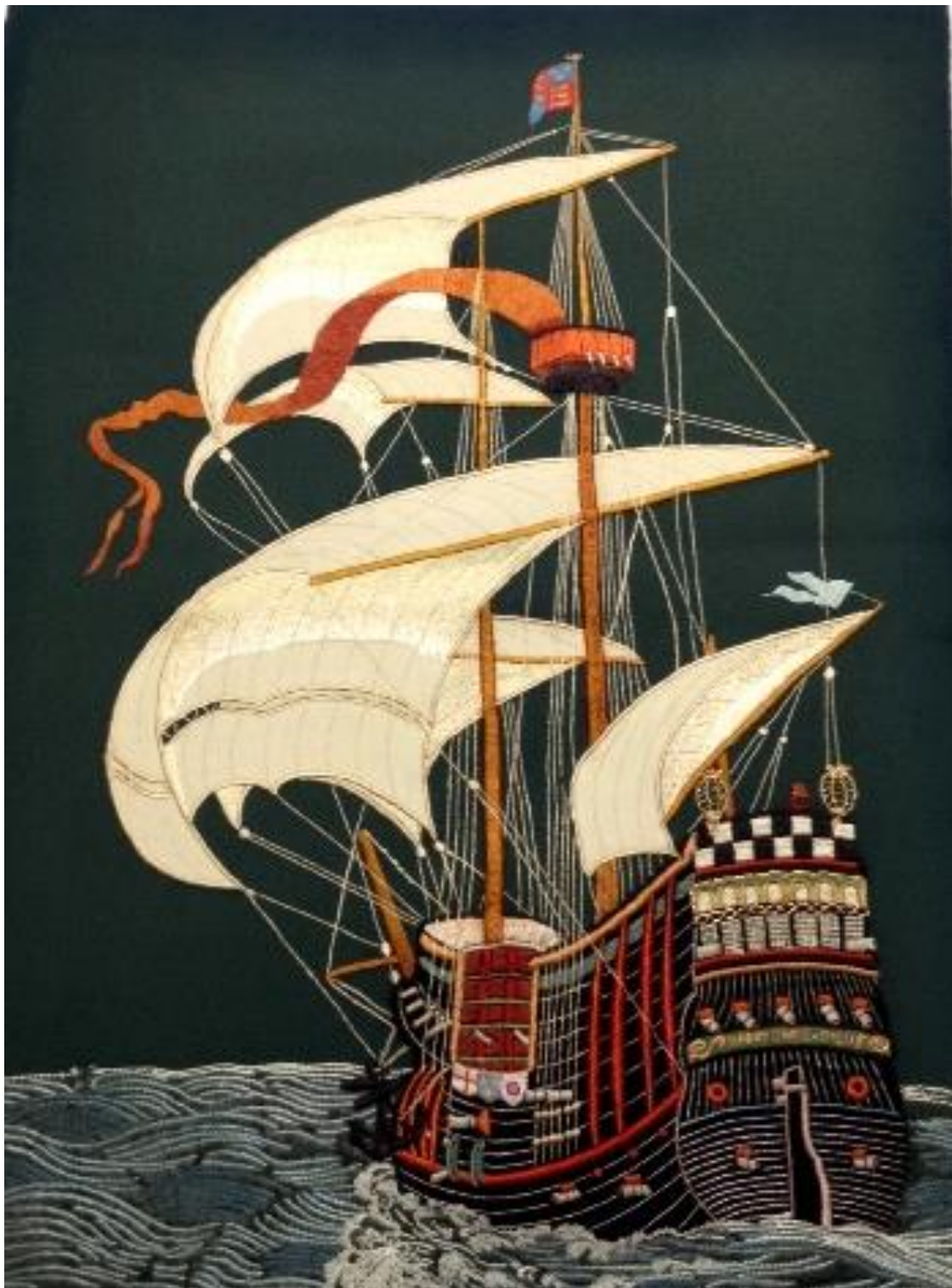


Figure 4.80: cat.44, 'Henry VIII's Ship, "Harry Grace à Dieu", embroidered by Mrs T. T. Greg' (1922.1844).



The anonymity of the maker, combined with the paucity of other details such as date or place of origin, may have worked to open up a sense of possibility, suggesting the universality of making. Fiona Hackney differentiates between the concepts of handicraft and home craft during this period in terms of skill. Where handicraft required significant levels of commitment and know-how, the kinds of home crafts increasingly promoted by women's magazines during the interwar period focused instead on the therapeutic potential of a kind of making that required minimal skill.<sup>111</sup> In this respect it is instructive to consider a short article that appeared on the same page of *The Manchester Guardian* as the Gallery's publicity photographs (Figs.4.81-83). Immediately below the figures of Mr Batho and Miss Wild, 'To Make a Basket' advised readers that '[t]here is not a very great deal of skill required in basket-making, and the work is light and interesting enough to amuse an invalid'.<sup>112</sup> Anyone and everyone – the young and the old, the rich and the poor, even the infirm and the imprisoned – could be a maker. Other articles on the same page include a report on fluctuating food prices and the family budget; advice on how to judge the quality of cloth; and the main feature, a discussion on the defeat of nearly all the women who had stood for Parliament in the recent General Election. The photographs of Mr Batho and Miss Wild in costume are flanked by adverts for food products, Christmas gifts, fur coats and family hotels. It is, in effect, a women's page. This period saw the emergence of the dedicated women's page and, with it, a new generation of women's magazine – *Good Housekeeping* was founded in 1922, *Woman's Friend* in 1924 and *Woman's Own* in 1932. They offered the reader a range of subjects seen from 'a woman's perspective', from household advice and fashion news to sport, topical news, and profiles of famous women.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Fiona Hackney, 'Use Your Hands for Happiness: Home Craft and Make-do-and-Mend in British Women's Magazines in the 1920s and 1930s', *Journal of Design History*, 19 (1) (2006) pp.23-38.

<sup>112</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 'To Make a Basket', 5 December 1922, p.6.

<sup>113</sup> Claire Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

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**1501**  
 6/6  
*FANNY FROM THE 18TH CENTURY*

**1502**  
 6/6  
*IN HER SLIPPERS*



### GOVERNMENT DRESSING

LONDON.

It looks very much as though the Government are themselves going in for some wrangling regarding food prices. The inquiry to be held into the disparity between wholesale and retail prices of horticultural produce is to be conducted by a select committee. As a rule investigations of this kind are not considered of sufficient public interest such as this.

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BY ONE OF THEM.

The defeat of all but two of the 32 women who contested seats at the general election has attracted widespread attention and been variously explained. By some it is attributed to masculine prejudice; by others to women's own timidity or each other's defeatist criticism. Both views are, however, thoughtful critics point out, this time defeated candidates on the whole have proved far more heavily than the women who stood in 1918. They did so remember that every newly enfranchised body of electors is slow to become confident of itself or to place power in the hands of representatives drawn from its own ranks, and they point to the Labour party as an illustration of this truth.

No doubt the women's own influence on the result, for there are plenty of prejudiced, jealous, and timid people of both sexes. But though such people would doubtless vote against women representatives, it may be questioned whether they are more numerous than the women electors who desire more women in Parliament and are willing to vote for a woman candidate (prejudice notwithstanding). In any case it is surely rash to assume that a major cause of the defeat of women candidates was mainly due to their sex.

Barbervill, lighting the sitting member in North Islington, raised the Labour vote from 4,381 in 1918 to 7,553. Dr. Beith, in East Islington, raised the Labour vote from 1,132 in 1918 to 5,908. The Labour vote in King's Cross, raised the Labour Cooperative vote from 2,917 in 1918 to 2,917 and cut down the Conservative majority by half. Miss Richardson, at Acton, increased the Labour vote from 4,241 in 1918 to 5,512. Three other Labour women polled respectably in constituencies where heath was contested by Labour.

The "National" Liberals as a party did worse than any other party at this election. They had three women candidates, all pitted against sitting members in irreparably Labour seats. Miss Grant, appearing in South Leeds a man, who had held the seat since 1936, polled 9,354 votes. Miss Fraser in Glasgow, Govan, did better with 5,336 votes than the women candidates in 1918, when the Labour vote was 1,500. Glasgow was a strong Labour seat, Glasgow Labour was in the forefront of the fight, and the vast majority of Beag was split at the last moment by a Unionist candidate, with the natural result of increasing the majority of Labour.

**LIBERALS AND INDEPENDENTS.**  
There were thirteen Liberal women candidates. Mrs. Winttingham's constituency, after a year's experience of her work in the House, increased her poll by over 3,000 votes and her majority by 28. Lady Curzon, first

There is not a very great deal of skill required in basket-making, and the work is light and interesting enough to amuse an invalid. There is a wide choice of material, from willow to raffia, and the shape or size may be just as fancy-dictates. Basket-making is practically weaving, and there are almost as many different weaves in baskets as there are in cloth, but the principle of them all is the same—that of interlacing strands to make a firm structure.

The simplest basket is made with a round piece of wood to form the bottom, into which straight sticks have been fastened. The material is twined in and out round these spokes until the sides are formed. But after a little experience the worker soon becomes expert enough to devise new ways of making uncommon baskets. Many of the baskets sold are made by blind people, which is proof that the work is not difficult. Baskets may be dyed in colour with any of the packet dyes that are sold, but browns and greens are perhaps the most suitable shades to use.

**Figures 4.81-4.83: Page 6 of *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1922 (details).**



The Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection as exhibited in 1922 thus contained within it a multi-layered set of interpretations of the material culture of everyday life, one that straddled Haward's 'old world' and 'new order'. It was framed as a look back at the everyday creativity of the past in order to encourage creative pursuit in the present. It included objects of the kind identified by Montague Benton and increasingly sought after by the 'museum hunters' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, circulated through the competitive and masculine environments of the sale room. It followed the Haslemere example in including, in clothing and textiles at least, the 'peasant' art of less industrialised nations. And it reflected contemporary interests in the therapeutic potential of making as a personal pursuit, emphasised through the inclusion of overtly feminine material that moved through different systems of exchange, primarily domestic. In 1927 its domestic qualities were further emphasised, when the collection was re-located to a historic house: the newly acquired Platt Hall branch gallery in south Manchester.

### **'The fusing of art and daily living'<sup>114</sup>**

Platt Hall is an eighteenth century redbrick Palladian house situated on the edge of Platt Fields Park in the south Manchester suburb of Rusholme. The house and grounds were sold by the Worsley family in 1908, shortly after which the land surrounding the house opened as a public park (Fig.4.84). Platt Hall was initially used as a tearoom, but in 1925 was transferred to the Art Galleries Committee for use as an art gallery. On opening to the public two years later, its transformation was applauded by the local press, who particularly praised the harmonious blend of new and old on offer. The influence of the growing Neo-Georgian movement clearly informed such opinion, *The Manchester Guardian* commenting that the Hall represented:

a standard of simplicity and dignity at a time when we are at last concerning ourselves to bring some symmetry into our hitherto haphazard cities. The Hall belongs to the period during which, more than at any other time, the planning both of public and private architecture in Britain was considered and seemly.<sup>115</sup>

The East and West wings of the house were converted into double-storey top-lit galleries, while the layout of the central core was preserved intact, enabling the site to combine both a modern public gallery function and a sense of domestic history. The first floor dining room was singled out as particularly fine; complete with surviving eighteenth century plaster-work

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<sup>114</sup> Jim Ede, 'Foreword', *Kettle's Yard house guide* (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard, 2002) p.5.

<sup>115</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'PLATT HALL: A New Branch Art Gallery', 23 May 1927, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

‘almost as delicate as lace’<sup>116</sup> it was lightly furnished with appropriately domestic items including a Persian rug, mahogany furniture and eighteenth century paintings. However, the remainder of the house was used as gallery space. While this included a number of paintings from the Galleries’ historical collections, it was dedicated primarily to the housing and display of two more recent acquisitions: the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection and the newly acquired Rutherford Loan Collection of modern British art (Figs.4.85-86).



Figure 4.84-4.86 (clockwise from top): Platt Hall, Rusholme, c.1908; cat.37, ‘Vase of flowers made of applied cut silks, in old carved frame’ (1922.1334); *Red Hot Pokers*, Vanessa Bell, 1921, from the Rutherford Collection (1925.321).

<sup>116</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, ‘PLATT HALL: A Lodging for the Rutherford Gift: MANCHESTER’S NEW ART GALLERY’, 21 May 1927, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

Bradford businessman and art collector Charles Rutherston had given his collection of 50 paintings, over 500 works on paper and 12 sculptures to Manchester in 1925, with the purpose of establishing a loan scheme for schools and art colleges.<sup>117</sup> Securing the collection for Manchester was a personal coup for Lawrence Haward, as Rutherston had chosen the Galleries expressly for its modern outlook and innovative education work. Rutherston moved in contemporary art circles; his artist brothers, Albert Rutherston and William Rothenstein<sup>118</sup> were both associated with the New English Art Club, and his wife Essil Elmslie, also a painter, was co-owner of London's Redfern Gallery.<sup>119</sup> The collection covered the period 1890-1925 and included many of Britain's most important contemporary artists: Augustus and Gwen John, Walter Sickert, Wyndham Lewis, Paul and John Nash, C. R. W. Nevinson, Lucien Pissarro, Philip Wilson Steer and Edward Wadsworth. Rutherston and latterly his wife Essil continued to add to the collection in subsequent years, including works by Vanessa Bell, Eric Gill, Winifred Nicholson and Matthew Smith. The collection marked a significant shift in the character and direction of Manchester's fine art collection, providing a foundation on which Haward continued to build throughout the interwar period. On its arrival in Manchester, after an initial period of display in the City Art Gallery, it found its permanent home at Platt Hall.

Modern British painting was becoming increasingly domestic in both scale and subject matter. In 1912, Roger Fry had written that '[a]ll art depends on cutting off the practical responses to sensations of ordinary life, thereby setting free a pure and as it were disembodied functioning of the spirit'.<sup>120</sup> A year later, however, he established the Omega Workshops, for 'allowing free play to the delight in creation in the making of objects of common life'.<sup>121</sup> Taken together, these two statements suggest not a rejection of 'ordinary life' *per se*, but of common sense 'practical responses' to it. Early twentieth century British painting is characterised by increasing attention to the surfaces of things, a prioritisation of sensation that Amy Woodson-Boulton describes as looking 'at' rather than 'through'.<sup>122</sup> The Rutherston Collection comprised

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<sup>117</sup> Angela Summerfield, *Interventions: Twentieth-century art collection schemes and their impact on local authority art gallery and museum collections of twentieth-century British art in Britain*, unpublished PhD (London: City University, 2007) pp.75-76.

<sup>118</sup> Charles and Albert both anglicized their surnames from Rothenstein to Rutherston.

<sup>119</sup> Natalie Bradbury, 'Manchester Art Gallery's Rutherston Loan Scheme', *Pictures for Schools: Documenting the research project 'Pictures for Schools: Art, Education and Reconstruction in Post-War Britain'*, 9 June 2014, <https://picturesforschools.wordpress.com/2014/06/09/manchester-art-gallery-s-rutherston-loan-scheme/> [accessed 02 July 2017].

<sup>120</sup> Roger Fry, cited in Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010) p.20.

<sup>121</sup> Omega Workshops brochure, cited in Harrod, ref.100, p.20.

<sup>122</sup> Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) p.149.

predominantly small scale works including landscapes, interiors, still lives and portraits. It is full of quiet contemplative compositions in which nothing much happens but the play of light over tables and fruit and vases of flowers. Many of them are painted by women. In 1930 Eric Newton, art critic to *The Manchester Guardian* and advisor to the Rutherford Loan Scheme, noted the 'lower and subtler key'<sup>123</sup> of much contemporary painting, speculating on whether the grand public spaces of the municipal gallery were appropriate to such intimate work. Such thinking would later inspire Jim Ede to establish Kettle's Yard in Cambridge as an informal domestic setting in which to encounter modern art as an integral part of life. As he later recalled, the seeds of this idea were sown in the 1920s when he first met Ben and Winifred Nicholson; Winifred in particular 'taught me much about the fusing of art and daily living'.<sup>124</sup>

In 1927 Platt Hall provided an opportunity to show modern and contemporary work in an elegant but intimate environment, part-gallery, part-house, stylistically in keeping with contemporary ideas about the 'seemliness' of architecture derived from a return to the Georgian. It also juxtaposed modern domestic painting with the material remnants of daily living in the past, in the form of the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection. Platt Hall opened in May with displays of paintings from the Rutherford Collection on the ground floor, and works on paper on the second floor. The handicrafts collection occupied the suite of first floor rooms flanking the central dining room. No information survives as to the layout but, again, Mrs Greg was closely involved, and from comments in the letters, groupings appear to have been largely based on the previous arrangement.<sup>125</sup> Mrs Greg again came to oversee the installation, bringing with her some 300 additional objects. Much of this was the remains of collections she and Thomas Greg had acquired together during their marriage. The development of Platt Hall coincided with Mrs Greg's departure from her family home; in 1927 Coles Park was sold, according to the conditions of Thomas Greg's will, and Mrs Greg moved into a small flat in London. As a result, Manchester was the recipient of several crates of material including snuff boxes, lamps and candlesticks, glass bottles and archaeological fragments, medals and 'tassies', furniture, Chinese ceramics, a substantial amount of early nineteenth century British pottery (that more logically belonged with the pottery collection), and a small group of Della Robbia art pottery that had been her husband's first ceramic purchase (Figs.4.87-92).<sup>126</sup> However, it also included further examples of dress, textiles, toys and other craft-related objects acquired specifically for the collection; in December 1925 she

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<sup>123</sup> Eric Newton, cited in Summerfield, ref.117, p.76.

<sup>124</sup> Ede, ref.114, p.5.

<sup>125</sup> Letters from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 31 May, 13 June 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>126</sup> See lists dated April and November 1926, MG correspondence, MCG Archive.

wrote to say she had just received 'some fresh and very good baskets from Nigeria' (Figs.4.93-98).<sup>127</sup> The ongoing overlap between ethnographic and craft-based interpretation of such objects is reflected in her suggestion that if there was not enough room for these in the new displays at Platt Hall, some might perhaps be sent to Manchester Museum.<sup>128</sup> On this occasion, the Galleries were more selective with Mrs Greg's gifts – after the opening of the Hall, objects not used in the displays were returned to Mrs Greg with Mr Batho's confident assertion that 'you will no doubt be able to place them where they will serve a useful purpose'.<sup>129</sup>

Thus the handicrafts collection was re-framed in the context of an explicitly historical domestic setting, alongside progressive modern painting that dated from the same period as that in which much of the collection had been assembled. In 1928 Mr Batho wrote that the collection 'seems almost part of its surroundings so well does it look in the rooms that have been allotted to it'.<sup>130</sup> Later that year Mrs Greg commented 'I think of Platt Hall with more pleasure than any other of the Manchester museums – but then it is partly because it is such a delightful house & so open & sunny'.<sup>131</sup> At Platt Hall the collection was interpreted increasingly in terms of the history of everyday life; as Mr Batho noted, 'it excites a great deal of interest...and is used by the teachers in expounding the lessons of social history to the school children'.<sup>132</sup>

The 1920s saw a growing popular literature that considered history in terms of the everyday. Laura Carter situates this within the liberal ideal of democratic citizenry that also informed museum development, drawing on Arts and Crafts aestheticism and encouraging active participation in culture.<sup>133</sup> Between 1918 and 1934, husband-and-wife team Marjorie and C. H. B. Quennell published *A History of Everyday Things in England*, a four-volume illustrated series for children that was a huge commercial success.<sup>134</sup> Between 1925 and 1931 Dorothy Hartley and Margaret M. Elliot produced the six-volume *Life and Work of the People of England*.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 30 December 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>128</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 26 May 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>129</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 31 May 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>130</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 13 March 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>131</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 10 November 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>132</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 13 March 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>133</sup> Laura Carter, 'The Quennells and the 'History of Everyday Life in England', c.1918-69', *History Workshop Journal*, 81 (1) (2016) p.108.

<sup>134</sup> Marjorie Quennell and C. H. B. Quennell, *A History of Everyday Things in England* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1918-1934).

<sup>135</sup> Dorothy Hartley and Margaret M. Elliot, *Life and Work of the People of England* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1925-1931).





Figures 4.87-4.92: Selection of items sent to Platt Hall in 1926, as listed when accessioned (clockwise from top left): '269 Plaster Casts, Isteria Imperiati' (1922.1470/269); 'Candlestick, old, wood, used at Eton College' (1922.778); 'Mug, glass, white line decoration, Nailsea ware. Late 18<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1320); 'Bowl...leaf decoration in brown and green' (Della Robbia art pottery) (1922.1629); 'Flower Vase...Enoch Wood, Burslem ware' (1922.1568); '89 pieces of old glass, dug up in London' (1922.1402).





Figures 4.93-4.98: Selection of items sent to Platt Hall in 1926, as listed when accessioned (clockwise from top left): 'Caribbean basket, brown natural straw' (1922.1382); 'Corn Sieve, straw work in artistic design' (1922.1392); 'Corn Sieve, Nigeria Benin straw work' (1922.1383); 'Bag, pale green and natural coloured straw' (1922.1370); 'Basket, circular, made of wood like fibre, reddish brown' (1922.1373); 'Raffia basket, fine plain straw, round, Made by the Queen Alexander craftworkers' (1922.1396).

Both series were lavishly illustrated, with photographs of historical objects and images, and illustrations by the authors. Hartley and Elliot argued that 'the study of contemporary illustrations is not only desirable, and as entertaining as it is instructive, but...it is really essential to a right appreciation and well-found understanding of any historical period'.<sup>136</sup> Objects provided a visual and material sense of the past that was regarded as democratic, accessible and of equal, if not higher, educational value as textual sources. Both Hartley and Marjorie Quennell were professional illustrators but amateur historians; in 1936 Quennell became the first female curator of the Geffrye Museum, where she was instrumental in transforming it from a museum dedicated to the local furniture industry into an overtly educational museum of everyday domestic life.<sup>137</sup> The relocation of the handicrafts collection to the genteel domestic setting of Platt Hall provided an appropriate setting for the re-framing of the collection as a material history of the everyday in this manner.

However, the Platt Hall redisplay also marked the beginning of the collection's eventual split and dispersal. The nature of the space meant that the collection was shown across two rooms, with antiquarian objects in the larger 'Long Gallery' and dress in a smaller side room, accompanied by table cases of lace, embroidery, fans and hair combs. Shortly after opening, Mr Batho wrote to say that this smaller room was 'the most popular one in the whole suite'.<sup>138</sup> Three years later, Lawrence Haward asked Mrs Greg's permission to temporarily dismantle the Greg pottery display in the City Art Gallery, in order to show the newly acquired Lewis F. Day collection of textiles. Mrs Greg refused, reminding Haward that her husband's original condition of gift had still not been met. She suggested instead that the textiles might be shown at Platt Hall, for which purpose she would gladly agree to the relocation of the handicrafts collection. Haward conceded, further suggesting that the Lewis Day textiles would complement the Greg dress and embroideries display in the smaller of the two first floor rooms.<sup>139</sup> Thus in 1930 the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection was split in two; dress and textiles remained at Platt Hall while the more overtly antiquarian material was transferred to Queens Park.

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<sup>136</sup> Dorothy Hartley and Margaret M. Elliot, *Life and Work of the People of England: Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1931) p.4.

<sup>137</sup> Carter, ref.133, pp.126-127. Mrs Greg donated approximately 100 objects to the Geffrye Museum during 1936-7, and thus probably had some acquaintance with Marjorie Quennell, although no documentary evidence has so far been found. I am grateful to Laura Carter for this information, email to Liz Mitchell, 24 May 2014.

<sup>138</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 31 May 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>139</sup> Correspondence between Mr Haward and Mrs Greg, 1 – 11 April 1930, MCG Archive.

## Accession, classification, dispersal

It seems probable that shortly after this the collection was formally accessioned, numbered and catalogued. A typewritten list was produced that falls into two parts (and was later physically separated), the former comprising the wide range of antiquarian objects (1922.686-1750), the latter comprising dress and related materials (1922.1751-2195). The catalogue cards indicate that at this point an attempt was made to classify the antiquarian material according to standard ethnographic categories. Objects were organised into groups according to function and then allocated accession numbers. For the first 600 objects this resulted in a tidy and sequential series of categories progressing from the first and most visibly coherent group, 'Keys, locks, hinges and other home fittings', through nine further categories that ranged from the functional to the ornamental (Fig.4.99). However, mapping the objects across these categories in accession number order, the system appears to fall apart half way through. The last 400 objects are no longer allocated neatly and consecutively to the different categories but appear to jump between them. Object types that in the first half of the list are allocated to 'domestic utensils', 'domestic industries' and 'portraits and commemorative medals' are, in its later stages, grouped together under the generic heading 'ornamental objects'. It feels as if the cataloguer lost confidence in the system – either that or simply ran out of time. Either way, the 'drift' of the collection away from utilitarian categories towards a single generic decorative category, in the very process of its documentation, again plays up the uncertain position of such material between the poles of 'art' and 'non-art'.

After this date, the costume collection expanded rapidly. Mrs Greg continued to source new material; in the period until her death in 1949 she gave a further 80 items of clothing, OPUA and textiles. In 1932 she helped Mrs Haward source clothing for a 'Pageant of Dresses' organized on behalf of the Women Citizens Association at the Whitworth Art Gallery, further promoting the growing collection.<sup>140</sup> Multiple smaller donations from a variety of sources were increasingly forthcoming; between 1932 and 1938, 76 different donors, almost all of them women, are recorded. As small scale donors, they are not remembered in the same way as those who give large collections, but they had a significant impact on the growing collection.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>140</sup> See letters between Mrs Greg and Mr Haward, 12-17 February 1932, MCG Archive.

<sup>141</sup> Donors included local women with suburban Manchester addresses, those from further afield, and several women who were associated directly with the Art Galleries, either as wives and daughters, or in their own right. These include Mrs Haward, Mrs Simon, Miss Tylecote, Lady Mathewson Watson and Miss Margaret Pilkington. See MCAG, *City of Manchester Art Gallery Stock Book of Works of Art 1882-1932*, MCG Archive.

Category   Acc number	1922. 686- 800	1922. 801- 900	1922. 901- 1000	1922. 1001- 1100	1922. 1101- 1200	1922. 1201- 1300
Keys, locks, hinges and other home fittings	88 objects					
Fire and light making appliances	27 objects					
Domestic utensils and tableware		75 objects				
Domestic industries		83 objects				
Ornamental objects/ OPUA			118 objects			
Portraits, commemorative medals, seals				62 objects		
Smoking and snuff-taking requisites					50 objects	
Objects illustrative of corporate life					51 objects	
Writing materials and seals						28 objects
Sports, games, entertainment, folklore						23 objects

Category   Acc number	1922. 1301- 1400	1922. 1401- 1500	1922. 1501- 1600	1922. 1601- 1700	1922. 1701- 1800
Keys, locks, hinges and other home fittings					
Fire and light making appliances	1 object			1 object	
Domestic utensils and tableware	64 objects				
Domestic industries		35 objects		1 object	
Ornamental objects/ OPUA	171 objects				
Portraits, commemorative medals, seals	49 objects			47 objects	
Smoking and snuff-taking requisites		2 objects			
Objects illustrative of corporate life		13 objects		1 object	
Writing materials and seals	1 object		5 objects		
Sports, games, entertainment, folklore					
Pictures				45 objects	
No category given					3 objects

Figure 4.99: Distribution of objects across ethnographic categories in accession number order, from 1922.686-1922.1750. Probably done c.1932.

In 1937, the titling of the exhibition *Bygone Feminine Fashions 1750-1880* effectively re-defined the concept of the bygone explicitly in terms of women's fashionable dress. In the accompanying catalogue, Lawrence Haward proudly stated that although '[f]ifteen years ago the Manchester Corporation did not possess a single period costume', the Galleries' collection now included 'over sixty' dresses and 'numerous specimens of hats, bonnets, caps, shawls, gloves, shoes, parasols and miscellaneous articles of feminine adornment'.<sup>142</sup> Two years later he wrote to Mrs Greg, 'the costume collection of which your gifts formed the nucleus still grows apace'.<sup>143</sup> In 1941, Elisabeth Howroyd was appointed the Galleries' first dedicated costume and textiles curator.<sup>144</sup> Six years later, the purchase of the extensive C. Willett Cunnington collection of nineteenth century women's dress, and the appointment of Anne Buck as Costume Curator, established Platt Hall as The Gallery of English Costume, the first museum of its kind in the UK. The costume and textile elements of the Greg collections were subsumed within the now nationally significant collection, dominated by the high-profile Cunnington collection. By 1982, and *A Century of Collecting*, over 600 items of clothing, textiles and OPUA had been reduced to 'a group of dresses'.<sup>145</sup>

Meanwhile, by 1938 the remaining 'bygones' were no longer included in the Decorative Art Collection, but in a category of their own, described in terms of their 'partly antiquarian, partly ethnographical' character.<sup>146</sup> By 1956, they came under the explicit heading of Antiquarian Collections, a category that also contained the 'Old Manchester Collection' of archaeological artefacts and historical documents, and the Greg dolls and dolls' houses collection, now retitled 'Playthings of the Past'. Any claim to their identity as art was dropped in favour of a social history approach that positioned them as a 'folk collection', 'classified in homogeneous groups' reflecting 'aspects of daily life in the past'.<sup>147</sup> A selection was displayed at Wythenshawe Hall along with seventeenth and eighteenth century furniture, silver and ceramics. Subsequently, individual ceramic, glass and silver objects were gradually removed and re-allocated to materially-defined decorative art disciplines, under the care of individual specialist curators in the city centre. During the 1980s, an increasing focus on the branch

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<sup>142</sup> Lawrence Haward, *Bygone Feminine Fashions 1750-1880* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1937) p.3.

<sup>143</sup> Letter from Lawrence Haward to Mrs Greg, 13 January 1939, MCG Archive.

<sup>144</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1941*, p.2. MCG Archive.

<sup>145</sup> Timothy Clifford, *A Century of Collecting 1882-1982* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1983) p.27.

<sup>146</sup> Lawrence Haward, *Illustrated Guide to the Art Collections in the Manchester Corporation Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Art Galleries Committee, 1945 [1938]) p.21.

<sup>147</sup> S. D. Cleveland, *Guide to the Manchester Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Art Galleries Committee, 1956) p.33.

galleries as historic houses, rather than satellite art galleries, contributed to the return to storage of material that was not specifically relevant to the house or could not be securely displayed in a period domestic setting. Unstable environmental conditions in the storage areas of Wythenshawe Hall subsequently proved unsuitable for organic material such as paper, fabric, wood and straw; open shelving and fluctuating temperature and humidity contributed to its deterioration, which only became clear during preparations for the 2002 Gallery of Craft & Design displays. In 2004 it was relocated to closed cupboard storage back at Queens Park, where it remains.

## Conclusion

Finding a coherent pathway through this collection, nearly a century after it was first acquired by Manchester City Art Galleries, is not straightforward. In part this is due to its incremental growth, changes in the framing of its content, and its dispersal within the wider collections. However, it also reflects what Montagu Benton described in 1911 as the 'exceedingly miscellaneous character of these late antiquities'.<sup>148</sup> His rueful acknowledgement of the inherent difficulty in grouping such material is echoed by later writers; in 1947, a reviewer in *The Spectator* wrote of Margaret Lambert and Enid Marx's *English Popular and Traditional Art*, '[t]he problem with a book of this kind is where to begin and end...the choice is bewildering'.<sup>149</sup> Similar difficulties affected reviewers in 1922, with one press commentator observing of the Greg collection, 'such a collection as this is capable of indefinite extension'.<sup>150</sup> Lambert and Marx's later concept of popular art was not defined by the handmade, but by the context of everyday life and 'ordinary people...sometimes making it themselves, at others imposing their own tastes on the products of the craftsman or the machine'.<sup>151</sup> The content of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times (if not Mrs Greg's description of it) might be described in a similar way. And as Lambert and Marx themselves acknowledged, '[p]opular and traditional art, in the sense here intended, is hard to define though easy enough to recognise when seen'.<sup>152</sup>

This sense of unclear boundaries and indefinite extendibility probably contributed to the collection's effective dissolution over time, possibly compounded by its layering of different generational attitudes to the material culture of the domestic past. It contained fragments of

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<sup>148</sup> Montagu Benton, ref.22, p.93.

<sup>149</sup> *The Spectator*, 'English Popular and Traditional Art', 13 June 1947, p.698.

<sup>150</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 'USE AND BEAUTY \* The Greg Colln of Handicrafts', 4 December 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>151</sup> Margaret Lambert and Enid Marx, *English Popular and Traditional Art* (London: Collins, 1946) p.7.

<sup>152</sup> Lambert and Marx, ref.151, p.7.



at least one earlier collection, that of mid-nineteenth century Derbyshire archaeologist Thomas Bateman (1821-1861). During his short lifetime, Bateman excavated over 300 Anglo-Saxon burial sites,<sup>153</sup> amassing a huge collection that was described by a contemporary as 'unrivalled in many of its branches by any collection in existence'.<sup>154</sup> But Bateman did not just collect archaeological remains. His 1855 publication, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities and Miscellaneous Objects Preserved in the Museum of Thomas Bateman at Lomberdale House, Derbyshire*,<sup>155</sup> lists five divisions of material including Britannic Collections, Ethnographical Collections, Relics, Arms and Armour, and Collections Illustrative of Arts and Manufactures. Bateman too acknowledged the inherent difficulties of categorising diverse groups of antiquities, curiosities and 'more modern and unmanageable'<sup>156</sup> objects with multiple affinities. Bateman objects so far identified in the Greg collections include keys, spoons, reckoning tables, the horsebone ice skates, metalwork fragments and eighteenth century slipware and creamware pottery.

On entry to the Greg collections, these items were re-contextualised within the later antiquarian enthusiasms of Thomas Tylston Greg, formed in the wake of Victorian museum development, the mania for private collecting, and developing attitudes towards homeland ethnography and folklore. Greg's express public desire in 1907, to evoke wonder through bringing 'under one roof'<sup>157</sup> the worlds of art, science, and everything in between, was matched by the Art Galleries Committee's ambitions to widen the remit of the Galleries' collections, along the lines of the continental examples encountered on their 1905 research tour. The collection at this point was, however, primarily a private one. Discrete sections of it were spread throughout the Gregs' home at Coles Park, the 1920 probate inventory reading like a partial version of later Galleries catalogues. Its reference to multiple sub-collections within the whole also suggests wide-ranging and catholic antiquarian tastes, which are at odds with the more familiar image of Greg as purely a ceramics collector. It is easy to assume that at this point Thomas Greg was the dominant force in shaping the collection. His writings dwell on the excitement of the hunt and the competition of the sale room, and the antiquarian societies

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<sup>153</sup> Robert McCombe, 'Anglo-Saxon Artefacts and Nationalist Discourse', *Museum History Journal*, 4 (2) (2011) pp.139-160.

<sup>154</sup> Lewellynn Jewitt, 'The Late Thomas Bateman, Esq., of Lomberdale House, and Middleton-By-Youlgreave', *The Reliquary*, II (1861-62) p.87.

<sup>155</sup> Thomas Bateman, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities and Miscellaneous Objects Preserved in the Museum of Thomas Bateman at Lomberdale House, Derbyshire* (Bakewell: James Gratton, 1855).

<sup>156</sup> Bateman, ref.155, p.viii.

<sup>157</sup> Greg, ref.46, p.i.

he and his contemporaries belonged to did not then admit women.<sup>158</sup> However, as his 1904 letter indicates, he was keen to acknowledge his wife's involvement. A postcard among Greg's few papers in the Manchester City Galleries Archive also gives a hint of the wider involvement of wives in their husbands' collecting pursuits. Addressed to Mrs Greg, it bears a short note from Hilda Petrie, wife of Egyptologist Flinders Petrie and an Egyptologist in her own right,<sup>159</sup> indicating that when they next met she would bring with her a medieval ivory figure she was attempting to date.<sup>160</sup>

However, selected and arranged for display by Gallery staff under Mrs Greg's supervision, and introduced to the visitor via the catalogue preface, the collection's first public iteration was predominantly framed by her emphasis on making as a morally, spiritually and emotionally uplifting personal pursuit. And while this may have been informed by long-held Arts and Crafts sensibilities, it also resonated directly with the contemporary postwar sense of a nation in recovery. The collective title for the assemblage of objects that went on display in 1922 identified each and every item as handicrafts, in the plural. It covered everything from cutlery to handwriting, pincushions to undersleeves, 'knucklebones to needlework'. This was not how the term had been understood by the likes of William Morris. Handicraft, in Morris's singular term, denoted the skilled and income-generating work of the pre-industrial male artisan. Later, the committed night-school amateur was incorporated into this category. But handicrafts, in the context of this collection, encompasses a wider material culture, that of making *and* living, of home and workplace, and home *as* workplace. In this respect, it has more in common with W. R. Lethaby's description, also dating from 1922, of 'the common art'. According to Lethaby, art encompassed both 'the crest of high genius' and 'the flood of common art' out of which genius arises. The common art, he argued:

which is the thing of importance (as the other will form itself out of it), is concerned with all the routine things of life – laying the breakfast table and cleaning the door-steps of our houses, tidying up our railway stations, and lighting the High Streets of our towns.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Women were first admitted to the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1921. See Bernard Nurse, 'The Society of Antiquaries of London', *Making History: The changing face of the profession in Britain* (London: The Institute of Historical Research, 2008), <http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/antiquaries.html> [accessed 31 July 2017].

<sup>159</sup> Brenna Hassett, 'The Trowel Blazing women of ARCHAEOLOGY', *History Today*, 67 (2) (2017) pp.32-37.

<sup>160</sup> Postcard from Hilda Petrie to Mrs Greg, undated, MCG Archive.

<sup>161</sup> W. R. Lethaby, 'The Need for Beauty', in *Form in Civilization: Collected Papers on Art & Labour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), p.144.

Architect, designer and educator, W. R. Lethaby (1857-1931) also straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the 1880s he was closely involved with the Arts and Crafts Movement but later helped found the breakaway DIA and worked closely with Harry Peach to promote the teaching of handicrafts in schools. His essays were published both by the DIA and the Women's Institute, bridging the gap that Tanya Harrod identifies between craft as professional practice and handicraft as personal development.<sup>162</sup> In the same 1922 essay, 'The Need for Beauty', Lethaby also wrote '[i]n the days before us, we shall need to make use of all the sources of power we can draw on – Historical Continuity, Pride of Race, National Spirit, Love of Home and Civic Patriotism.'<sup>163</sup> Echoing Henry Balfour's arguments for a national folk museum, made ten years earlier, such comments bound together the promotion of handicraft as a spiritually fulfilling and self-justifying leisure pursuit with a sense of stability and continuity with the past. The Handicrafts of Bygone Times collection, in all its apparent diversity and eclecticism, might be described in Lethaby's terms as the common art of daily routine. In this sense craft is found not only in the making of cutlery, but in the laying and using of it, not only in the sewing of clothes but in the wearing of them too.

Change as a form of continuity in itself is a central theme throughout the collection, in terms of both the practices of everyday life and creative endeavour. Mrs Greg laid a duty of care at the feet of the visitor in two respects. Firstly, in the debt owed 'to those who have preceded us and have left us those specimens of their painstaking and beautiful work'. Secondly, in the instruction to "'...work while it is called today", so that what you make may be beautiful and worth handing on'.<sup>164</sup> It was not enough simply to preserve the objects of the past, but to honour the lives of those who made and used them, through the continuation of practices of care and the ongoing creation of 'good work' as a legacy for the future. Thus the collection, much like that put together by Peach as an adjunct to the range of Dryad Handicraft publications, was intended as an inspiration to further creativity. The notion of 'good work' and the relationship between past and future are also formative themes in the second of the two inter-related Greg collections that make up the Mary Greg Collection and the subject of this research.

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<sup>162</sup> See Kirkham, ref.84, p.53.

<sup>163</sup> Lethaby, ref.161, p.146.

<sup>164</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.6.



Figure 5.1: cat.26, 'Greengrocer's Shop: fruit modelled in wax: by Mrs. Greg, 1922' (1922.92) (detail).

## Chapter Five

### **'These seemingly little things':<sup>1</sup> The Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses**

*'Grown up people enjoy it for its historical interest...  
and all the little girls like it and "want to keep it"'.<sup>2</sup>*

#### **Introduction**

The Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses is approximately half the size of the Handicrafts of Bygone Times Collection. As with the former, and for similar reasons, the total number of objects can only be estimated. A list totalling 615 individual entries was produced when the collection was formally accessioned in about 1932, again entered retrospectively under the year 1922. A further 50 objects and groups of objects were accessioned between 1933 and 1947. In 1983, Timothy Clifford described the collection as numbering over 900 objects, reflecting the multi-part nature of much of its content, such as dolls' house furnishings and toy tea sets.<sup>3</sup> It developed ostensibly in parallel to the handicrafts collection, with an initial gift in 1922 that was added to in subsequent years. However, attention to the wider context of both collections indicates that while the handicrafts collection emerged out of the longer history of the Gregs' collecting as a collaborative husband-and-wife project, the dolls and dolls' houses collection was explicitly a project of Mrs Greg's own making. During initial discussions with the Galleries after Thomas Greg's death in 1920, there was no mention of toys or other children's things; similarly, the probate inventory of Coles Park lists nothing that made its way into this collection. However, in March 1922, Mrs Greg wrote to Lawrence Haward, explaining that 'I have been collecting for some time dolls & dolls [sic] furniture from 1800 to 1900', for the purpose of establishing 'a children's section' in the art gallery.<sup>4</sup> As she later confirmed, it was a project that really only began after her husband died.<sup>5</sup>

The dolls and dolls' houses collection thus differs from the handicrafts collection in that it was a museum project from the outset, developed within and for the context of public display. In

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Sabin, 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1924 [1935 reprint]) p.7.

<sup>2</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1923*, p.20. MCG Archive.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Clifford, *A Century of Collecting 1882-1982* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1983) p.28.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Haward, 20 March 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 26 December 1922, MCG Archive.

this respect, it marks a shift in Mrs Greg's relationship with the museum, from collector-donor, initiated by the handling of her husband's estate, to would-be curator in her own right. Furthermore, while the handicrafts collection might be characterised in terms of its 'indefinite extendibility',<sup>6</sup> the dolls and dolls' houses collection was explicitly contained, both by the overarching topic of childhood and by its intended audience of children. From the start, the collection was treated as separate from the rest of the Greg collections, displayed not in the city centre but at Heaton Hall, Manchester's northernmost branch gallery. In contrast to the handicrafts collection, it appears to have enjoyed the unqualified support of both Committee and Curator. Mrs Greg was given a more or less free hand to develop the collection, and was consistently deferred to on matters of interpretation or offers of related material from other sources. A small display opened in June 1922; within weeks Mrs Greg had acquired further material and by Christmas the collection had outgrown its allotted display space. Popular with visitors, it expanded rapidly over the next three years, eventually relocating from the first floor suite of bedrooms at Heaton Hall to the larger and more accessible ground floor Long Gallery, where it remained for the duration of the interwar period. As with the handicrafts collection, a modest catalogue was produced, although not until 1924. Unlike the handicrafts catalogue, several revised editions were produced over the next 15 years, as stock sold out and the collection grew.

Of all the Greg collections, the dolls and dolls' houses collection was clearly the project closest to Mrs Greg's heart, and for which she had the clearest sense of purpose. It offered her the scope to build on ideas that she also regarded as central to the handicrafts collection, but with a specific audience in mind. As the eventual merging of the two collections might suggest, they thus share particular qualities: a focus on aspects of daily and domestic life, on making as a redemptive practice, and on a nostalgic approach to a loosely imagined collective past. As a more evidently coherent body of objects united by a common theme, however, the dolls and dolls' houses collection appears to have been easier than the handicrafts collection for the museum to accommodate. No attempts were made to classify, reclassify or subdivide its content, and it remained together in one place as the highlight of the Heaton Hall displays for 17 years. It prompted gifts of childhood toys from other donors, including Art Galleries staff and Committee members. And, as the Annual Reports for this period repeatedly note, it generated an enthusiastic response on the part of a wide range of visitors, both young and old.

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Four, pp.166-167.



This chapter thus takes a different approach to that of the previous chapter. Rather than tracking the collection's development and display through the interwar period, it considers the collection as a whole, in terms of the themes and qualities it was intended to make manifest and for whom. It draws on archive evidence to examine the ways in which the collection was received and understood by its contemporary audience, both adults and children alike. Reflecting wider developments in attitudes toward children and childhood during this period, it also situates attention to the collection's content within the context of other initiatives both in Manchester and further afield, with which, as will become clear, the collection's development was closely connected.

## A children's section

In March 1922, in the midst of negotiations over the pottery and handicrafts collections, Mary Greg wrote to Lawrence Haward inviting him to a small exhibition of children's toys she had organised in the Hertfordshire town of Buntingford near her home. She proposed that after the exhibition had ended, the exhibits might come to Manchester for, as she saw it,

children are taken to museums by their parents & seeing nothing to interest probably decide that when they grow up they will never enter a Museum again. So I believe more strongly than ever that there should be a children's section and for this end I have been collecting for some time dolls and dolls [sic] furniture...<sup>7</sup>

The material culture of childhood was not at this time the focus of any British museum. Those that did acquire children's things did so as part of a wider focus on social history or art and design, rather than an interest in childhood *per se*.<sup>8</sup> The emergent museums profession had, however, begun to recognise children as a potentially significant audience. In 1914, the British Association established a committee to report on the educational potential of museums. Its Chairman, Professor J. A. Green, concluded that museums offered a unique opportunity for the 'exploration of reality' and, following progressive educational theory, should actively facilitate the use of real objects in children's learning. In a comment that prefigures Lawrence

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Haward, 20 March 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>8</sup> Bethnal Green was at this point a branch gallery of the V&A, only beginning to specialise in childhood from 1923. Other major collections including Edinburgh Museum of Childhood and Sudbury Hall are both later in date. An enquiry circulated through the GEM email list (15 March 2017) yielded no earlier examples. See Christopher Frayling and Sue Laurence, 'European visions of childhood', *European Business Review*, 98 (5) (1998), <http://www.emeraldinsight.com.ezproxy.mmu.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1108/eb.1998.05498eab.009> [accessed 21 October 2017] for a brief history of childhood collections. See also Sharon Brookshaw, 'The Material Culture of Children and Childhood: Understanding Childhood Objects in the Museum Context', *Journal of Material Culture*, 14 (3) (2009) pp.365-381, for a survey of childhood-related objects in museums.

Haward's later focus on art as productive of 'a good state of mind',<sup>9</sup> Green observed that '[t]he mind that comes to the object is more important than the object itself'.<sup>10</sup>

Haward had direct experience in this area; he had been instrumental in Manchester's innovative wartime education programme, initiated in response to the requisition of school buildings in 1914. The city's Education Committee had instituted a 'half-time' system in the remaining schools, ensuring all children received some classroom teaching. For the resulting half-days off, a group of Manchester museums and galleries, including Manchester City Art Gallery and its north Manchester branch Queens Park, co-ordinated a programme of gallery-based teaching.<sup>11</sup> The scheme built on an earlier history of museum provision for children in the city; in the 1880s Thomas Horsfall, founder member of the Art Galleries Committee, had prioritised the engagement of children as key to the Ruskinian social ambitions of his own independently established Manchester Art Museum.<sup>12</sup> Three decades later, the wartime scheme was widely regarded as a great success, and subsequently maintained beyond the cessation of hostilities.<sup>13</sup> By 1922, therefore, the presence of children in the galleries was a daily occurrence.<sup>14</sup> Mrs Greg's letter had conflated two separate but intersecting issues: the collection and display of childhood-related artefacts, and the potential for museums to provide meaningful experiences for children. Haward's response thus included a carefully worded corrective:

...you are possibly unaware that ever since 1916, a hundred children a day are brought into this Gallery and receive instruction from teachers specially chosen for their capacity to interest children in the contents of the Gallery. From evidence we have from the children themselves and their parents, and also from the essays that they write from time to time, we can see that the work which Manchester was the first to put in hand on these lines is really bearing good fruit.<sup>15</sup>

However, he responded positively to her proposal, which marked a departure from existing programmes in that it focused on the material culture of childhood itself. He regretted that he was unavailable to visit the Buntingford exhibition, but with regard to its content, 'I am

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter Three, p.76.

<sup>10</sup> J. A. Green, cited in Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994) p.83.

<sup>11</sup> See Kavanagh, ref.10, pp.82-85, for an account of this and similar wartime museum schemes.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Harrison, 'Art and Philanthropy: T. C. Horsfall and The Manchester Art Museum' in A. J. Kidd and K. W. Roberts, *City, class and culture, Studies of cultural production and social policy in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) pp.120-147.

<sup>13</sup> Spurley Hey, *Courses of Lectures for Elementary School Children in Museums and Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Education Committee, 1922) p.13.

<sup>14</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1915-16*, pp.2-3. MCG Archive.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Mr Haward to Mrs Greg, 26 March 1922, MCG Archive.

convinced it will be of the greatest interest and value to Manchester. I know how much such things have been appreciated at the Victoria & Albert and the London Museum'.<sup>16</sup> The London Museum had opened in 1912 as a repository for the social history of the city.<sup>17</sup> Chronological displays brought together archaeological finds and London-manufactured goods with the trappings of everyday London life, from royalty to commoner, with childhood-related objects forming part of this wider narrative.<sup>18</sup> At the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), Haward was almost certainly referring to the work of Edith Spiller, a volunteer who, during the war years, had developed a holiday programme for children and had subsequently persuaded the V&A's Director, Cecil Harcourt Smith, to mount an exhibition of 'such toys as the V&A possessed'.<sup>19</sup>

A wider interest in the artefacts of childhood as worthy of museum attention was thus beginning to emerge. As Carolyn Steedman and others have argued, between 1870 and 1930, 'a profound transformation in the economic and sentimental value of children' occurred.<sup>20</sup> Stemming from the earlier writings of Rousseau, and gaining currency in Romantic painting and poetry, childhood was increasingly positioned as a privileged realm of innocence and purity, a state of natural grace to be cherished and protected.<sup>21</sup> Childhood was conceptualised as both the formative period from which the morally upright and productive adult might emerge, and a force for good amongst those who had left it behind but were charged with its protection in successive generations. Subsequently, alongside legislative and philanthropic efforts to improve child welfare,<sup>22</sup> the material landscape of children's lives began to attract attention. Developments in print technology and manufacturing during the late nineteenth century had fuelled a growing toy industry and a widening market for mass-produced toys, games, books and pictures aimed specifically at children.<sup>23</sup> The appropriateness of such materials to the shaping of a 'good' childhood and, consequently, the production of well-

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from Mr Haward to Mrs Greg, 26 March 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>17</sup> The London Museum merged with the Guildhall Museum in 1964 to form the Museum of London.

<sup>18</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'THE LONDON MUSEUM: HISTORICAL EXHIBITS FROM ROMAN TIMES', 21 March 1923, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Burton, 'Design History and the History of Toys: Defining a Discipline for the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood', *Journal of Design History*, 10 (1) (1997) p.1. See also Anthony Burton, *Vision & Accident: The Story of the Victoria & Albert Museum* (London, V&A Publications, 1999) p.171.

<sup>20</sup> Carolyn Steedman, citing Viviana Zelizer, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan 1860-1931* (London: Virago, 1990) p.63. See also Philippe Ariès [trans. Robert Baldick], *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962); Paula A. Fass (ed.), *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Larry Wolff, 'Childhood and the Enlightenment: The complications of innocence' in Fass, ref.20, pp.78-99.

<sup>22</sup> Steedman, ref.20; Marah Gubar, 'The Victorian Child, c.1837-1901', *Representing Childhood* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2005), [www.representingchildhood.pitt.edu/victorian.htm](http://www.representingchildhood.pitt.edu/victorian.htm) [accessed 30 March 2017].

<sup>23</sup> Burton (1997), ref.19.

rounded adult citizens, became a topic of increasing debate.<sup>24</sup> A growing interest in the history of toys also emerged, with the 'first substantial English book on toys',<sup>25</sup> Mrs F. Nevill Jackson's *Toys of Other Days*,<sup>26</sup> published in 1908.

In offering her collection to Manchester, Mrs Greg differentiated it from the other Greg collections by suggesting that it would sit well within the Heaton Park branch gallery, recently returned to the Galleries after wartime requisition. 'I understand', she wrote,

that at Heaton Park there is a suitable & unfilled museum & that it is the haunt of thousands of children during the year...there is a good sized room which has oil pictures in & such a room might be excellent if there is sufficient light.<sup>27</sup>

Haward agreed. Situated in the affluent northern suburb of Prestwich, Heaton Park was Manchester's largest municipal park, complete with sporting facilities, a boating lake, bandstand and refreshment rooms (Figs.5.2-3). The site had been acquired by Manchester City Council in 1902, along with Heaton Hall, the eighteenth century home of the Earl of Wilton.<sup>28</sup> Opened as a branch gallery in 1906, the Hall added to the park's considerable attractions with displays of painting, sculpture, musical instruments and the Earl Egerton Collection of Oriental Weapons and Armour. Pre-war annual visitor figures regularly exceeded 100,000.<sup>29</sup> On the outbreak of war, however, both park and hall had been requisitioned for military training, and by 1922 were only just returning to full public use.<sup>30</sup> Accommodation built to house army trainees was repurposed to house the children of Manchester's poorest families, in what was to become the annual 'White Heather' summer camps established by local philanthropist Councillor J. Mathewson Watson.<sup>31</sup> Alongside related charitable initiatives such as the Pearson's Fresh Air Fund, Heaton Park was indeed 'the haunt of thousands of children': in the summer of 1922 it was expected that 1500 children would take part in the camp, with a further 25,000 as day visitors.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See for example John Ruskin, 'Lecture IV: Fairyland. Mrs. Allingham and Kate Greenaway', *The Art of England: Lectures given in Oxford* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1884) pp.79-107.

<sup>25</sup> Burton (1997), ref.19, p.8.

<sup>26</sup> Mrs. F. Nevill Jackson, *Toys of Other Days* (New York/London: Benjamin Blom, 1968 [1908]).

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Haward, 20 March 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>28</sup> Clare Latimer, *Parks for the People* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1987) pp.19-23.

<sup>29</sup> MCAG, *Annual Reports 1906-1914*, MCG Archive.

<sup>30</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'A MANCHESTER PARK: TIDYING UP AFTER THE WAR', 25 May 1922, p.11.

<sup>31</sup> *The Beacon*, 'Personalities in the world of the blind: Councillor J. Mathewson Watson, J. P.', XIII (148) (1929) pp.3-4. <https://archive.org/details/beacon131929unse> [accessed 02 August 2017].

<sup>32</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'FRIDAY TO MONDAY IN HEATON PARK: THE WORK OF THE WHITE HEATHER CAMP', 19 June 1922, p.9.



Figure 5.2: Heaton Hall, Heaton Park, 12 June 1905.



Figure 5.3: Whit Sunday in Heaton Park, 8 June 1919.

Mrs Greg's offer of a collection of children's toys thus provided a focus for the newly re-opened Hall that was particularly appropriate to its changing post-war demographic, and that also tapped in to wider developing interests in the material culture of childhood. It met with easier approval on the part of both Curator and Art Galleries Committee than did the handicrafts collection, Lawrence Haward's personal involvement standing in marked contrast to his apparent absence from negotiations regarding the latter. Twenty three cases, containing both handicrafts and the dolls collection were sent to Manchester for inspection by the Art Galleries Committee in May 1922, and agreement quickly reached that 'the toys and dolls' houses should be sent up to our Heaton Hall Branch at once in order that they could be arranged in time to open for Whitweek'.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, as Mr Batho communicated to Mrs Greg, with respect to the more complicated handicrafts collection, 'our Chairman would very much like to talk the matter over with you when you are in Manchester'.<sup>34</sup> Thus, while negotiations over the rest of the material continued, the Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses went on public display, at Heaton Hall, in the summer of 1922.

### **'A beautiful idea of home'<sup>35</sup>**

As its title suggests, the collection comprised mainly dolls, dolls' houses and miniature domestic objects, from furniture to tableware to kitchen pots and pans (Figs.5.4-7). However, there were also smaller groups of toys and games, miniature and children's books, nursery rhyme sheets and pamphlets, children's illustrations, and miscellaneous miniature objects such as charms, trinkets and models, many of which were not made with children in mind (Figs.5.8-11). As with the handicrafts collection, the handmade and the homemade were key themes throughout, but it also included examples of commercial and mass-produced objects, and things that traversed these deceptively simple boundaries. It did not include typically masculine toys such as weapons, toy soldiers or model trains, though there were a small number of toy carriages, mechanical models and pressed tin toys. There were no objects that encouraged boisterous behaviour such as sporting or playground toys, and no soft toys or baby items. The collection's focus was primarily artisan- and/or home-made objects from the previous century, mainly domestic or 'improving' in subject matter. It was intended to be calming, to invoke curiosity, and to provide a miniature object lesson in aspects of domestic life. In this respect it was, in some ways, a miniature version of the handicrafts collection itself. The preface to the 1924 catalogue painted a picture of children enthralled, 'their eyes fixed on

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<sup>33</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 18 May 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 18 May 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>35</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, D/ESm F5. Letter from Mr Sabin to Mrs Greg, 4 December 1922.



a little group of miniature furniture, or standing before a beautiful doll's house, whilst a sense of the wonder of it all seemed simply to thrill out of their quiet pose'.<sup>36</sup> This was not written by Mrs Greg. Although initially responsive to the Galleries' request that she provide an introduction to the collection, she struggled to find the right words and instead, asked a friend to write it for her.<sup>37</sup>

Arthur Sabin had been appointed Curator of Bethnal Green Museum, an outpost of the V&A in London's East End, in the autumn of 1922. He too was interested in museum provision for children, having observed in the early weeks of his appointment large numbers of children wandering the museum 'unseeing, bored and sometimes noisy'.<sup>38</sup> Deciding he would organise a section of the museum specifically for them, a mutual friend introduced him to Mrs Greg. 'Sister Frances', a local woman 'who devotes her life to the well-being of the children of East London',<sup>39</sup> was almost certainly Frances Symes, co-founder of the Much Hadham Children's Home, about ten miles from Mrs Greg's Hertfordshire home. In 1923 she visited Manchester; Mrs Greg wrote a note of introduction to Mr Batho, explaining that:

Miss Symes who has helped me much with the children's things and gave the dolls' house which first went to Heaton Park...has had for over 20 years a Home for children – of course voluntarily – and her unselfish care + power of organising is truly wonderful.<sup>40</sup>

It would appear from this statement that Mrs Greg's association with Miss Symes and the Children's Home, the extent of which remains unknown, provided both the origins of the Manchester collection and introduced her to the man who would set Bethnal Green on the path to becoming Britain's National Museum of Childhood. The Much Hadham Children's Home provided temporary respite and 'clean air' for both 'crippled children' and those from London's poorest and most densely populated districts, of which Bethnal Green was one.<sup>41</sup> Heaton Park was in an affluent part of Manchester, but through the White Heather camps was also temporarily home, during the summer season, to some of the city's poorest young.

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<sup>36</sup> Sabin, ref.1, p.5.

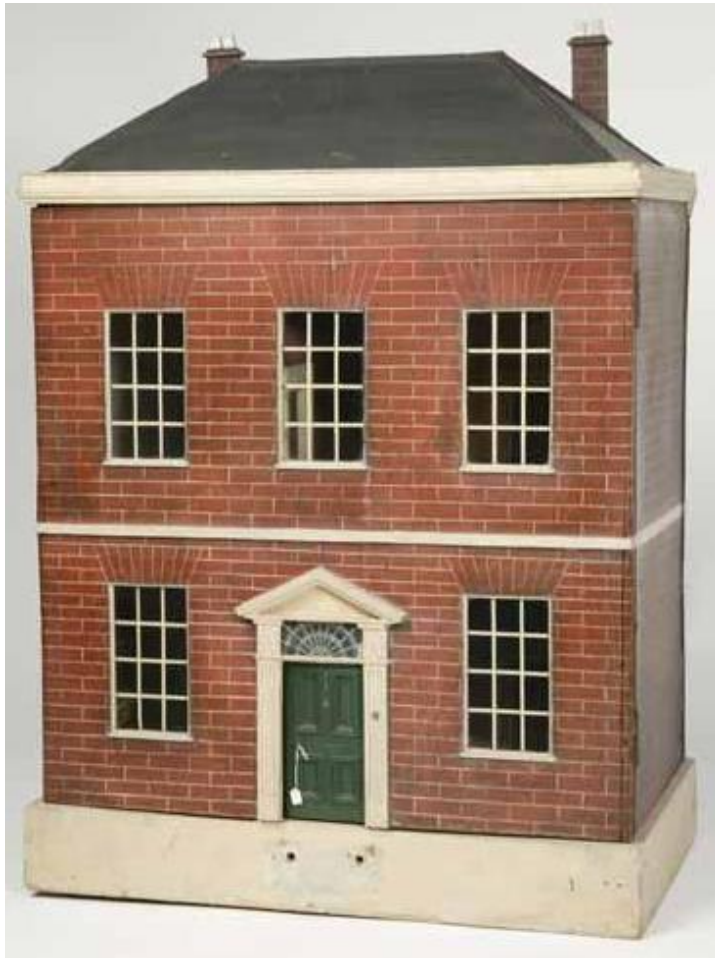
<sup>37</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 7 January 1924, MCG Archive.

<sup>38</sup> Arthur Sabin, cited in Burton (1999), ref.19, p.1.

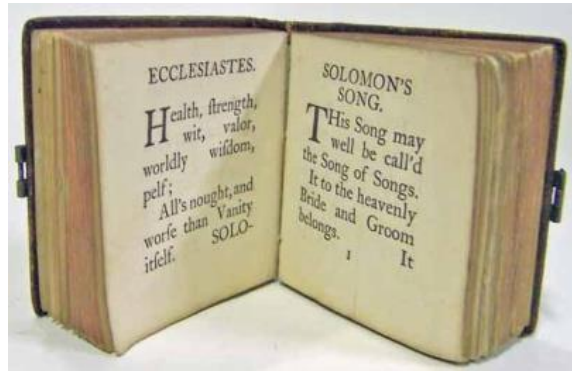
<sup>39</sup> V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H. Arthur Sabin, Minute Paper 86, 4 January 1923.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 10 April 1923, MCG Archive.

<sup>41</sup> See *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire 1899* (London: Kelly & Co, 1899) p.88.



Figures 5.4-5.7 (clockwise from top left): ex.cat, as listed when accessioned, 'Doll; dressed complete, a Fishwife, more than 100 years old' (1922.100); cat.31, 'Doll's House with furniture in each room: Adam period, c.1750' (1922.96); cat.287, 'Whitewood Armchairs' (1922.437); cat.71, '71. Doll: Stuart period' (1922.169).



Figures 5.8-5.11 (clockwise from top left): cat.200, 'Tea Set: blue glass: on mirror' (1922.342); cat.463, The Thumb Bible, one of multiple 'Children's Miniature Books, Almanacs, Nursery Rhyme Books, Plays etc.' (1922.550); ex-cat., as listed when accessioned, 'Tin Carriage with Coachman and Grey Horse' (1922.608); cat.497, 'Ring-a-ring-a-roses', Jessie Willcox Smith, one of several 'Coloured Pictures illustrating Nursery Rhymes' (1922.676).

Mrs Greg and Arthur Sabin developed a close friendship based on their shared interests not just in museums, but also in handicrafts, poetry and gardening.<sup>42</sup> Over the next decade Mrs Greg helped develop a children's collection for Bethnal Green in parallel to the Manchester collection,<sup>43</sup> while Sabin's developing philosophy of providing not just the children but also the adults of the East End with 'a beautiful idea of home'<sup>44</sup> provided encouragement for Mrs Greg's efforts in Manchester. Her response to the short preface he wrote for the Manchester catalogue was one of rapture: 'It is exactly what I had been wrestling with but could not express – I had only the dimmest glimmering of all that you have said in such a beautiful way'.<sup>45</sup> The development of both the Manchester and Bethnal Green collections were thus closely connected from this point on, not just in terms of their inspiration but also in terms of their content. Sabin was substantially supported and arguably influenced in developing what he also described as a 'children's section'<sup>46</sup> by his friendship with Mrs Greg. But while the Art Galleries Committee gave Mrs Greg freedom to develop the Manchester collection as she saw fit, Sabin was restricted in his ambitions by the need to secure permission for every new acquisition from V&A curators, whose assessment criteria were based on aesthetic quality rather than the exploration of childhood.<sup>47</sup> Thus several items offered by Mrs Greg to Bethnal Green, and enthusiastically received by Arthur Sabin, were subsequently rejected as being of insufficient aesthetic quality or as duplicating examples already held by the V&A. This included not just children's things but also textiles, pottery, clothing, thimbles and other sewing implements, as well as dolls and other toys. Much of the material rejected by the V&A was later sent to Manchester, where it was distributed between the handicrafts and dolls' houses collection (Figs.5.12-13).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, D/ESm F5. Correspondence between Mrs Greg and A. K. Sabin, December 1922 to June 1924.

<sup>43</sup> Anthony Burton and Caroline Goodfellow, 'Arthur Sabin, Mrs Greg and the Queen', *V&A Album No.4* (London: Templegate Publishing, 1986) p.355.

<sup>44</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, D/ESm F5. Letter from Mr Sabin to Mrs Greg, 4 December 1922.

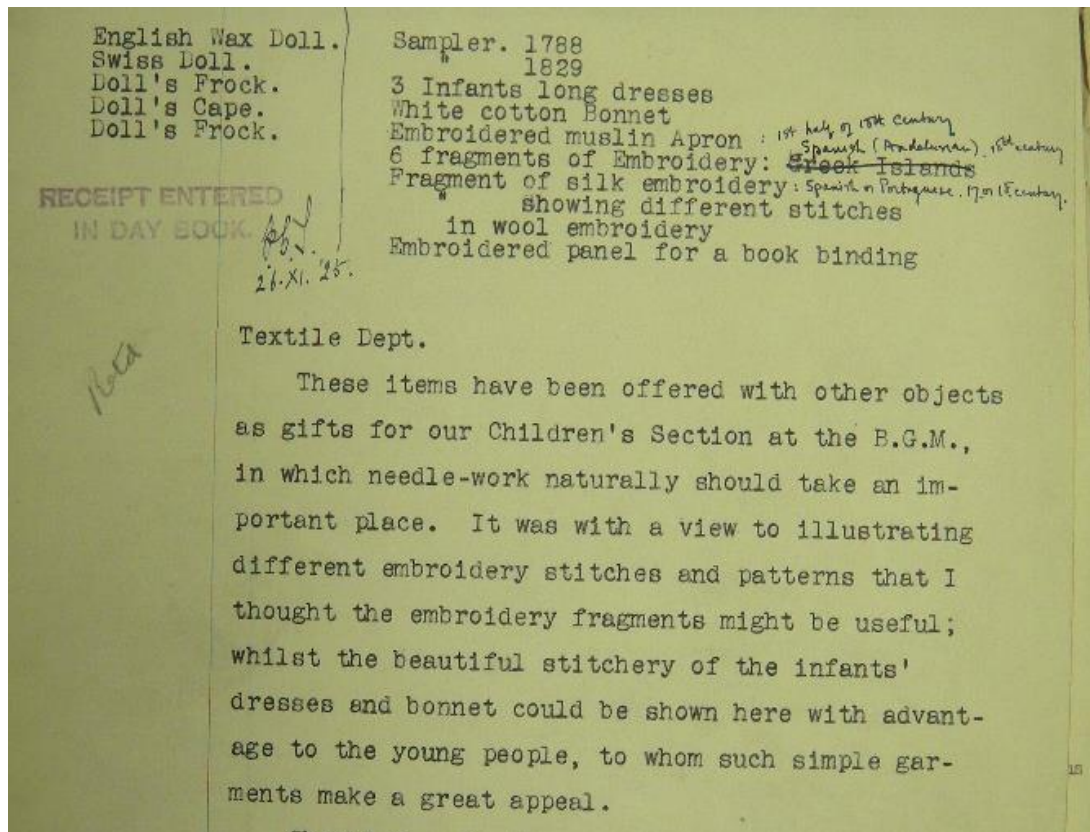
<sup>45</sup> V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H. Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Sabin, 9 September 1923,

<sup>46</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, D/ESm F5. Letter from Mr Sabin to Mrs Greg, 23 June 1923. Sabin writes that he is planning a children's exhibition for October which 'will enable a permanent children's section to be started'.

<sup>47</sup> Burton (1997), ref.19, pp.3-4.

<sup>48</sup> V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H.





Figures 5.12-5.13: Memo from Arthur Sabin to the V&A Textile Department, 28 October 1924 (detail) requesting permission to accept a gift of embroideries and clothing, subsequently rejected by the Textiles Department; embroidered sampler, 'Charlotte Reeves Aged 12 1829' (1922.1843) rejected by the V&A and later sent to Manchester.

The development of the Manchester collection was thus informed by Mrs Greg's pre-existing interests, shaped in the development of the handicrafts collection during her married life, her involvement with philanthropic child welfare initiatives, and an increasingly explicit commitment, shared with Arthur Sabin, to the importance of a good home life. Indeed, in spite of assertions to the contrary, the dolls and dolls' houses collection was not only, or even primarily, intended for children. More precisely, as Mrs Greg's initial letter to Lawrence Haward had implied, its focus was on the family. The dedication she provided for the catalogue made this clear: 'to the Fathers, Mothers, and Children who come here I dedicate this collection of toys of other days'.<sup>49</sup>

The First World War had caused considerable disruption to family life, as fathers disappeared to the Front leaving mothers to manage households, alone and often short of money. With the closure of schools requisitioned for war purposes, and many women forced to find work, children found themselves with substantial amounts of unsupervised free time. Cecil Leeson's 1917 report, *The Child and the War*, linked this directly to a sharp rise in juvenile delinquency, which he attributed to 'the withdrawal from child-life of adult personal influence, and in the curtailment of those social and educational agencies that hitherto have occupied so large a part of the child's life'.<sup>50</sup> His concluding remarks further identified inherent contradictions in contemporary attitudes towards childhood, advising a more interventionist approach as essential to post-war recovery:

The temper of the day rather suggests that we should make the child happy, and leave him to be good by himself; and we acknowledge the truth in this. At the same time, the child's goodness requires something to crystallize upon, as it were – something through which it may take shape and be expressed. His sense of duty needs to be aroused and his conscience developed, in order that he may grow stronger than his surroundings.<sup>51</sup>

Five years later, both Mrs Greg's and Arthur Sabin's comments echo aspects of Leeson's account in their reference to large numbers of children with time on their hands. In this light, the collection may be seen as an attempt to re-strengthen family bonds in the aftermath of conflict. Like the handicrafts collection, through the preservation of everyday things of the not too distant past, it offered a way of bridging the gap between 'before' and 'after'. It contained implicit lessons for the formative adult-within-the-child, through the miniaturisation of workaday tools into objects of play. And it appealed to the remembered child-within-the-adult,

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Greg, Catalogue, ref.1, p.3.

<sup>50</sup> Cecil Leeson, *The Child and the War* (London: The Howard Association/P. S. King, 1917) p.22.

<sup>51</sup> Leeson, ref.50, p.67.



in the opportunity for nostalgic reminiscence provided by a body of playthings from the past, much of which was within living memory. In line with Leeson's advice, it embodied ideas of both parental love and a guiding hand, through which children might grow into good citizens. The former was manifest in the making of things for children. For if the handicrafts collection identified the handmade object as that which might embody 'our best, our love, our intelligence, our power',<sup>52</sup> how much more so when the making of such things was for children? The latter was embodied in the kinds of things made, things that would provide wholesome guidance for the younger generation.

## Making for love

Mrs Greg described her initial gift in 1922 as a collection of 'dolls and dolls furniture'; she might equally have described it in terms of the hand- and home-craft skills of needlework and carpentry. The phrase 'dolls furniture' may refer to the wide range of miniature household objects comprising approximately one third of the total collection. However, of these, half are specifically items of domestic furniture. They vary widely in scale and grandeur, from a substantial 22 inch high 'Jacobean bed' complete with bedding, to dolls' house-size drawing and dining room suites, novelties such as chairs made of feathers or encrusted with shells, and plain kitchen furniture, simply made (Figs.5.14-16). A small number of tin and brass stoves and fireplaces were included, but in the main, the furniture collection represented a display of joinery, upholstery and canework skills deployed in the making of miniatures. These had not necessarily been made as toys; Case 15 for example included a group of chairs and other domestic objects reflecting changing historical styles, described in the catalogue as apprentice models (Figs.5.17, 20-21).<sup>53</sup> They offered both an illustration in design history and in working practices of the past. They were shown alongside other items specifically identified as made for children, including 'furniture made by a father for his children: 1818'<sup>54</sup> and, slightly more obliquely, 'furniture made by a Shepherd on Salisbury Plain: 1921' (Figs.5.18-19).<sup>55</sup> This latter, although not specifying a familial relationship, is located in much the same territory, as amateur work, with added rural connotations. Displayed alongside the earlier example, it also implied a continuity of making spanning a century. Such examples were as skilfully executed as the apprentice pieces also on show, and the whole ensemble may be interpreted as an object lesson in carpentry skills.

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<sup>52</sup> Mary Greg, 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1922) p.5.

<sup>53</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.16.

<sup>54</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.27, cats.331-332.

<sup>55</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.25, cat.295.

As the previous chapter shows, carpentry was regarded by Arts and Crafts propagandists as an ideal amateur pursuit for men. John Sedding's 1890 description of the emotional value embodied in the night-school courses of the Whitechapel Guild of Crafts had focused on making for love. Furthermore, he had argued, even greater value was to be found in a receptive audience, for 'the delight of art-industry is increased beyond telling when shared with others'.<sup>56</sup> Thirty four years later, a similar sentiment was applied specifically to the making of things for children, as the preface to the collection catalogue indicates:

those things which have been done for children, the payment for which has been in no earthly coin, embody the noblest qualities of men's labour, because of the innocence of their motive and the love that inspired them.<sup>57</sup>

Such objects not only embodied love in their making but also in the love subsequently bestowed on them by the recipient:

Here a devoted father made for his children the finest model of a chair or dresser it was in his power to make, and it has been sanctified by his devotion and by the children's love and care for it, so that it has come to us intact, a warm and living thing. Or a doll in its period has been dressed by a mother in contemporary clothes, and fondled with loving care by children and perhaps grandchildren in their turn.<sup>58</sup>

Thus the making of things for children by their parents might set up an endlessly generative source of goodness passed down through generations. Love could inspire the pursuit of morally uplifting adult leisure activities, which in turn generated love in the child, all absorbed into the body of the made object, then passed down by the child-become-adult to his or her own children. The maker of the 1818 suite of furniture is unrecorded, although the frequent occurrence of Greg and Hope family objects in the handicrafts collection, not documented as such but identified through this research, makes it plausible that these are family objects, passed down by Mrs Greg, who had no children of her own, to the children of Manchester.

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<sup>56</sup> John Sedding, 'The Handicrafts in Old Days', *Art and Handicraft* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trünner, 1893) p.53.

<sup>57</sup> Sabin, ref.1, p.6.

<sup>58</sup> Sabin, ref.1, p.6.



Figures 5.14-5.21 (clockwise from top left): cat.102, 'Bedstead: original woven hangings: Jacobean period' (1922.212); cat.22, 'Doll's Furniture: painted wood, flower decoration' (1922.88); cat.156, 'Chair: high-back: mahogany' (1922.428); cat.359, 'Furniture made by a Shepherd on Salisbury Plain: 1921' (1922.531); cats.331-332, 'Furniture made by a father for his children: 1818' (1922.488); cat.144, 'Chair: rush-bottomed: 1780' (1922.260); cat.140, 'Garden chairs: wood' (1922.255).

As the popularity of the Heaton Hall display increased, visitors began to offer further gifts, all of which were referred back by Mr Batho to Mrs Greg for her approval. Such offers included in 1928 a suite of dolls' furniture from a Miss Tattersall of Stretford, 'made for her and her sisters 66 years ago',<sup>59</sup> and, the following year, a 'monkey on a stick' made by a Mr Carrington of Oldham.<sup>60</sup> Both were accepted for the collection, sight unseen, by Mrs Greg, who commented in relation to the Tattersall gift:

if the ladies have treasured them all their lives they probably are well made...I am glad indeed to hear so many visitors have seen both the collections - How glad I should be - we all should if we could know if any of them ever make a single thing as a result which will be a delight to themselves or their children...<sup>61</sup>

On the face of it, her comment suggests that the objects in question must have been sufficiently robust to withstand the rigours of a lifetime's 'treasuring'. The correlation of love with technical skill is also reflected in the catalogue preface, in 'the finest model of a chair or dresser it was in his power to make'. But 'well made' may also indicate the purpose for which something is made, for the love of making, or as a gift to one who is loved. Mr Carrington's 'monkey on a stick' was one of two in the collection; it is considerably cruder in execution than its companion, and it is not known which example was acquired first (Figs.5.22-23). But in the motivation for its making, in the 'delight' that its making provided, and thus potentially in the very naivety of its construction, it may also qualify as well made. Furthermore, Mrs Greg's observation regarding the Tattersall gift also suggests a mutually reinforcing relationship which ties together making and use: in the treasuring such things are well made. Love, as Sabin's preface implied, determines what is kept, what is 'treasured' and handed on; love may thus transform an otherwise ordinary object into a precious family heirloom.

The overall message was one of dedication and application, the blending of love and skill. As Arthur Sabin's preface concluded, in opposition to the dubious pleasures of cinema (an increasingly popular leisure activity), 'it is a wholesome corrective for adults and children alike to think of the happy hours that have been spent in the making of children's toys'.<sup>62</sup> Thus the object well made for children, transformed into a museum object and made accessible as a source of inspiration to potentially thousands more parents and their children, might continue to generate love.

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<sup>59</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 21 September 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 26 April 1929, MCG Archive.

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 23 September 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>62</sup> Sabin, ref.1, p.7.



Figures 5.22-5.23: cat.325, 'Monkey on a Stick' (1922.452); cat.368, 'Monkey on a Stick' (1922.542).

## Domestic guidance

In contrast to the explicit identification of examples of paternal making, there are no references in the catalogue to objects specifically made by mothers. However, motherhood is implicit throughout, primarily in the guise of teacher. Accompanying the dedication at the front of the catalogue, Mrs Greg included a quote from a book of sermons by H. J. Wilmot-Buxton (1843-1911). It read 'she that takes care of a little child takes care of an empire that knows no boundaries, no dimensions',<sup>63</sup> and came from an 1898 sermon entitled 'God's Jewels'. Ostensibly about the importance of Christian schooling, it first directly addressed mothers:

I would speak most earnestly to you mothers, because as you are the earliest, so are you the most powerful teachers of your children. It is a tremendous responsibility which God has laid upon you. He has lent you a precious jewel, an immortal soul, which will be saved or lost mainly through your influence.<sup>64</sup>

Maternal responsibility runs throughout the collection in terms of providing children with a domestic education. Maternal making thus lies in the making of the collection itself, as much

<sup>63</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.3.

<sup>64</sup> H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty, v.2: A year's plain sermons on the Gospels or Epistles* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1898) p.56.

as the things within it. It provided a lesson for children in the manners and customs of everyday life, mainly in the form of dolls and miniature household goods. In this respect it was heavily weighted towards girls, for whom education during this period was primarily a process of induction into a class-structured model of domesticity. Through both home education and a gender-differentiated school curriculum, middle class girls were expected to acquire the attributes of a leisured domestic life, while working class girls were trained for domestic labour, as both housewives and paid servants.<sup>65</sup> In both cases, needlework was central.

Dolls and dolls' accessories account for one third of the collection. Of the hundred or so dolls, the majority are early- to late-nineteenth century. As well as the outfits they wore, a further 80 items of dolls' clothing are recorded, approximately half of which have since been either lost or destroyed. Beyond the wealthy, few nineteenth century children had many custom-made toys. But the re-clothing of older dolls, or in poorer households, domestic objects such as spoons and clothes pegs, was common, and girls were often taught to sew through the use of plain dolls.<sup>66</sup> Handwritten additions to the collection inventory identify examples of clothing worn by historical dolls as later in date, as examination of the dolls themselves also reveals. Similarly, although much clothing has been lost over time due to deterioration, some of that which remains is in remarkably good condition, suggesting it may not have been 'fondled' very much before its entry to the museum. Two dolls appear to be wearing clothes made from the same fabric, and it is tempting to speculate whether Mrs Greg herself made these, or at least had them made. Her own embroidery was included in the handicrafts collection, and in 1923 she wrote to say she had just acquired a particularly good new doll that was to come to Manchester on her next trip, before which 'I must get her ready, i.e. washed & mended!'.<sup>67</sup> Thus, as with aspects of the handicrafts collection, dolls' clothing reflects the class crossover between leisure and labour in women's needlework practices. Sewing clothes for dolls was a way for mothers to teach daughters basic dressmaking skills, but it was also an opportunity for pleasurable pursuit in itself, particularly in the interwar context of craft as leisure.<sup>68</sup>

As well as providing an object lesson in needlework skills, the dolls also presented, in miniature, a range of class and gender identities. A small number of aristocratic dolls included three eighteenth century ladies, sumptuously dressed, and a large papier-mâché doll, more

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<sup>65</sup> Jane McDermid, 'Women and education', in June Purvis (ed.), *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945 – an introduction* (London: University College London Press, 1995) p.107.

<sup>66</sup> Gary Cross, 'Play, Games and Toys', in Fass, ref.20, pp.267-282.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 23 September 1923, MCG Archive.

<sup>68</sup> Pat Kirkham, 'Women and the Inter-war Handicrafts Revival', in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (eds.), *A View from the Interior: Women & Design* (London: The Women's Press, 1989) pp.174-183.



simply attired, known as a 'Queen Adelaide', after William IV's consort (Figs.5.24-25).<sup>69</sup> Victorian dolls in middle-class dress, with composition, wax or porcelain heads, were accompanied by smaller painted wooden dolls in plain and printed cottons (Figs.5.26-29). And a group of wooden dolls, dressed in coarse wool and cotton skirts, shawls and coats, were recorded in terms of working-class occupations – these include a 'fishwife', 'washerwoman', and several pedlar dolls with baskets of tiny miniature goods (Figs.5.30-31).<sup>70</sup> Only four male dolls – a pedlar, a French soldier (now lost) and two footmen – were included, reflecting the rarity of such things.<sup>71</sup> The dolls collection presented a range of predominantly female identities across different levels of society, loosely distinguishable by dress and accessories. The catalogue identified the working dolls in terms of their occupations, but listed the more fashionably dressed dolls by individual Christian names, which in many cases provided the only information, along with date. Thus this group offered the possibility of personal identification on the part of visitors, particularly those who shared their names, while those at the further reaches of the social spectrum were more generic.

Although the dolls reflected a range of social positions, they were not displayed in groups by class or occupation, but mixed up together, royalty with commoners, a 'Pompadour' next to a 'Fishwife'.<sup>72</sup> Several of the cases comprised exclusively dolls, while others also contained a wide variety of miscellaneous household objects and other miniatures. As with the handicrafts display, groupings varied, from the seemingly logical to the apparently random. Case 14 included a cook and a waitress, accompanied by a kitchen range, tables 'set for a meal'<sup>73</sup> and various wooden and pewter kitchen implements. Case 20, however, included a milkmaid ornament, a model telephone receiver, a baby's rattle and a working model of a steam engine, as well as five pedlar dolls, a 'telescopic view of the Industrial Exhibition of 1851' and 'various small animals and trees',<sup>74</sup> among its 66 objects. All varying widely in scale, such arrangements must have presented a mixed bag of visual delights, combining the miniaturised equipment of everyday domestic life with adult souvenirs and knick-knacks.

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<sup>69</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.13, cat.84.

<sup>70</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.11, cat.52; p.17, cat.142; p.30, cats.379-380

<sup>71</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.21, cat.222, p.24, cat.281; p.30, cat.380.

<sup>72</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.22, cats.239-240.

<sup>73</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.15, cat.115.

<sup>74</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.33, cats.431, 436.



Figures 5.24-5.27 (clockwise from top left): ex-cat., as listed when accessioned, one of 'Two dolls, Louis XIV period' (1922.384); cat.84, "'Queen Adelaide": c.1836' (1922.190); cat.285, "'Patty": 1860' (1922.381); cat.59, "'Lucy": 1850' (1922.177).





Figures 5.28-5.31 (clockwise from top left): cat.279, "'Clarissa': holding baby doll: mid-Victorian' (baby doll lost) (1922.436); cat.238, 'Doll with Two Bonnets: c.1830' (1922.420); cat.234, 'Doll: Pedlar with Basket' (1922.415); cat.142, 'Washerwoman: c.1800' (1922.257).

Of particular pride to Mrs Greg was a 'Model of a Nuremburg [sic] Kitchen',<sup>75</sup> one of several model rooms included in the collection (Fig.5.32). Nuremberg kitchens had been produced for several centuries in the famous German toy-making city, not as playthings but as educational toys intended to teach girls lessons of household management. The kitchen given to Manchester was not actually from Nuremberg, but made in imitation of a nineteenth century original also owned by Mrs Greg and subsequently given to Bethnal Green (Fig.5.33). Manchester's version was made by a member of Mrs Greg's Hertfordshire staff, Charles Hummerstone, and subsequently fitted out by Mrs Greg with 171 items of furniture and equipment (only a small number of which survive).<sup>76</sup> Several letters over the period April to November 1923 discuss 'Mr Hummerstone's beautiful kitchen' made, as she explained, 'out of love of Mr Greg',<sup>77</sup> and how best to display it for close viewing. Two years later she sent three model shops – a greengrocer's, fishmonger's and milliner's - which 'I am responsible for & which with help from 2 or 3 others have been very much my work during the dark dull days'.<sup>78</sup> Together with a 'Garden in Hertfordshire',<sup>79</sup> now lost but presumably a miniature version of Mrs Greg's own garden, these provided a series of stage sets against which to situate the smaller objects. Such models fulfilled both qualities required of the collection – wholesome educational purpose and the making of things out of love. The showpieces of the collection in this respect, however, in their combination of craftsmanship and educative content, but also in their own right as visual spectacle, were without doubt the dolls' houses.

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<sup>75</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.14, cat.104.

<sup>76</sup> Dolls and Dolls' Houses collection inventory, probably c.1932, MCG Archive.

<sup>77</sup> Letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 10 April, 22 May, 7 October and 15 November 1923, MCG Archive.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 April 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>79</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.34, cat.450.





Figures 5.32-5.33: cat.104, 'Model of a Nuremberg Kitchen: made by Mr. Hummerston for Mrs. Greg' (1922.257); Nuremberg Kitchen, c.1800, National Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green (V&A Museum), given by Mary Greg, accession number Misc.217-1923.

## The Dolls' House

Dolls' houses are at the heart of this collection, as indicated by their inclusion in its given title from 1924. In fact, dolls' houses are arguably central to Mrs Greg's whole project. Once she started collecting them she didn't stop. She gave at least nine to Manchester, and then continued with further gifts to Bethnal Green, Salford and Liverpool museums. Her last letter to Manchester, written in June 1949 shortly before her death, ends with a query as to whether the dolls' house for Liverpool has arrived yet.<sup>80</sup> The dolls' house, in both its physical and symbolic presence, embodied many of Mrs Greg's most passionate interests, perhaps most evidently in the way it manifests the power of small things to captivate. The dolls' house is both small and large. It turns the commonplace objects of domestic life into strange and marvellous things, simply by changing their scale. At the same time, it is also home as collection, the assemblage of intimate objects brought together to form an enclosed world, centred around its creator. It offers imaginary harmony, a safe place in the world where things can be controlled. The dolls' house is both strange and familiar, serious and playful; it can be deployed for educational purposes, instils patient and careful handling, but can elicit delight in young and old alike.

Eight dolls' houses were included in the Heaton Hall display, at least by 1936. One arrived as part of the original gift in May 1922; a further six were added in December of the same year. Three more were offered in 1925 and 1927, though it is not clear which of these were eventually given. What is clear is that Mrs Greg was spending significant sums of money specifically for this purpose, for as she said to Mr Batho, 'I do not want to buy them unless they would be appreciated'.<sup>81</sup> By far the largest items in a collection of small things (the biggest house, at 47 inches high, would have been taller than many young children) and placed in their own individual showcases, they must have formed visually dramatic focal points in the display. Dolls' houses also epitomised the dual message of the wider collection, in providing both inspiration for making and a material illustration of the different facets of domestic life. The dolls' house combines both fatherly and motherly skill – carpentry to build the house and its furniture, needlework for the curtains and bed covers. The project of furnishing a dolls' house offers practice in matters of home-making. And houses reflecting different periods might also provide a history lesson in changing patterns of daily life, interior design and architecture. Early books on the history of toys took it as given that historical miniatures

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<sup>80</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Cleveland, 9 June 1949, MCG Archive.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 3 September 1922, MCG Archive.



provided an accurate and reliable picture of the past.<sup>82</sup> The catalogue introduction was no exception:

A history lesson becomes vitalised when you are able to see the things that were in common use at the time you are dealing with...For these miniature pieces of furniture, the dresses of the dolls, and all the useful things of every kind, are exact models of the actual things men and women used in their own period.<sup>83</sup>

As with the 'Nuremberg' kitchen, the dolls' houses at Manchester no longer contain their original furnishings; at an unknown later date, probably in the 1950s, each house was emptied and its contents pooled. Comprising very small objects, many have since been lost and those that remain, being unlisted, are not reconcilable to their original houses. However, all the Greg dolls' houses arrived in Manchester individually furnished. The relationship between the houses and their content was clearly important to Mrs Greg. Unable to accompany the six new houses that arrived in December 1922, she suggested that a female member of staff, Miss Maben, would be the ideal person to lay them out on her behalf as, on previous occasions, she had shown 'excellent taste'.<sup>84</sup> Mrs Greg's regular updates suggest that such furnishings included material that had come with the house when purchased and further items assembled by Mrs Greg in order to complete the interior arrangements to her satisfaction. Historical authenticity was thus potentially less of a given than the catalogue might suggest; a later handwritten annotation on the inventory states that in the case of one house 'furniture, cheap modern stuff, has been removed'.<sup>85</sup>

This incidental note hints at how the multiple intended meanings of the collection potentially conflicted with each other. The collection as social history required at least a degree of historical accuracy, a quality that apparently became more important to the institution in later years. For the collection as inspiration, however, the demonstration of love, skill and material potential was more significant; the making of new things to accompany those handed down from the past simply added to this. Individual object listings in the collection catalogue, even more so than with the handicrafts collection, do not prioritise dating. Some objects have precise year dates, dates which seem suspiciously precise given the nature of the material, unless based on anecdotal information. Some are given 'circa' dates and others period descriptors. It is not entirely clear, however, whether these refer to the date the object was

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<sup>82</sup> For example, Nevill Jackson, ref.26; C. Geoffrey Holme (ed.), *Children's Toys of Yesterday* (London: The Studio, 1932).

<sup>83</sup> Sabin, ref.1, pp.5-6.

<sup>84</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 October 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>85</sup> Dolls and Dolls' Houses collection inventory, probably c.1932, MCG Archive.

made, or the style in which it was made, or are a conflation of the two. As the Nuremberg kitchen shows, Mrs Greg was not averse to replicas, and arguably all miniatures are already replicas of the full scale original to which they refer. Similarly, objects such as dolls are, by their nature, likely to have been dressed and re-dressed over time, complicating attempts at specific dating. Given the wider intent of the collection and its core audience, however, evocation was more important than accuracy. The majority of objects have no date at all.

The dolls' houses also point up a further contradiction within the collection, indeed within all collections of historical toys: their identity as children's playthings. Many objects we recognise today as toys were not originally produced primarily, or even at all, for children to play with. Dolls were used as mannequins in order to promote changing fashions. Other miniatures were similarly used to distribute information about makers and advertise their products.<sup>86</sup> They might also be produced as novelties for adult amusement, or as ornaments, demonstrating both the expert skill of the maker, and the wealth and prestige of the owner who could indulge in objects the sole purpose of which was to delight. Or they provided an opportunity to own luxury items that one could not possibly afford at full scale.<sup>87</sup> All these functions have in common a key mode of communication – display. In this respect the dolls' house is the ultimate showpiece. As a series of framed scenarios, it affords the viewer a voyeuristic perspective, able to see into both the public and private spaces of the home, from drawing room to bedroom, at the same time. As with many other types of toy, the history of the dolls' house is substantially one of adult pleasure; they only started to be made specifically for children's play from the nineteenth century. Earlier houses were indeed characterised by the attempt to create as exact a replica of the full-scale world as possible, for the purposes of such visual delight. Mrs Greg's dolls' house collecting in the 1920s coincided with the production of just such an example, commissioned for Queen Mary from Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1920.<sup>88</sup> Completed in 1924, the Queen's Dolls' House excited much public attention as a masterpiece of miniature craftsmanship, a fully furnished aristocratic home in miniature 'into which a thousand artists have put their best'.<sup>89</sup>

The dolls' house made for children, however, has different requirements – it must be robust enough to withstand regular handling and leave room for imaginative play. Thus the

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<sup>86</sup> Cross, ref.66.

<sup>87</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 1993 [1984]) pp.61-62.

<sup>88</sup> See Royal Collections Trust, 'Queen Mary's Dolls' House', no date, <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/windsorcastle/what-to-see-and-do/queen-marys-dolls-house> [accessed 14 August 2017].

<sup>89</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'The Queen's Dolls' House: AN EXCELLENT RECORD', 15 May 1924, p.6.

emergence of child-focused dolls' houses saw a shift away from historical accuracy and the world in microcosm, towards what Leonie von Wilckens describes as a realism sufficient 'to involve the child's fantasy, indeed to evoke it, and yet not so perfect that there was no room for the child to develop its own ideas'.<sup>90</sup> Mrs Greg's dolls' houses sit between these two archetypes. Without their original furnishings it is hard to gauge precisely, but her loose approach to dating and the later removal of furnishings regarded as inappropriate suggest a more imaginative than historically precise approach. As Mrs Greg explained in relation to the six new houses acquired in September 1922, 'I want the imagination of the little folk to be fired!'.<sup>91</sup> In construction, they range from the detailed to the basic, from a 'very good Georgian one full of furniture of the same date'<sup>92</sup> (Figs.5.34-35) to a late nineteenth century example, again 'made by a father for his children'<sup>93</sup> (Figs.5.36-37). Both of these have interior features that mimic the layout of real houses, with a staircase and landings providing access between the rooms. Others are simply boxes within a box (Figs.5.38-39). Architecturally, they are loosely identifiable by period style, predominantly Georgian and Victorian townhouse – there are no Tudor cottages or Gothic castles. But while the catalogue implied architectural accuracy in its accompanying note to the 'Adam' dolls' house (Fig.5.5) – 'early dolls' houses were often made and designed by architects'<sup>94</sup> – for the most part details are gestural, indicated through beading and paintwork rather than precisely replicated. They are not architectural models.

Even as things made for play, however, such dolls' houses required careful handling; their poor condition today demonstrates how easily constituent parts may be damaged. They were prepared by Mrs Greg as objects of visual delight, not physical play. As the correspondence shows, she clearly enjoyed the task of readying them, giving considerable attention to issues of lighting and case construction and requesting that steps be provided for smaller children. Arguably, the main arena of play with a dolls' house is primarily the making, assembling and arrangement of its contents. In this sense Mrs Greg's dolls' houses were just that – Mrs Greg's dolls' houses. She bought them, furnished them, and supervised their presentation for visual appreciation by others. The only other people who got to interact with them directly were those members of Gallery staff that she approved specifically for the purpose.

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<sup>90</sup> Leonie von Wilckens, *The Dolls' House: An Illustrated History* (London: Bell & Hyman, 1980) p.61.

<sup>91</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 3 September 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 3 September 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>93</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.34.

<sup>94</sup> Catalogue, ref.1, p.10, cat.31.



Figures 5.34-5.39 (from top left): cat.458, 'Doll's House and Furniture: George III', exterior and interior (furniture missing) (1922.637); cat.448, 'A Doll's House made by a father for his children', exterior and interior (1922.635); ex-cat., as listed when accessioned, 'Doll's House and Furniture. 150 articles', exterior and interior (furniture missing) (1922.642).

## Play

Play, evidently, is a central theme of the dolls and dolls' houses collection. But play is also central to all forms of collecting. Susan Stewart identifies the collection as 'a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context'.<sup>95</sup> In this sense, collecting is a game of make believe, the setting up of a hermetically sealed world. Brenda Danet and Tamar Katriel similarly identify collecting as 'a form of play with classification'.<sup>96</sup> They outline the key ingredients of play that also apply to collecting: its voluntary nature, 'engaged in for its own sake';<sup>97</sup> competition, in the hunt for new material; chance, in determining what will be found; and the role of the imagination, or 'as-ifness'.<sup>98</sup> The rules of the collecting 'game' that enable it to be recognised as such comprise reframing, classification, procedures (i.e. how one looks after a collection) and discrimination or differentiation – 'no two alike'.<sup>99</sup> Thus all collections may be regarded in some sense as 'toys', and the acquisition, arrangement and presentation of them a form of play. Children, as Danet and Katriel also observe, make particularly enthusiastic collectors; Susan Pearce goes so far as to describe collecting as 'one of the most visible aspects of childish behaviour'.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the make-believe world of the collection is necessarily smaller than the 'real' everyday world, in both a literal sense – it can be contained within a cabinet, a bedroom, a museum even – and symbolically – it is within the control of the collector. The dolls and dolls' houses collection, by virtue of its focus on children and childhood, placed the qualities of play and smallness centre stage. But for whom?

As the creator, if no longer technically the owner, of the collection, its contents were first and foremost Mrs Greg's toys. Arguably, she used the collection as a means of play in multiple ways. In the acquisition, assembly and display of its content, she was enacting the play of the collector, but in the context of the museum she was also playing the role of curator, one denied her as a professional reality by age, class and gender. In the making of things for the collection – the toy shops and a series of fabric models of houses – she was engaging in her own creative play. And as an elderly widow with no children of her own, was she playing at being a child again, or playing at parenthood, or possibly both? Dianne Sachko Macleod, in

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<sup>95</sup> Stewart, ref.87, p.151.

<sup>96</sup> Brenda Danet and Tamar Katriel, 'No two alike: play and aesthetics in collecting', in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 2003 [1994]) p.222.

<sup>97</sup> Danet and Katriel, ref.96, p.222.

<sup>98</sup> Danet and Katriel, ref.96, p.223.

<sup>99</sup> Danet and Katriel, ref.96, p.225.

<sup>100</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995) p.237.

her study of American women art collectors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, theorises collecting-as-play in terms of Donald Winnicott's concept of 'transitional phenomena'. Winnicott argued that the objects to which very young children develop strong attachments, the first 'not-me' object, occupy an intermediate area between inner reality and outer experience. Such transitional objects are thus neither wholly external nor wholly internal but form a bridge, enabling the child to situate her/his emergent self within a wider external world.<sup>101</sup> He posits a direct progression 'from transitional phenomena to playing, from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences'.<sup>102</sup> Sachko Macleod consequently proposes that 'art collecting as practiced by women should be redefined as a process of gathering objects that console the psyche and contribute to articulation of the self'.<sup>103</sup>

In the case of the dolls and dolls' house collection, archive documents suggest it had the effect of legitimising play on the part of all those adults who encountered it, particularly those who had the privilege of handling it. In 1925 Mr Batho wrote to say that a miniature mangle had been inspected and approved by the Committee: '[t]he little model of a mangle has arrived safely and you would have been amused to see from the Chairman downwards, trying their hands at mangling'.<sup>104</sup> The sight of the august gentlemen of the Art Galleries Committee playing washerwoman with a toy mangle clearly amused Mr Batho, who further noted 'I remember well as a boy seeing them in use'.<sup>105</sup> As a collection of playthings and domestic miniatures of the past, much of which was within living memory of older adults at least, nostalgic affection for the pre-war social past could be conflated with the individual and internalised past of childhood. The collection provided an opportunity for personal reminiscence and even, perhaps, on the part of staff who could interact physically with it, the re-enactment of childlike behaviour. In 1923, the usually serious-minded Lawrence Haward replied to Mrs Greg's news of a doll she was bringing to Manchester, saying he was very much looking forward to 'making her acquaintance'.<sup>106</sup> He later gave a doll of his own to add to the collection.

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<sup>101</sup> D. W. Winnicott, 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena', in D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1971) pp.1-25.

<sup>102</sup> D. W. Winnicott, cited in Diane Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) p.14.

<sup>103</sup> Macleod, ref.102, p.15.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 22 January 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>105</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 22 January 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Mr Haward to Mrs Greg, 29 September 1923, MCG Archive.



Delight, amusement and recognition also characterise the adult visitor response to the collection, and not only among those who had children in their company. In 1927 Mr Batho wrote again:

A seafaring friend of mine and a nephew of his from New York paid a visit last week to Heaton Hall. They called at my house last evening and told me how much they had enjoyed seeing your dolls and dolls furniture. They are both men who have seen collections not only in Europe but all over the globe and they both said how delighted they were.<sup>107</sup>

The collection appears to have evoked a genuine and easy sense of playfulness in adults, a sense which is also evident in the tone of voice with which contemporary commentators wrote about Queen Mary's dolls' house. A. C. Benson, editor of *Everybody's Book of the Queen's Dolls' House*, ascribed this to an emergent *zeitgeist*, an optimistic and modern light-heartedness that contrasted with the adult solemnity of preceding generations. He said of the Queen's house:

It is meant to have a touch of childlike fancy, of irresponsible cheerfulness, to represent the genial and leisurely side of life, the instinct for play pure and simple, which in these enlightened days preserves the freshness and bonhomie of many men and women to an age at which, a century ago, a certain conventional ruefulness and even dreariness appeared generally to have established itself.<sup>108</sup>

The framing of childhood as innocence, and its positioning as the formative period of the later adult self, from the Enlightenment onwards, placed the experiences of one's own childhood increasingly at the centre of individual identity in later life. And as Rousseau observed in 1762, the older one became, the more attractive the nostalgic remembrances of youth: 'In ageing I become a child again'.<sup>109</sup> The collection appears to have spoken to the memories and sensations of childhood pleasure, both for Mrs Greg and others who came into contact with it. Quite what contemporary children made of it, however, is harder to gauge.

### **'The little folk'**

Evidence suggests that children and their responses to the collection were at the forefront of Mrs Greg's mind in all her thinking about its development and presentation. She consistently referred to it as the 'children's collection' – never a toy collection – or alternatively as the

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<sup>107</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 25 April 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>108</sup> A. C. Benson, 'The Playful Aspect of the Queen's Dolls' House', in A. C. Benson, C. V. O., and Sir Lawrence Weaver, K. B. E. (eds.), *Everybody's Book of The Queen's Dolls' House* (London: The Daily Telegraph and Methuen & Co., 1924) p.28.

<sup>109</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, cited in Larry Wolff, ref.21, p.90.

‘children’s things’ – as belonging to them rather than to her or the museum. She pondered in letters whether younger visitors would want to come inside if the weather was warm, how smaller children would see into the cases, whether parents *would* actually go home and make things for them.<sup>110</sup> She referred to children throughout as ‘the little folk’ or ‘little people’,<sup>111</sup> aligning them directly with the collection in terms of their similarly diminutive stature. However, she made no reference to individual children she might have known, nor do her letters give any sense of encountering actual visitors during her Manchester visits. Furthermore, her phraseology effectively turned real world children, the ‘juvenile delinquents’ of Cecil Leeson’s report, into fairy folk, imagined creatures inhabiting another dimension to that of the adult world.

Fantasy and magic, as well as nostalgia, were staple ingredients in children’s literature of this period, its so-called ‘golden age’: enchanted lands, magical races of people, animate inanimate objects and the unpredictability of changing scale characterised the writings of multiple authors, from Lewis Carroll in the 1860s to E. Nesbit in the 1900s.<sup>112</sup> Such stories blurred the boundaries between real and imaginary worlds, as in Nesbit’s *The Magic City* of 1910, in which the hero, Philip, grown inexplicably small, finds himself inhabiting the model city he has earlier constructed out of household objects.<sup>113</sup> John Ruskin, in an 1884 essay titled ‘Fairy Land’, stressed the ‘absolute necessity’, as he saw it, of the freedom for ‘fancying something that isn’t there’, in the world of the child, as key to the future imaginative capabilities of the adult.<sup>114</sup> The correlation of a child’s eye view with enchantment is also present in *Everybody’s Book of the Queen’s Dolls’ House*, thirty years later, in which multiple adult contributors fantasized about its tiny inhabitants. Colonel Mervyn O’Gorman contributed two chapters on the unseen ‘Dollomites’, so named by ‘a bright little girl, among the children of my acquaintance’,<sup>115</sup> who lived within. His detailed account of the real physical challenges of inhabiting the world at one-twelfth human scale is a curious combination of playful fantasy and scientific analysis.

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<sup>110</sup> Letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 4 June 1922, 3 November 1922, 27 April 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>111</sup> Letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 3 September 1922, 26 December 1922, 10 April 1923, 18 April 1927, 24 November 1930, MCG Archive.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Hemmings, ‘A Taste of Nostalgia: Children’s Books from the Golden Age-Carroll, Grahame and Milne’, *Children’s Literature*, 35 (2007) pp.54-79.

<sup>113</sup> E. Nesbit, *The Magic City* (London: Macmillan, 1910). See also Nancy Wei-Ning Chen, ‘Playing with Size and Reality: The Fascination of the Dolls’ House World’, *Children’s Literature in Education*, 46 (2015) pp.278-295, for further discussion of this story.

<sup>114</sup> John Ruskin, ref.24, p.83.

<sup>115</sup> Colonel O’Gorman, ‘The Dollomites’, in Benson and Weaver, ref.108, pp.35-36.

Mr Batho's regular updates from Manchester, however, while stressing the popularity of the collection and its consistently impressive visitor figures, say little about the responses of real children. Four days after the collection first opened to the public, in time for Whitweek 1922, he wrote to say that 5,420 visitors had passed through the turnstiles, causing staff on duty some difficulty: 'they have had a strenuous time urging the people to get away from the cases in order to let others have a chance of seeing the show'.<sup>116</sup> Whitweek was a major public and religious holiday in the North West; it marked the start of the summer season, attracting thousands of visitors, both adults and children, to concerts and other festivities in the park. Mr Batho did not comment on the ratio of adult to child visitors, although three years later he explained that the collection had been relocated to the ground floor in part due to incidents of children being hurt on particularly busy days.<sup>117</sup> During Whitweek 1928, 24,000 visitors were recorded and 600 copies of the newly updated catalogue sold.<sup>118</sup> Such numbers were unlikely to be conducive to the kind of transformative experience Arthur Sabin had described in his evocation of children awestruck by wonder. Indeed the 1923 Annual Report painted a rather different picture, observing bluntly that:

a very large proportion of the visitors to this Gallery are children and young people, and the advisability of someone being there specially to direct their interest is obvious, as if left entirely to themselves they are naturally inclined simply to run from room to room, not really seeing anything...the crowds of children who pour aimlessly through the Gallery on the occasions of the Fresh Air Fund Treats are too unwieldy to be dealt with in this way; indeed the time spent by them in the Gallery would seem to be entirely wasted.<sup>119</sup>

The Report also noted, however, that the dolls and dolls' houses were popular with girls, all of whom 'like it and "want to keep it"'.<sup>120</sup> Boys, predictably, were less keen, finding more to interest them in the collection of armour and weapons on show in the adjacent room.

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<sup>116</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 6 June 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>117</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 18 April 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>118</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 15 June 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>119</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1923*, p.20.

<sup>120</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1923*, p.20.



Figures 5.40-5.41: cat.385, 'Sedan Chair and Carriers' (1922.569); cat.492, 'Noah's Ark: modern (Pomona Toys)' (1935.999).

It was, essentially, a collection of playthings that couldn't be physically played with, but only imaginatively so. Furthermore, it was a collection of playthings from the past, not necessarily reflective of contemporary children's concerns. A few contemporary objects were acquired – a series of historical models of ships by model makers Bassett-Lowke, specially commissioned in 1925,<sup>121</sup> and a wooden Noah's Ark and figure of a sedan chair with two dolls, both made by Pomona Toys (Figs.5.40-41). Such items fit the overall themes of the collection in being overtly educational in terms of either religious instruction or historical illustration. They were also craft objects as much as playthings. Pomona Toys was established in 1915 by two artists, Mary Vermuyden Wheelhouse and Louise Jacobs. They exhibited at Arts and Crafts Society exhibitions, supplied Fortnum's, Liberty and Harrods from their Chelsea and Kensington shops,<sup>122</sup> and contributed miniature versions of their toys, including a half-scale version of the sedan chair, to the Queen's Dolls House.<sup>123</sup>

Such toys were well beyond the means of many of the children who would have seen the collection. But even the kind of play they might facilitate, had they been accessible in this way, was debatable. A reviewer of Pomona Toys in 1915 had commented, 'some of the toys strike one as being more beautiful than fit for their purpose...the average child could only be trusted to gaze at them from a distance, except on rare occasions when there was someone by'.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, in June 1922, a *Manchester Guardian* article argued that delicate or elaborate toys represented adult aspirations on behalf of their children rather more than the reality of children's play. The author gave an example of a girl 'I once knew [who] never dreamed of playing with them unless she had a party and wanted to show them off. All the rest of the time she was...pulling her model dolls' house to pieces so that she could play at being the builder and decorator who was called in to repair it'.<sup>125</sup>

In November 1922, the *Manchester Evening News* (MEN), which sponsored the White Heather camps, held an essay writing competition for children who had taken part in that summer's camp. Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the MEN's investment, its coverage of the competition entries waxed lyrical about the benefits of the programme. It spoke of the release the camp provided from 'the cruel pressure of ugliness and dirt' in Manchester's city streets; of the 'simple elements of happiness' to be found in tram rides, boat trips and 'romps among the

<sup>121</sup> See letters between Mrs Greg and Mr Batho, June to November 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>122</sup> Rebecca Green, 'Pomona Toys', *Dolls' Houses Past & Present*, 07 November 2010, <http://www.dollshousespastandpresent.com/issue7nov2010p5.htm> [accessed 14 May 2017].

<sup>123</sup> Benson and Weaver, ref.108, p.74.

<sup>124</sup> Green, ref.122.

<sup>125</sup> Evelyn Sharpe, 'The Toys that Children Want: AN IDEAL NURSERY', *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 June 1922, p.4.

trees'; and the 'pathetic' gratitude of children cheering outside the newspaper's office. Young essayists wrote of 'vast plains of wavy grass' and 'shimmering silvery waters', of birds and grasshoppers and water lilies, but also, to the unnamed journalist's amusement, of getting into fights and dodging park keepers.<sup>126</sup> This article is among a group of cuttings in the Greg correspondence, along with an article from an unknown Hertfordshire newspaper on the Buntingford Educational Handwork Association that pleaded for 'the entire freedom of children so that they might be natural, and neither have their speech repressed nor their movements restricted'.<sup>127</sup> Such phrases resonate with the MEN journalist's observation that 'the love of nature and all lovely things is difficult to kill in a child's heart'.<sup>128</sup> The grouping of these cuttings in the Greg archive (rather than the Galleries' Press Cuttings Books) suggests they were sent to Manchester by Mrs Greg. Together they reflect a romantic ideal of childhood as both free and natural, looking benevolently on the more boisterous behaviour of boys playing 'Tarzan'. However, the reality of large numbers of children, removed from their everyday environment and given open space in which to roam without supervision, clearly proved difficult to manage within the more restrictive environment of Heaton Hall. Visits to the Hall were referenced by some of the young MEN essayists, although as the article wryly observed, 'educationalists should note that they are all girls'.<sup>129</sup> No mention of the dolls' house collection is recorded.

Nonetheless, the Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses remained a popular attraction at Heaton Hall for the rest of the interwar period. In 1927, fellow dolls and dolls' house collector Queen Mary<sup>130</sup> requested a personal tour when she came to Manchester to open the annual Heaton Park camp.<sup>131</sup> In 1932, items from the collection were included in a one-off publication by fine and decorative arts magazine *The Studio*, entitled *Children's Toys of Yesterday*, along with several of Mrs Greg's gifts to Bethnal Green and further examples from other British and European museums (Fig.5.42).<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 'CHILDREN'S WIT AND WISDOM: YOUNG ESSAYISTS AT HEATON PARK', 3 November 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>127</sup> Press cutting, source unknown, included with letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 22 December 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>128</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, ref.126.

<sup>129</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, ref.126.

<sup>130</sup> Burton and Goodfellow, ref.43, pp.354-366.

<sup>131</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 5 May 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>132</sup> Holme, ref.82. Objects credited to Mrs Greg are shown on pp.19, 23, 27, 30, 38, 59, 69, 94.





*Manchester Art Gallery*

English doll's bed, with original woven hangings of the Jacobean period, height 23½ inches. Given to the museum by Mrs. Greg.



*Manchester Art Gallery*

On the left, doll's dressing table of the Queen Anne period, 16 inches high ; on the right, "Queen Adelaide," dated about 1836, height 20 inches. Both given to the museum by Mrs. Greg.

Figure 5.42: Objects from the Greg Collection of Dolls & Dolls' Houses, illustrated in C. Geoffrey Holme, *Toys of Yesterday* (London: The Studio, 1932) p.69.

## Playthings of the Past

The collection remained in situ until 1939 when Heaton Hall was once more requisitioned for war purposes. It was subsequently re-located to Platt Hall, where it joined the growing costume collection until Platt Hall too was requisitioned. It then moved to Wythenshawe Hall on the southernmost edge of the city, where a smaller display remained popular with visitors for the duration of the war.<sup>133</sup> In 1945, structural problems with the building necessitated the closure of much of Wythenshawe Hall and the whole collection went into storage, where it stayed for the next ten years. In 1946, Gwen White's Penguin publication, *A Book of Toys*, made no mention of Manchester among the museums where one might see old toys, focusing purely on the London museums and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Dorset.<sup>134</sup>

In 1954, however, after another world war and nearly a decade in storage, the dolls and dolls' houses collection was redisplayed at Queens Park, under the new title 'Playthings of the Past'.<sup>135</sup> As noted in the Annual Report for that year, the material, 'most of which had been in store since 1939, was scrutinised, restored where necessary, and the most interesting items exhibited'. The display took an explicitly social history approach, arranged as a 'miniature museum of the decorative and domestic arts';<sup>136</sup> as such, it delighted a whole new audience, attracting more press coverage than it had in 1922. The *Manchester Guardian* reported on 'the many small girls...crowding the Queens Park Art Gallery' in order to see the 'perfectly fashioned' dolls and the 'astonishing craftsmanship' of the dolls' houses. Drawing a distinction between 'the exquisite models' that make their way into museum collections, and the more mundane reality of everyday playthings, the report lingered on material pleasures, describing how, 'before one's eyes the spare elegance of the Georgians puts on weight and is finally smothered in plush and velvet and woolwork' before ending in the 'bitterly nostalgic charm' of 'the greengrocer's shop selling strawberries at sixpence a lb. and asparagus at a shilling a bundle'.<sup>137</sup> Three months later, in July 1954, the last vestiges of wartime rationing were finally lifted.

The collection once again became a popular local attraction, though now in the predominantly working class neighbourhood of Harpurhey. It remains a fond memory among those who grew

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<sup>133</sup> MCAG, *Annual Reports 1940-1946*, MCG Archive.

<sup>134</sup> Gwen White, *A Book of Toys* (London: Penguin, 1946) pp.60-63.

<sup>135</sup> S. D. Cleveland, *Guide to the Manchester Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester Art Galleries Committee, 1956) p.33.

<sup>136</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1954*, pp.8-9. MCG Archive.

<sup>137</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'Perfection in Miniature', 27 April 1954, p.12.

up there in the 1950s and 60s. A post on a local history internet forum in 2006, recalling independent childhood visits to the museum, sparked a flurry of responses, including memories of the 'sinister pedlar doll',<sup>138</sup> of 'tiny handstitched white kid leather doll's gloves',<sup>139</sup> and of the 'glamorous and spacious building'<sup>140</sup> that housed it all. One account is particularly evocative of Arthur Sabin's description of wonder, written ninety years earlier:

As a child in 1960, I lived in Cheetham but went to school (then aged 7) at St Clare's RC juniors in Blackley. My school ran regular Tuesday trips to QP museum to see the art and the dolls houses... The houses were numerous, were so well equipped and clearly made for the children of the wealthy.

Most of us kids were from poor families and I have never forgotten the effect it had upon us to see these dolls houses and the paintings, in the lovely setting of that house. It gave us a glimpse into a world we could not otherwise experience for ourselves and it gave us the idea that one could actually aspire to a better life with some of the finer, aesthetic trappings of such a life. I often wonder if the lady might have considered it was a waste of her time showing items of such wonder to a bunch of working class oiks as us, but I hoped she saw the wonderment in our faces. I for one have never forgotten those displays.<sup>141</sup>

Although the collection clearly enjoyed a renewed public profile, both its wider reputation and connection with Mrs Greg were lost. Aspects of the collection had also deteriorated in storage; a substantial amount of dolls' clothing was deaccessioned and destroyed in 1959 and again in 1972. The rest of the collection remained on display until 1984 when Queens Park closed to the public.<sup>142</sup> At that point, the dolls were re-allocated to the costume collection at Platt Hall as models of historical dress. The rest was placed in storage. Moved from site to site over the next two decades according to the changing needs and uses of Gallery space, aspects of the collection deteriorated further until, in 2004, a conservation audit resulted in the return of the collection to more stable storage at Queens Park, where it remains today.

## Conclusion

The Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses at Manchester City Art Galleries represents the first attempt by a British museum to form a collection focused specifically on the material

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<sup>138</sup> 'princesskeli', response to post by 'Tuesday', 'Queens Park Museum/Art Gallery', *Manchester Forum*, 16 November 2011, <http://www.manchester-forum.co.uk/index.php?topic=352.0> [accessed 04 October 2017].

<sup>139</sup> 'princesskeli', ref.138, response from 'cheethamgirl', 3 November 2012.

<sup>140</sup> 'princesskeli', ref.138, response from 'Jdbooth50', 27 July 2012.

<sup>141</sup> 'princesskeli', ref.138, response from 'cheethamgirl', 3 November 2013.

<sup>142</sup> L. G. Lovell, 'City Art Gallery – Opening Periods: Report of the Director', 6 June 1984, in Manchester City Council Cultural Committee Minutes, April – June 1984, MCG Archive.

culture of childhood. Although other museums held similar material at the point when Mrs Greg first wrote to Lawrence Haward, they did not acquire it with this purpose in mind. Bethnal Green, Manchester's closest parallel, did not begin its work in this area until 1923, after the appointment of Arthur Sabin as Curator.

By 1922, Manchester had an established reputation for working with children that dated back to the founding of the Manchester Art Museum in the 1880s. The wartime schools programme was widely regarded as a pioneering model of museum education and continued after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>143</sup> It was, however, based primarily on formal classroom sessions within the otherwise adult spaces of the galleries. The development of a dedicated collection purportedly both *of* and *for* children, and with a focus on family and home, marked an expansion of existing Galleries policy. The development of interwar interest in children and childhood had been several decades in the making. Nineteenth century debates over the importance of child welfare to the wellbeing of the nation led to the passing of 79 laws relating to child protection and education between 1870 and 1908.<sup>144</sup> Developments in medicine, psychology and psychoanalysis popularised theories of child development; into the twentieth century progressive educational theory increasingly endorsed the idea of child-centred learning and the provision of environments specifically tailored to the needs of children.<sup>145</sup>

At the same time, developments in both anthropology and art included a growing interest in the beliefs and behaviours of children in terms of otherness. Anthropological interests in folklore situated children as outside the world of 'rational' and civilized adult life and thus akin to the 'peasant' and 'primitive' societies that formed the basis of most ethnographic study. London bank worker Edward Lovett (1852-1933) amassed a huge collection of both folklore and children's toys in the same period.<sup>146</sup> His collecting of blue bead necklaces worn by London children to ward off bronchitis is well known, and illustrates the overlap between superstition, magic and children.<sup>147</sup> In March 1922, when Mrs Greg first wrote to Lawrence Haward, the City Art Gallery was host to a touring exhibition of children's artwork by the pupils of Viennese art

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<sup>143</sup> Leeson, ref.50, p.61. See also Kavanagh, ref.10, pp.84-85, for multiple contemporary professional references to the Manchester scheme.

<sup>144</sup> Ivan Jablonka, 'Social Welfare and the Rights of Children', in Fass, ref.20, pp.380-399.

<sup>145</sup> Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989* (London: Routledge, 1994) pp.33-36.

<sup>146</sup> There is little written on this combination of interests in Lovett's collecting, most of the literature focusing on his folklore collection, now dispersed across various museums including the Wellcome Collection at the Science Museum, and the Horniman and Pitt Rivers Museums. Objects from Lovett's toy collections are held by Bethnal Green and Edinburgh Museums of Childhood, among others.

<sup>147</sup> Ross McFarlane, 'Edward Lovett: an Emotional Collector?', *The History of Emotions Blog*, 1 June 2016, <https://emotionsblog.history.qmul.ac.uk/2016/06/edward-lovett-an-emotional-collector/> (accessed 11 April 2017).

educator Professor Franz Cizek (1865-1946).<sup>148</sup> Reflecting theories that child development followed an evolutionary model,<sup>149</sup> Cizek and his followers similarly aligned the creative powers of children to those of 'peasant' societies.<sup>150</sup> The perceived 'primitivism' of children, as potentially free from the constraints of civilized culture, made child art increasingly interesting to contemporary artists and critics promoting a modernist philosophy of transcendental expression. Aligned with the 'discovery' of naïve and self-taught painters such as Alfred Wallis, S. B. Malvern identifies a 'cult of childhood in the 1920s and 30s' that was based partly on developing philosophies of modernist art practice but also on the postwar desire to create a new and better world 'by taking the terms of the conditions of its rebirth from its children'.<sup>151</sup>

This aligns with A. C. Benson's prioritising of a childlike but essentially adult playfulness in his commentary on the Queen's Dolls' House. But herein lay a contradiction. While artists increasingly valued the child's eye view of the world as a way of re-connecting with a universal and spiritual imaginary, actual children were required to grow up into responsible members of society, guided through this transition by the adults around them. Such arguments took on added significance in the context of postwar recovery, as Cecil Leeson had argued in 1917:

In the reconstructive work after the war, the country will require to make each human unit go farther than ever before; and whether or no [sic] the next generation proves equal to the demands made upon it very largely depends upon the wisdom and foresight displayed in our actions now....<sup>152</sup>

In spite of an increasing emphasis during the 1920s on handicrafts as fostering children's 'innate' creativity and the idea of learning through self-expression and experimentation,<sup>153</sup> the dolls and dolls' houses collection did not include examples of craft or artwork made by children. Mrs Greg was clearly interested in the teaching of handicrafts in schools, as the press cuttings in the Greg correspondence attest; in 1925 she also hinted at the collection as inspiration for children's making when she described making model shops 'to show children what they might do'.<sup>154</sup> However, handicraft within the collection was an adult practice, carried out within a family context for children rather than by them. As Leeson's account demonstrated, family life had been deeply disrupted by the impact of war; it now had to re-

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<sup>148</sup> MCAG, *Annual Report 1922*, p.4. MCG Archive.

<sup>149</sup> Hendrick, ref.145, p.36.

<sup>150</sup> S. B. Malvern, 'Inventing 'Child Art': Franz Cizek and Modernism', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 35 (3) (1995) pp.262-272.

<sup>151</sup> Malvern, ref.150, p.264.

<sup>152</sup> Leeson, ref.50, p.10.

<sup>153</sup> Pat Kirkham, *Harry Peach* (London: The Design Council, 1986) p.70.

<sup>154</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 May 1925, MCG Archive.

adapt to peacetime, including the return – or not – of fathers who might have been absent for some years, and who might be physically and/or emotionally scarred by their experiences.<sup>155</sup> Children who may have enjoyed considerable freedoms during the war had to adapt to the re-imposition of adult regimes and supervision. As indicated in the previous chapter, handicrafts were regarded as a key therapeutic practice for convalescent and disabled returning soldiers; here they were deployed for the development of father-child relationships.

The dolls and dolls' houses collection thus manifests several boundary tensions in its purported identity and function – between child and adult, leisure and work, play and education. It was not perhaps as calming or wonder-inducing in children as both Mrs Greg and Arthur Sabin imagined it to be. But it was immensely popular, met with delight and charm by those who encountered it. It included objects that were explicitly designed and made for children alongside adult souvenirs, knick-knacks and ornaments, and objects that occupied an uncertain identity somewhere between the two. It was both light-hearted and deeply serious: it induced a sense of playfulness in both professionals and visitors alike, while tapping into some of the most pressing issues of the age in relation to the re-establishment of 'stability and tranquillity'<sup>156</sup> in the aftermath of the First World War. For as Arthur Sabin observed:

These seemingly little things have a great bearing upon our culture and development. The whole process of our life and our civilization exists for the welfare of the child, which means the welfare of the race.<sup>157</sup>

Research shows that the dolls and dolls' houses collection was Mrs Greg's personal project, embarked on in the years immediately following her husband's death. Love – not generally a recognised criterion in museum collecting – in its different manifestations explicitly informed its development; in 1924 she sent William Batho a photograph of herself with the suggestion that he might place it with the collection so that mothers could see the lover of children who had given it for them.<sup>158</sup> This collection thus occupies a different position to the rest of the Greg collections in terms of Mrs Greg's own situation and motivation. This seems an appropriate point, therefore, at which to turn from the collections and the institution to consider in more depth the person at the centre of it all, Mary Hope Greg.

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<sup>155</sup> James Marten, 'Children and War', in Fass, ref.20, p.154.

<sup>156</sup> See Chapter Three, pp.74-75.

<sup>157</sup> Sabin, ref.1, p.7.

<sup>158</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 17 January 1924, MCG Archive.



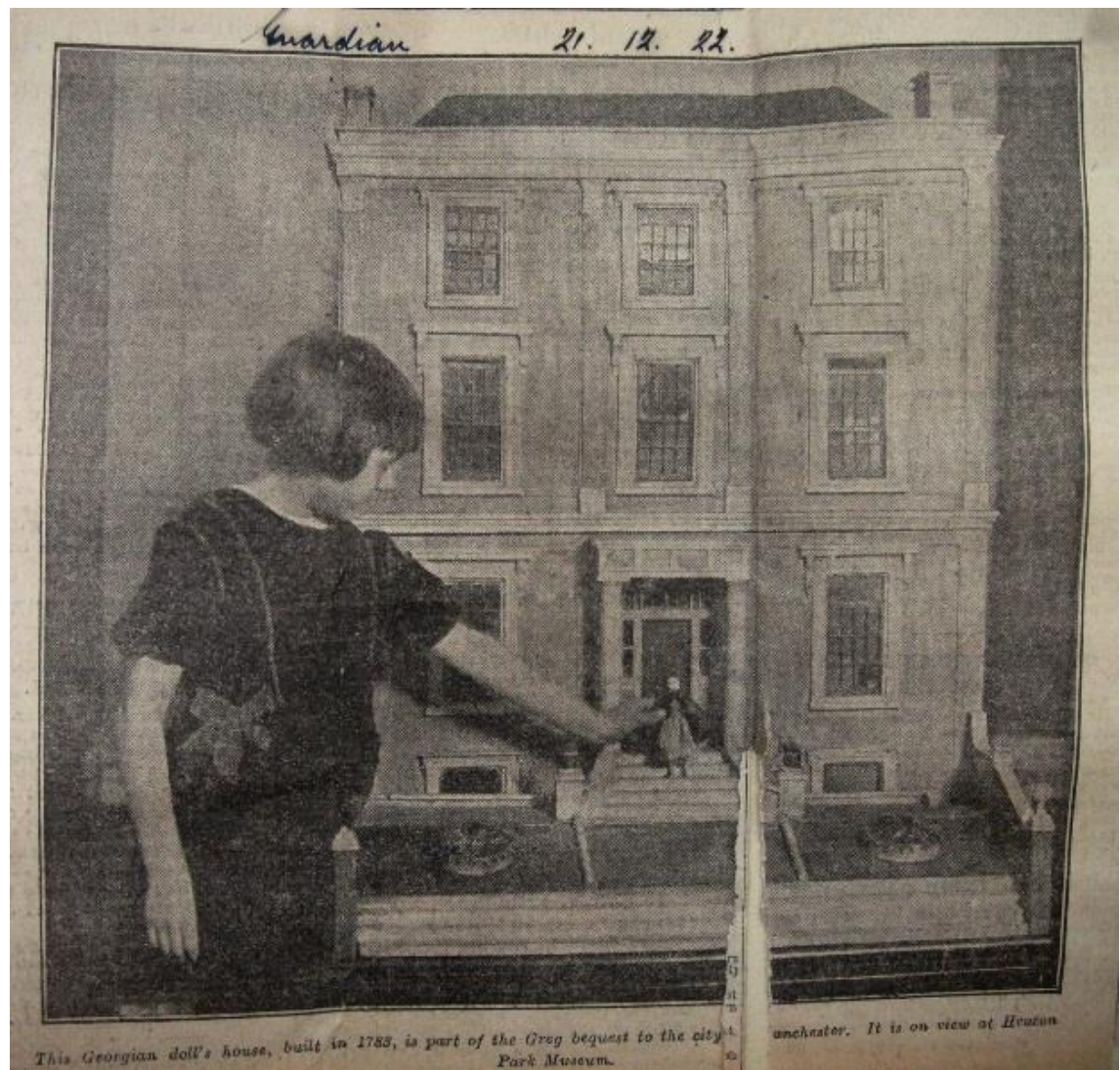


Figure 5.43: Cutting from *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 December 1922, Press cuttings book, MCG Archive.

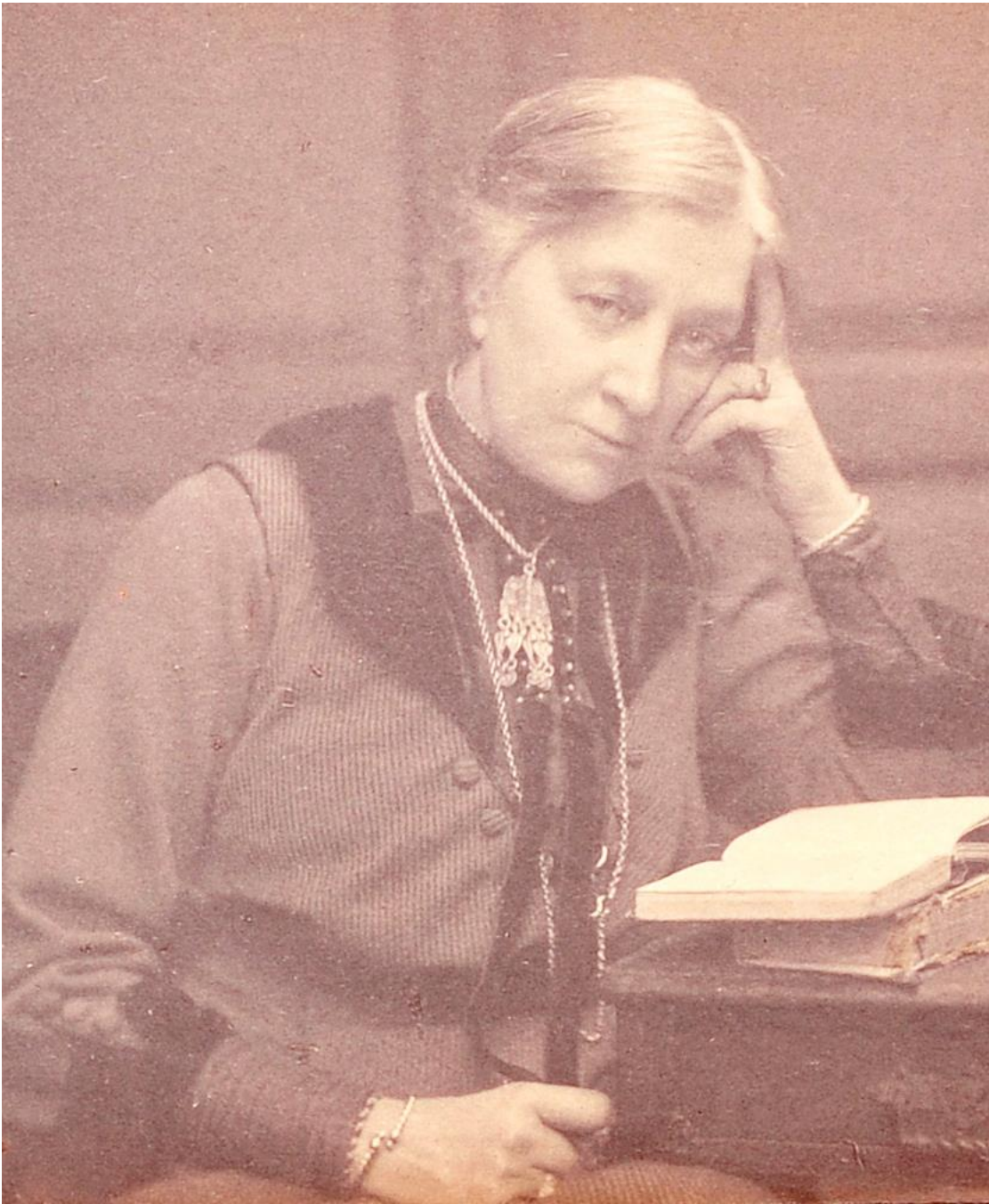


Figure 6.1: Mary Hope Greg (1850-1949), c.1922.

## Chapter Six

### 'Treasuring things of the least':<sup>1</sup>

#### Mary Hope Greg (1850-1949)

*'Forbear not sowing because of birds.'*<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

At the opening of the Westmill Village Hall in 1901, Thomas Greg gave a speech in which he drew attention to a motto in the stained glass of the west window.<sup>3</sup> Chosen by his wife, 'whose name I wish to associate with the building and opening of this hall', it had come from an old Hertfordshire farmhouse and read, simply, 'forbear not sowing because of birds'. 'If we are to venture nothing, to attempt nothing, to have no ambitions or aspirations because of possible failure', he explained, 'we shall do nothing...and so with possible failure ahead of me, as well as possible success, I have laid my money on this horse 'Village Hall', and hope to win at least a consolation stake'.<sup>4</sup> This glimpse of Mary Greg, seen through the words of her husband, is instructive. Her choice of motto suggests a temperament that combined tenacity and optimism. But her presence is shadowy. For, although the speaker explicitly acknowledges her involvement in the village hall project, he does not in fact call her by name. She is both there and not there.

Carolyn Steedman suggests that the popularity of biography is due to the promise it offers that life stories can be told: 'that the inchoate experience of living and feeling can be marshalled into a chronology, and that central and unified subjects reach the conclusion of a life, and come into possession of their own story'.<sup>5</sup> Identity, however, as we currently understand it, is performative, relational and contradictory, shaped by social, cultural, political contexts and the specificities of individual experience; it does not make a very tidy story.<sup>6</sup> As Jo Burr Margadant observes, the historical subject is 'an individual with multiple selves whose different

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<sup>1</sup> Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3. Letter from Mrs Greg to Eleanor Adlard, 20 October 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, 'Speech at the Opening of the Westmill Village Hall (1901)', in Thomas Tylston Greg, *In Varying Mood* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1924), pp.88.

<sup>3</sup> See Alec Hamilton, *Charles Spooner: Arts and Crafts Architect* (Stamford: Paul Watkins Publishing, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.88.

<sup>5</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Past Tenses: Essays on writing, autobiography and history* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992) p.163.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Greg Noble, 'Accumulating being', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7 (2) (2004) pp.233-256.

manifestations reflect the passage of time, [and] the demands and options of different settings'.<sup>7</sup> Having considered the collections Mary Greg assembled and gave to Manchester during the last thirty years of her life, however, I come now to consider the collector herself. If, as so much of the literature on collecting suggests, 'it is invariably *oneself* that one collects',<sup>8</sup> then through attention to a collection, one may come to know something of its collector. That is how this research began. There comes a point, however, where closer attention to the collector herself may inform a deeper understanding of the body of objects she assembled.

Mary Hope Greg lived a long life. She was born in 1850, a year before the Great Exhibition, and died in 1949, a matter of months before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The century of her lifetime spanned a period of extraordinary social and cultural change: from Queen Victoria to George VI, through two world wars and the spread of industrialisation through town and country. She witnessed the development of the motor car, the radio, the telephone, outlived 12 brothers and sisters and one husband. As a woman, she lived through a period that saw the granting of legal rights to married women as property owners, the admission of women to universities and professions, and the eventual success of the long-fought battle for the vote.<sup>9</sup> When she first became directly involved with Manchester City Art Galleries, she was 70 years old and recently bereaved. Thomas Greg had died in September 1920, as a result of an unsuccessful medical procedure. He was then 62. They had been married for 25 years and had no children. Instead, their relationship was described by a family friend in terms of the companionship of shared interests, in particular a keen love of nature, the preservation of rural life in the Hertfordshire village where they lived, and a passion for collecting.<sup>10</sup>

In 2002, however, little was known about Mrs Greg. In spite of what turns out to be a substantial and wide-ranging contribution to the development of British museums during the interwar period, she is afforded little more than passing mention in its histories, and what is written is often inaccurate. Timothy Clifford's *A Century of Collecting* erroneously describes its 'magnificent holding of English earthenware' as 'presented in 1923 by Thomas Tylston Greg'.<sup>11</sup> Mary Greg is referred to briefly as the donor of a collection of 'dolls and dolls' houses, toys,

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<sup>7</sup> Jo Burr Margadant, cited in Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008) p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Baudrillard, 'The System of Collecting', in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994) p.12 [original emphasis].

<sup>9</sup> See Barbara Caine, *Destined to be Wives: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.4.

<sup>10</sup> Author unknown, 'Note', in Greg, ref.2, pp.v-xii.

<sup>11</sup> Timothy Clifford, *A Century of Collecting 1882-1982* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1983) p.25.

furniture and china' and 'a group of dresses'.<sup>12</sup> On one page she is Mrs M. Greg, on another Mrs. T. T. Greg. In Bethnal Green's 2012 *Museum of Childhood: A Book of Childhood Things* she is mentioned briefly, and also mistakenly, as Mrs Greg of Leeds.<sup>13</sup> Even the 2002 attempt to redress this balance turned out to be, as this research shows, an inaccurate simplification of a considerably more complex set of inter-related identities.

There are multiple reasons why women do not appear in the historical record.<sup>14</sup> Mary Greg was not a professional person, thus her place in the Galleries' history is recorded only in terms of her role as private collector. Collecting is seen in this context as simply acquisition and donation, but as many have argued, collecting also incorporates care of what is collected. Russell Belk and Melanie Wallendorf identify a gendering of collecting practices that situates the competition and mastery of acquisition as masculine, the 'curating and maintaining' of what is acquired as its feminised counterpart.<sup>15</sup> And indeed, Mrs Greg was a curator as much as a collector. Furthermore, she was not a public figure, preferring, in the main, to act in the name of her late husband.<sup>16</sup> In one small departure from this, she corrected the *Manchester Guardian's* mistaken attribution of her dolls and dolls' house collection to Thomas Greg. But this too is cloaked in the need to manage her husband's reputation, for, as she explained, 'it is not so much a man's subject as a woman's...I do not want any glorification for myself - but it would be better to have it put right'.<sup>17</sup> She is not unusual in this respect, for there are numerous examples of wealthy women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who were propelled into public roles by the death of their spouse.<sup>18</sup> Such roles afforded them a range of opportunities, endowing cultural and political as well as economic agency in the guise of managing an eminent or wealthy husband's legacy. It could also legitimise the pursuit of wider aims and objectives, but at the same time obscured them from view.

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<sup>12</sup> Clifford, ref.11, pp.27-28, 117.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Wood, *Museum of Childhood: A Book of Childhood Things* (London: V&A Publishing, 2012) p.11.

<sup>14</sup> See Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Russell W. Belk and Melanie Wallendorf, 'Of Mice and Men: Gender Identity in Collecting', in Katharine Martinez and Kenneth L. Ames (eds.), *The Material Culture of Gender, The Gender of Material Culture* (Delaware: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1997) p.10.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, letter from Ernest Fordham to Councillor Frederick Todd, 25 February 1921, MCG Archive. Also Hertfordshire Archives, D/ESm F5. Correspondence between Mrs Greg, R. L. Hobson and Sir Charles Hercules Read of the British Museum, 10 December 1920 – 13 January 1921.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Mary Greg to William Batho, 26 December 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Enriqueta Rylands (1843-1908) and Lady Martha Barber (1869-1933), both of whom founded public institutions in their husband's names; Lady Charlotte Schreiber (1812-1893) whose ceramics collection, acquired with her husband Charles, only entered public ownership on his death; Mrs Lewis F. Day (dates unknown) who distributed her husband's textile collections across several museums after his death in 1910.



Steedman argues that the absence of women from historical accounts has led to a reductive simplification of the relationship between public and private lives as gendered binary opposites.<sup>19</sup> Amanda Vickery famously developed this idea in her attack on the concept of 'separate spheres' as the organizing principle by which nineteenth century women's lives are understood.<sup>20</sup> Such argument has led to a more nuanced approach to the private and public identities of historical women which, as Kathryn Gleadle identifies, addresses the historical complexities of female agency and 'the processes whereby women were able to contest and subvert seemingly powerful gender constructs across a range of socio-cultural contexts'.<sup>21</sup> Mrs Greg was the means by which over 3,000 objects were acquired by Manchester City Art Galleries during the 1920s and '30s. Her contributions changed the scope of the collections, setting in train aspects of their future development. As previous chapters have shown, she exercised considerable influence over the care, interpretation and further development of all the Greg collections during her lifetime, but all done with minimal public profile. Her one foray into writing for public consumption, the preface to the 1922 handicrafts catalogue, caused her some discomfort, and when asked to provide another, for the dolls and dolls' houses collection, she asked someone else to do it for her. However, she showed no such reticence in private communication, as the large body of letters in the Manchester archive attests.

This chapter takes the Greg correspondence as its starting point for an investigation of the life of Mary Greg herself. As with the collection, it takes a forensic approach, sifting through surviving material, identifying clues, following leads and speculating on their possible meaning. As with the content of the collection, hard facts are few, but through the course of this research, considerably more evidence has come to light than was previously known. Reading across a range of sources, a picture begins to emerge that contributes another dimension to understanding the collections at Manchester City Galleries.

## **A woman of letters**

As has been previously discussed, letter writing was a key skill for middle- and upper-class women of the nineteenth century, a means of maintaining important social relations.<sup>22</sup> Mrs Greg was a prolific letter writer. The 701 letters in the Manchester archive form the largest deposit, but they are matched by holdings of correspondence at the V&A, National Museums

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<sup>19</sup> Carolyn Steedman, ref.5.

<sup>20</sup> Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *The Historical Journal*, (36) (June 1993) pp.383-414.

<sup>21</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) p.4.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter Two, pp.47-49.



Liverpool, Sheffield Museums Trust and Hertfordshire, Sheffield and Gloucestershire Archives. There are almost certainly more elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> The Manchester letters provide detailed information relating to the ownership, care and display of the Greg family collections. But they also reveal how much more there was to the relationship between private collector and public institution than merely one of donor and recipient. The letters are a combination of the business-like and the personal, moving confidently and easily between the two. They enact the processes of custodianship and transfer of title,<sup>24</sup> but also form the basis of developing friendships, providing an insight into the wider life of the Galleries and its personalities. Fifty-nine different correspondents are represented, ranging from members of the Art Galleries Committee and staff to Mrs Greg's family, friends and personal staff, and a number of professional bodies including other museums, antique dealers, valuation specialists, printers and carriers. The majority, however, are between Mrs Greg and Assistant Curator William Batho.<sup>25</sup>

Materially, they reflect the nature of the relationship between individual and institution (Figs. 6.2-3). The Galleries' side of the correspondence survives in the form of type-written carbon copies that adopt a consistently formal manner and layout. Professional diplomacy and hierarchies of authority are evident, for example in the manner in which Lawrence Haward, William Batho's superior, steps in to author letters dealing with particularly sensitive topics.<sup>26</sup> Mrs Greg's letters, in contrast, are handwritten in a loose flowing style, often in a hurry, on various different papers. She makes reference to the circumstance of writing, 'on my knee in the sunshine' or at a table 'still loaded with letters to be answered'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Victoria & Albert Museum Registry Nominal File MA/1/G1729; National Museums Liverpool, 1930 – 1947.10; Sheffield Museums Trust, accession numbers CGSG6141-2; Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, D/ESm F4 & F5; Sheffield Archives and Local Studies, GSG21/18; Gloucestershire Archives, D2218/2/1-10. Hertfordshire Archives includes correspondence with 28 separate institutions, some of which may hold correspondence from Mrs Greg. This has not been followed up for the purposes of this research.

<sup>24</sup> Letter of gift from Mrs Greg to Councillor Todd, 18 October 1924; letters of acceptance from Councillor Todd to Mrs Greg, 16 April 1930, 20 April 1934, 21 July 1924, MCG Archive.

<sup>25</sup> Out of 701 letters, 410 are between Mrs Greg and Mr Batho.

<sup>26</sup> For example, letter from Lawrence Haward to Mrs Greg, 1 April 1930, MCG Archive. Haward asked Mrs Greg's permission to remove the Greg pottery from display temporarily, to accommodate the newly acquired Lewis Day collection of textiles. Mrs Greg refused.

<sup>27</sup> Letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 1 June 1925, 10 July 1923, MCG Archive.

Humm-  
 Stone Works  
 They would be  
 ready to go to  
 H. Park about  
 9 o'clock on  
 25 Oct will  
 see it. We  
 know it. This will  
 be right

COLES  
 BUNTINGFORD  
 HERTS

Oct 25

Dear Mr. Batho

Things are moving at this  
 end - we are busy getting all the  
 things packed & cleaned & ready for  
 the journey - which is to be  
 started on Tuesday next if all  
 goes well. They hope to start  
 quite early soon after 6 am. I  
 understand & might arrive  
 in Manchester if no contraventions  
 arrive about 6 pm - Now  
 please will you send to  
 W. E. Hummestone  
 Church House Westmill  
 Buntingford

Figure 6.2: Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 25 October 1922. MCG Archive.



27th Oct. 1922

Dear Mrs. Greg,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 25th inst. and have to say that I have booked comfortable beds for Messrs. Hummerstone, Searing, and the driver, at the Deansgate Hotel, Deansgate, Manchester. I have booked them for the Tuesday and Wednesday nights and if they stay longer I can arrange when they are here. It will surprise me if they arrive in Manchester so early in the evening but whatever time they do arrive they must make for the City Art Gallery, Mosley Street, when I, or one of my staff, will escort the lorry to the Town Hall courtyard, only a few yards from this Gallery. The police have kindly offered to keep an eye upon the lorry until it is removed to Heaton Park the next morning. I will arrange with the men about the transport of the exhibits to the Park.

If the weather is fine you can rest assured that we shall make their stay in Manchester a comfortable and interesting one.

Figure 6.3: Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 27 October 1922. MCG Archive.

Her letters are business-like in the sense that they are motivated by the task in hand and address this head-on, without preamble. However, they lack the formality and composition of the business letter, are written spontaneously, conversationally, occasionally passionately, with plentiful postscripts and corrections along edges and in margins. In contrast to her public reticence, the letters reveal her to be privately vocal, forthright and interested in a wide variety of contemporary issues. Their content ranges from specific requests relating to the care, management and display of the Greg collections, to more general questions of Gallery policy and staffing, and wider social and current affairs.

As the correspondence develops, so too do individual relationships. Mrs Greg's letters increasingly reveal aspects of her personal life, from the death of her sister Rebekah in 1924 to her sadness, in 1927, at having to sell the Coles estate, her home for most of her married life.<sup>28</sup> They share thoughts on a wide range of matters, from weather and the beauty of the Hertfordshire countryside, to the benefits of alternative medicine and the evils of 'the dole'.<sup>29</sup> In response, Mr Batho's letters also include personal detail – recent holidays, his daughter's search for employment, his wife's ongoing ill health<sup>30</sup> – but never political affiliation or opinion. Personal gifts are exchanged alongside institutional ones; in May 1922 Mrs Greg was delighted by the reversal of donor/recipient roles when she received a parcel of fabric from Mr Batho: 'I am amazed at the amount of valuable bits for patchwork. I am most grateful to you for being the means of my becoming the recipient!'.<sup>31</sup> Later the same year, Mrs Greg sent Mr Batho a pheasant, gratefully acknowledged in a subsequent letter; three years after that, a barrel of apples.<sup>32</sup> A degree of teasing was also involved; on receiving a copy of the publicity photograph of Miss Wild dressed in clothing from the collection in December 1922, Mrs Greg replied with thanks, adding 'I only wonder why Mr Batho in the becoming smock frock was not sent too!'.<sup>33</sup>

Mrs Greg and Mr Batho clearly developed a friendship in letters alongside their professional relationship, one that was further cemented by his frequent visits to both her Hertfordshire home, and later her London flat, to assess and help pack new additions to the collections. His

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<sup>28</sup> Letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 30 March 1924, 19 December 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 October 1926, and to Councillor Todd, 21 February 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>30</sup> Letters from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 12 April 1923, 23 April 1932, MCG Archive.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 9 May 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>32</sup> Letters from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 10 November 1922, and from Mrs Hummerstone to Mr Batho, 1 October 1925, MCG Archive.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 26 December 1922, MCG Archive.

sudden death, in service in 1937, cut this relationship abruptly short, and clearly caused Mrs Greg some distress. She wrote:

I am very grieved by your sad news this morning & very much appreciate you writing yourself to tell me that our true good old friend WB has passed on...I had known him for I think just over 30 years & have always felt that he was one of the most loyal true hearted characters I ever met...full of kindly thought for all he had to deal with & kindness & unselfishness.<sup>34</sup>

Mrs Greg's letters thus portray a woman with a keen interest not just in the fate of her family collections but in the life of the Gallery and the city. They are full of people. Manchester City Art Galleries, seen through her eyes, was a community brought together by a common purpose – 'the uplifting of the people...through the study and influence of beautiful & interesting works of art'.<sup>35</sup> Over the period 1920-1930, she made eight trips to Manchester to oversee the installation of the displays and add new material.<sup>36</sup> Social commitments, bouts of ill health and advancing age prevented more frequent visits, much to her disappointment for, as she commented in September 1927, 'I am very anxious to get up to Manchester to do what I can'.<sup>37</sup> Fond recollections of her visits pepper the correspondence and introduce a range of secondary characters and correspondents. Even allowing for necessary etiquette, Mrs Greg's enjoyment of the social interaction afforded by her visits is clear in her subsequent enquiries after the well-being of a wide range of gallery staff. In 1922 she wrote to Mr Batho:

I also want to ask you for the name of the good attendant at the umbrella place - the one who has been so ill - slightly deaf. I want to send her a little thing to keep her warm...The more I think of the time at the Gallery the more I appreciate the kindness and help everyone so cheerfully and willingly gave - I am grateful for all - to all.<sup>38</sup>

The 'good attendant' was Miss Ellen Lucas. In 1925 Mr Batho wrote to let Mrs Greg know of Miss Lucas' reluctant retirement under the terms and conditions of City Council employment. Three years later, Mrs Greg wrote to say she had bought Miss Lucas a 'woolly coatee' if Mr Batho could ensure it was forwarded.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Councillor Frederick Tylecote, 4 September 1937, MCG Archive.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 20 March 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>36</sup> May, June and December 1922; November 1923; November 1925; May 1927; May and September 1928. See Greg correspondence, MCG Archive.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 6 September 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 30 June 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 January 1928, MCG Archive.

Mrs Greg's own position within this community, however, was not straightforward, reflecting the delicate power balance of the relationship between institution and donor. Her letters are instructive, sometimes demanding, with an air of easy authority over the collections and their professional care: '[p]lease have none of the garments washed or 'got up' - they look perfectly right when properly hung and washing spoils and generally frays old material to pieces'.<sup>40</sup> She has no compunction about using the Gallery as a personal delivery service, sending gifts and objects with instructions for their dispersal among family and friends. Mr Batho, as a public servant charged with managing an important donor relationship, is consistently courteous and obliging.<sup>41</sup> And she lost no opportunity in challenging the institution over delays to the new museum; in 1930 she refused Lawrence Haward's request that the pottery collection be temporarily re-located, gently reminding him of 'my husband's strict condition in giving his collection to Manchester'.<sup>42</sup> Yet she is also gracious in defeat, conceding immediately to the authority of the professional when her requests are challenged or gifts rejected.<sup>43</sup> The letters convey a sense of belonging negotiated across hierarchies of class and professionalism. Mrs Greg saw her relationship with the Galleries as one of shared commitment to a wider social project within which, as an independent woman of means, she was able to make a useful contribution. The energy and attention to detail expressed in the letters, despite her advancing age, suggests the finding of a role and method by which she could express and fulfil a sense of vocation, without stepping beyond her own sense of propriety in relation to class, gender and age.

The Greg correspondence in Manchester and elsewhere places Mary Greg at the heart of a network of active and meaningful relationships with both individuals and institutions during the last thirty years of her life. The emphasis on relationships found in the Manchester letters is similarly present in her surviving correspondence with Arthur Sabin at Bethnal Green. However, prior to 1920, there is no evidence of her direct involvement with any museums. It is as if Thomas Greg's death precipitated the development of an active public role (if not an explicit public identity) in her own right. The Manchester letters do not dwell on the past, beyond factual references to her late husband. In fact, given her abiding interest in the things of childhood, it is surprising that she makes no mention of her own in the letters. Further letters, however, held by Sheffield Archives and Local Studies, provide more contextual

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 29 April 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 26 April 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Haward, 6 April 1930, MCG Archive.

<sup>43</sup> Letters between Mr Batho and Mrs Greg, 11-12 April 1932, regarding authenticity of items of dress. MCG Archive.



information and insight into her wide range of interests and provide clues as to aspects of her earlier life.

## John Ruskin and the Guild of St George

In 1935, at the age of 85, Mrs Greg wrote a letter to the Master of The Guild of St George, a charitable organisation founded in 1871 by John Ruskin.<sup>44</sup> The Guild was one of Ruskin's many social projects intended to address the corruption and degradation of humanity that he saw as an inevitable consequence of industrialisation. It focused on direct action in three interconnected areas – rural economy, craft revival and art education for the working man. Its members, or 'Companions', were mainly affluent middle-class men and women, many of whom donated money, objects or land in support of a range of projects, from farming co-operatives to craft education to the founding of the Sheffield-based St George's Museum. In terms of its practical ambitions, the Guild enjoyed limited success, undermined by conflicted ideals, internal disagreements and industrial competition. But, as with many of Ruskin's projects, its real purpose was as a call to action, an exhortation to *do* something. It brought together a body of like-minded men and women who continued to espouse its ideals after Ruskin's death in 1900.<sup>45</sup>

Stuart Eagles argues that the significance of Ruskin's legacy lies more in the inspiration he provided to others than in his own projects and actions. Ruskin's writing had fallen out of fashion by the 1920s (in part due to a wider distaste for all things Victorian), but his ideas continued to underpin wider cultural debate, particularly in the areas of conservation and craft revival.<sup>46</sup> The Guild of St George during this period increasingly aligned itself with government policy on housing, and with conservation initiatives such as the RSA Fund for Preservation of Ancient Cottages.<sup>47</sup> In 1927, Sir Hubert Llewellyn-Smith, Chairman of the British Institute for Industrial Art, became a Companion and attempted to bring together both organisations through a shared interest in rural craft research.<sup>48</sup> Such interests resonated with Mrs Greg and she became a firm supporter of the Guild's work. Her 1935 letter made clear the lifelong debt

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<sup>44</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18.

<sup>45</sup> Stuart Eagles, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.52-94.

<sup>46</sup> Eagles, ref.45, p.7. See also Kate Hill, *Women and Museums 1850-1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp.183-216.

<sup>47</sup> Eagles, ref.45, p.92.

<sup>48</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18. Letter from Hubert Llewellyn-Smith to Hugh Charles Fairfax-Cholmeley, Master of the Guild, 26 November 1926. This document is archived in the same bundle as Mrs Greg's letters.

she felt to Ruskin and his teaching. It was prompted by her enthusiastic reading of the Guild's latest report:

I have read it carefully. I am anxious to do what I can to further the work but at the outset I must tell you that I am very nearly 86 years of age, and that I am rather out of reach of the younger people who ought to be interested. For years Ruskin has been an inspiration to me...<sup>49</sup>

It is not surprising that Ruskin had some influence on her; born in 1850, her early- to mid-adulthood coincided with the high point of his reputation. John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a Victorian polymath – art critic, artist, political activist, educationalist, social thinker, writer and preacher.<sup>50</sup> His fame and influence during the second half of the nineteenth century reached extraordinary heights, his writings covering a vast range of topics across art, science, politics and belief. A conflicted and often contradictory man, he was an anti-democratic Romantic who believed in the authority of social hierarchy when enacted with duty, honesty and love.<sup>51</sup> Described by Leo Tolstoy as 'one of those rare men who think with their hearts',<sup>52</sup> he attracted a large and devoted following, verging on hero-worship. Between 1879 and 1896, nine regional Ruskin societies were founded, dedicated to the promotion and circulation of his writings and the support of his practical projects. Such societies provided close-knit, independent communities that looked to further his work on their own doorsteps, predominantly in urban industrial and commercial centres. The first Ruskin society was founded in Manchester, closely followed by Liverpool, Birkenhead and Sheffield.<sup>53</sup>

Ruskin also had a significant impact on the development of museums and galleries during this period, particularly in industrial centres.<sup>54</sup> His views on the function of the museum varied during the course of his life, however, and he was not a fan of the great national institutions that represented, in his view, little more than 'an accumulation of uselessly multiplied ugliness

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<sup>49</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21. Letter from Mrs Greg to the Master of the Guild of St George, 22 December 1935.

<sup>50</sup> There is a huge literature on John Ruskin, only a small sample of which is drawn on here. See Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000); Dinah Birch (ed.), *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Francis O'Gorman, *Late Ruskin: New Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Eagles, p.18.

<sup>52</sup> Leo Tolstoy, 'An Introduction to Ruskin's Works' (1899), in Leo Tolstoy [trans. Aylmer Maude], *Recollections and Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937) p.188.

<sup>53</sup> Eagles, ref.45, pp.148-198.

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter Three, p.76.

in misunderstood nature'.<sup>55</sup> In 1875, through the Guild of St George, he thus established his own museum, writing five years later that the museum:

is only for what is eternally right, and well done, according to divine law and human skill. The least things are to be there—and the greatest—but all *good* with the goodness that makes a child cheerful and an old man calm; the simple should go there to learn, and the wise to remember.<sup>56</sup>

From 1875 to 1890, the St George's Museum occupied a domestic house on a hilltop in Walkley on the outskirts of Sheffield. A symbolic as well as practical location, it was intended primarily to entice working men out of the city and into the fresh air. Combining art and natural history, copies and originals, didactic and domestic modes of display, it was to be a collection of beautiful objects that embodied Ruskin's belief in the unity of art and nature, and his association of social reform with the domestic household.<sup>57</sup> Thus painting, sculpture, illuminated manuscripts and drawings of Venetian architecture were shown alongside geological specimens and vases of fresh flowers within an overtly domestic interior setting (Fig.6.4). As he further explained, in a museum one should find nothing 'that vanity has invented for change, or folly loved for costliness; but all that can bring honest pride into homely life'.<sup>58</sup>

The centrality of Ruskin's teaching to Mrs Greg's philosophy becomes increasingly apparent on closer reading of both her public and private writings. An undefined but identifiably Ruskinian notion of 'goodness' is a recurring theme throughout, as the measure by which Mrs Greg assessed potential acquisitions for both Manchester collections. In the preface to the handicrafts collection catalogue, she wrote:

...we owe it to those who have preceded us and have left us those specimens of their painstaking and beautiful work and to those who will come after us to do likewise, to treasure good work and produce something into which we have put our best, our love, our intelligence, our power.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Eagles, ref.45, p.82.

<sup>56</sup> E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds.), *The Works of John Ruskin* (39 vols.) (London: George Allen, 1903-1912) 34, p.260 [original emphasis]. Hereafter referred to as *Works*.

<sup>57</sup> Hill, ref.46, pp.188-197; Eagles, ref.45, pp.81-86. See also Robert Hewison, *John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976) reproduced on the Victorian Web, August 2014, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/hewison/7.html> [accessed 21 August 2017].

<sup>58</sup> Ruskin, ref.56, *Works*, 34, p.262.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Greg, 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times* (Manchester: Manchester City Galleries: 1922) p.5.



Figure 6.4: Interior of the St George's Museum, Walkley, Sheffield, c.1876.

Her interpretation of material objects as traces of human endeavour, the sense of continuity between past and future that this sets up, and her phrasing of this sentiment all contain echoes of Ruskin's concept of the 'great entail', the idea that we are custodians of our inheritance and have a duty to pass it on in good condition:

God has lent us the earth for our life; it is a great entail. It belongs as much to those who are to come after us, and whose names are already written in the book of creation, as to us; and we have no right, by anything that we do or neglect, to involve them in unnecessary penalties, or deprive them of benefits which it was in our power to bequeath.

Ruskin continues with a reflection on trusting to the future, his analogy of the harvest foreshadowing Mrs Greg's later choice of motto for the Westmill Village Hall:

And this is the more, because it is one of the appointed conditions of the labour of men that, in proportion to the time between the seed-sowing and the harvest, is the fulness of the fruit; and that generally, therefore, the farther off we place our aim, and the less we desire to be ourselves the witness of what we have laboured for, the more wide and rich will be the measure of our success.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ruskin, ref.56, *Works*, 8, p.233.

In a letter to Mr Batho in 1928, Mrs Greg expressed much the same idea:

I am glad indeed to hear so many visitors have seen both the collections. How glad I should be - we all should - if we could know if any of them ever make a single thing as a result which will be a delight to themselves or their children and also for those who come after. We must leave the answer to the future!<sup>61</sup>

Thus, while the content of Mrs Greg's collections may suggest (and indeed embody) a nostalgia for the past, her letters are very much in the present, and directed to the future. They are, much like Ruskin's writing and his various social projects, an exhortation to *do* something. This extends to the gallery visitor, as the preface to the handicrafts catalogue reveals:

I cannot do better than quote Carlyle who says: "Produce, produce were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it in God's name. 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee; out with it then, up, up. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might, work while it is called today," so that what you make may be beautiful and worth handing on.<sup>62</sup>

In the early years of the post-war era, Thomas Carlyle's sermonizing Old Testament style must have seemed, to some, rather old-fashioned.<sup>63</sup> And yet it was included in the published catalogue, reflecting perhaps its adaptation by Mrs Greg to the cause of post-war craft revivalism. As she explained in the letter accompanying her draft, 'I feel very strongly the humanising and developing power of handwork that I could not help just putting that in'.<sup>64</sup>

Mrs Greg's choice of language and literary source material is indicative of her age and generation. In writing, as in collecting, she looked to the past to inspire the future. The Manchester and Sheffield letters reveal a woman whose personal philosophy of usefulness, work and duty was formed by the ideologies of the Victorian era. Mrs Greg was elected a Companion of the Guild of St George probably during the late 1920s and certainly prior to 1934. She supported the work of the Guild through the donation of artworks, books and furniture, contributing financially towards the distribution of Ruskin's writings, and circulating her own Ruskin quotation cards among friends and acquaintances, including museum

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<sup>61</sup> Letter from Mary Greg to William Batho, 27 September 1928, MCG Archive.

<sup>62</sup> Greg, ref.59, pp.5-6.

<sup>63</sup> The quote is from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, published as a serial in Fraser's Magazine 1833-4. It was first published in book form in the USA in 1836, then in the UK in 1838.

<sup>64</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 24 September 1922, MCG Archive.

curators.<sup>65</sup> She was later designated 'Companion Extraordinaire'<sup>66</sup> in recognition of her contribution, the only person ever to have been afforded this title.

An attachment to John Ruskin may not have been unusual in a woman of Mrs Greg's generation and background. However, research into her earlier life provides a closer connection to Ruskin than simply that of his widespread influence during her young adulthood. It also provides a formative context for her ideas based in the development of Nonconformist Liberal ideology in the nineteenth century industrial North West.

## The Hope family of Liverpool

The surname Greg carries considerable weight in the history of the North West. The Gregs of Quarry Bank Mill, Cheshire, were an eminent family of successful cotton manufacturers: prominent Unitarians, active in Liberal politics, with intellectual interests in literature, mineralogy and horticulture. Mary B. Rose, in her history of the Gregs, describes them as an exemplar of life 'in the higher echelons of commercial society in Georgian and Victorian England'.<sup>67</sup> The Hope family of Liverpool, into which Mary Hope Greg was born on 3 March 1850, is, by contrast, rarely mentioned in the written histories of the period.<sup>68</sup> However, both her paternal and maternal grandfathers, Samuel Hope and Christopher Hird Jones were active in Liverpool civic life in the early nineteenth century.

Samuel Hope (1781-1837) was a Liverpool merchant and banker, son of William Hope, mercer and draper, after whom Hope Street was named.<sup>69</sup> After serving his apprenticeship to a firm of cotton brokers, he established his own business, Samuel Hope & Co, in partnership with George Holt of Rochdale, later diversifying into banking. In *Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-1837*, John Hughes described Hope as

a man of considerable strength of character, and...pronounced Liberal views. In philanthropic endeavours he was ever to the fore, and he was earnest in his

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<sup>65</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Cleveland, 5 February 1941, MCG Archive. 'I send you a card I have had printed – I think it can be used by everyone'. No surviving cards have been found.

<sup>66</sup> This title appears to have been conferred uniquely on Mrs Greg, possibly in recognition of her level of generosity. No other Companions Extraordinaire are known. Stuart Eagles, email to Liz Mitchell, 2 December 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Mary B. Rose, *The Gregs of Quarry Bank Mill: The rise and decline of a family firm, 1750-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.2.

<sup>68</sup> For example Neil Collins, *Politics and elections in nineteenth-century Liverpool* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994); Tony Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987).

<sup>69</sup> University of Liverpool, Special Collections & Archives, *Documents Relating to Hope Street*, no date, <http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/sca/highlights/h1209HopeSt.pdf> [accessed 02 December 2014].



promotion of educational improvement...He identified himself strongly with the anti-slavery movement, and was an influential speaker at public meetings...<sup>70</sup>

A member of the Byrom Street Baptist Chapel, he was actively involved in educational projects within the city,<sup>71</sup> most significantly his presidency of the newly formed Liverpool Mechanics' Institution in 1835.<sup>72</sup> Christopher Hird Jones (1786-1866), Mrs Greg's maternal grandfather and a goldsmith by trade, was a fellow Baptist and Mechanics' Institution trustee.<sup>73</sup> The Hopes were thus among an elite group of Liverpool families who, having made their wealth through the city's commercial prosperity, were motivated by a Liberal Nonconformist belief in the raising of working class aspiration through education. Samuel Hope forged commercial and philanthropic partnerships with some of the city's most influential men, including George Holt, John Gladstone and James Cropper. Holt was a prominent Unitarian in the city; his son, Robert Durning Holt, became the first Lord Mayor of Liverpool.<sup>74</sup> John Gladstone's son, William Ewart Gladstone, later became British Prime Minister.<sup>75</sup>

By contrast, Samuel's son Thomas Arthur Hope (1817-1897), does not appear to have involved himself in public life. A wealthy man, with land and property in Cheshire, Flintshire and Northern Ireland,<sup>76</sup> his estate was valued on his death in 1897 at £177,659 5s 6d.<sup>77</sup> In the

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<sup>70</sup> John Hughes, *Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-1837: a history of the circumstances which gave rise to the industry, and the men who founded and developed it*, (Liverpool: H. Young & Sons, 1906) p.208.

<sup>71</sup> Including the founding of the Liverpool Sunday School Union in 1815 and the Charitable Institution House in 1819. See Timothy D. Whelan, *Baptist Autographs in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 1741-1845* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2009) pp.403-404; Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, its commerce, statistics and institutions: with a history of the cotton trade* (Liverpool: Thomas Kaye, 1825).

<sup>72</sup> Liverpool Mechanics' Institution, *Report of the directors of the Liverpool Mechanics' Institution, established June VIII, MDCCXXV, to the annual meeting of the members, 11 March 1840* (Liverpool: Hume Tracts, 1840).

<sup>73</sup> *The Baptist Magazine for 1829, Vol.XXI* (London: George Wightman, 1829) p166; Liverpool Mechanics' Institution, ref.72.

<sup>74</sup> Walker Art Gallery, 'Items related to Robert Durning Holt', no date, <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/collections/works-on-paper/watermark/explore.aspx?coll=4&per=24140&rdir=/walker/collections/works-on-paper/watermark/&page=1>, [accessed 18 January 2015].

<sup>75</sup> W. E. Gladstone (1809-1898) served as Liberal Prime Minister on four separate occasions: 1868-74, 1880-85, 1886, 1892-94.

<sup>76</sup> In 1878 he was recorded as owning a total of 16,672 acres valued at £6,570. See John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: Harrison & Sons, 1878) p226.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Arthur Hope, d. 7 May 1897 (Probate 28 July 1897). See England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1897, p.180. This sum equates to approximately £10.1million in 2005, calculated using National Archives Currency Converter, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/> [accessed 26 October 2017].

census records,<sup>78</sup> on his son Collingwood's Inner Temple admissions form,<sup>79</sup> and on Mary Hope's marriage certificate he is described as 'gentleman'.<sup>80</sup> In 1839, Thomas Arthur married Emily Hird Jones (1818-1887); they had 13 children, of whom Mary was the seventh. Census records show the family at several addresses over the period 1851 to 1891, in Liverpool, on the Wirral and in London. By 1861 they were living in Lower Bebington on the Wirral, in a house commissioned by Thomas Arthur Hope from local architect William Culshaw.<sup>81</sup> The Census report shows a household of ten children, with nine servants and a governess.<sup>82</sup> Mary Hope was then 11 years old. The inclusion of a governess in the household indicates that she was, at this point, educated at home. Of the other children listed, only William (aged 14) is identified as 'scholar', suggesting he may have been enrolled at school. Certainly, his younger brothers Arthur, Charles and Collingwood were later pupils at Rugby School in Warwickshire.<sup>83</sup> It was common practice during this period for upper middle-class boys to be sent away to school, while their sisters were educated at home. Boys were educated to take their place in the public worlds of business and politics, girls to be dutiful wives and mothers in the home.<sup>84</sup>

However, in what is possibly the only explicit written reference to her childhood, Mrs Greg's 1935 letter to the Master of the Guild of St George recalls that:

[f]or years Ruskin has been an inspiration to me. I was for a time at a school in Cheshire where he I believe chiefly organised the education and where he visited and for which he wrote *Sesame and Lilies*.<sup>85</sup>

This suggests that at some point Mary Hope did attend school; possibly at the short-lived but progressive Winnington Hall, a private school in Cheshire, with which John Ruskin was indeed closely associated during the 1860s (Fig 6.5).

Girls' schools in the mid-nineteenth century were few, and of limited educational ambition.<sup>86</sup> Middle-class girls were not encouraged to aspire to intellectual achievement beyond the

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Arthur Hope and family, 1851 Census: HO107; Piece 2192; Folio 160, p.50; 1861 Census: RG9: Piece 2637; Folio 35, p.37; 1871 Census: RG10; Piece 3742; Folio 4, pp.1-2; 1881 Census: RG11; Piece 146; Folio 17, pp.27-28.

<sup>79</sup> Inner Temple Admissions Database, 'Collingwood Hope', admitted 7.11.1878, <http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/detail.asp?id=17616>, [accessed 02 December 2014].

<sup>80</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18, copy of Certificate of Marriage, Thomas Tylston Greg to Mary Hope, 29 October 1895, Essex Unitarian Church, The Mall, Kensington.

<sup>81</sup> Christopher Webster (ed.), *The Practice of Architecture: eight architects 1830-1930* (Reading: Spire Books, 2012) p.58.

<sup>82</sup> Census 1861, ref.78.

<sup>83</sup> A. T. Michell, *Rugby School Register: Volume II. From August, 1842, to January, 1874* (Rugby: A. J. Lawrence) pp.296, 315, 373.

<sup>84</sup> Gleadle, ref.21; Caine, ref.9.

<sup>85</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18. Letter from Mrs Greg to T. Edmund Harvey, Master of the Guild, 22 December 1935.

acquisition of genteel and domestic accomplishments. However, the growth of Nonconformist religious belief among the commercial and industrial middle-classes posed an increasingly radical challenge to this view.<sup>87</sup> The schooling and home life of children of both genders was seen as central to the development of useful, moral members of society. The growth of dissenting academies promoted a shift away from the traditional subjects of classics and mathematics, towards a broader curriculum – including practical science, economics, law and modern history – designed to equip students for the requirements of modern life. Margaret Bell, Winnington's founder and head teacher, was the daughter of a Wesleyan Methodist itinerant preacher. In adult life, however, she adopted a more inclusive Broad Church Anglicanism that could accommodate a range of religious views. Winnington Hall was well-positioned geographically to attract a multi-denominational North West demographic that included progressive Cheshire gentry, Liverpool merchants and Manchester industrialists. It offered a learning environment based on the ideas of Swiss educationalist Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Pestalozzi advocated a child-centred model of learning which emphasised sense experience, self-expression and inductive reasoning; summed up in the phrase 'heart, spirit and hand'.<sup>88</sup> Winnington girls studied science, music and art, debated aspects of religion, and played cricket.<sup>89</sup> Bell encouraged learning through discussion and self-discovery rather than by rote. She invited many of the most progressive thinkers and artists of the day to visit the school, including Alexander John Scott, Frederick D. Maurice, Frederick Shields, Charles Halle and, in 1859, John Ruskin.

Ruskin was immediately drawn to the school and its inspirational head teacher. Over the ensuing decade Winnington became a retreat for him; he taught art and divinity, played cricket and croquet, and had his own suite of rooms. Winnington gave him space in which to examine more closely his own religious beliefs, through bible discussion with the daughters of Anglican and dissenting liberals, and to further develop his own theories of education. It introduced him to North West intellectual society and in return, increased the school's status within such

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<sup>86</sup> The Taunton Commission of 1864 found secondary education to be particularly poor. See Gleadle, ref.21, p.139; Caine, ref.9, pp.43-4.

<sup>87</sup> Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (Harlow: Longman, 1998) pp.8-9.

<sup>88</sup> Maria Laubach and Joan K. Smith, 'Educating with Heart, Head and Hands: Pestalozzianism, Women Seminaries and the Spread of Progressive Ideas in Indian Territory', *American Educational History Journal*, 38 (2) (2011) pp.341-356.

<sup>89</sup> Hilton, ref.50, p.1-2.

circles. He also began a regular correspondence with pupils and staff, written every week during term time from the spring of 1859 until 1864.<sup>90</sup>



Figure 6.5: Winnington Hall, Northwich, Cheshire, date unknown.

In 1865, Ruskin did indeed publish a book based on his Winnington experience, although this was not, as Mrs Greg later recalled, *Sesame and Lilies* but *The Ethics of the Dust*.<sup>91</sup> Both books were published around the same time, the latter taking as its form a dialogue between an elderly lecturer and his female pupils. *Sesame and Lilies*, however, also drew considerably on Winnington in its discussion of female education. In it, Ruskin argued explicitly that boys and girls should enjoy the same standards of education. He denounced the current state of affairs, exclaiming:

[y]ou bring up your girls as if they were meant for sideboard ornaments, and then complain of their frivolity. Give them the same advantages that you give their brothers – appeal to the same grand instincts of virtue in them; teach *them*, also that courage and truth are the pillars of their being: - do you think that they would not answer that appeal, brave and true as they are even now...'<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Van Akin Burd (ed.), *The Winnington Letters: John Ruskin's Correspondence with Margaret Alexis Bell and the Children at Winnington Hall* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

<sup>91</sup> John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures delivered at Manchester in 1864* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1865); John Ruskin, *The Ethics of the Dust: Ten Lectures to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallisation* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1866).

<sup>92</sup> John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures by John Ruskin* (London: George Allen, 1906 [1865]) pp.155-156.

He argued that girls in particular, whose intellect ‘ripens faster’ than boys, should be introduced at an early age to ‘deep and serious subjects’, should be encouraged to avoid unnecessary frivolity and instead to ‘add the qualities of patience and seriousness to [their] natural poignancy of thought and quickness of wit’.<sup>93</sup> Pupils at Winnington were encouraged to think for themselves, and on subjects that were not always deemed appropriate for women in polite society. Pupil Frances Colenso was described by her mother as ‘quite impregnated with Winnington ideas, in harmony with those around her there – She will have to learn to give up her own will at home!’.<sup>94</sup>

It is impossible to state conclusively that Mary Hope was a pupil at Winnington. Surviving archive material is scant, and information about its pupils partial.<sup>95</sup> However, her specific (if inaccurate) reference to the ‘school in Cheshire’, her age during the school’s short lifetime (8-20 years old), and her family background of North West Liberal Nonconformism do make it plausible. As no other evidence has been found for a specific Hope family connection to Ruskin, this would also account for the strength of Mrs Greg’s attachment to his teachings, an attachment that lasted well beyond the period of his popular appeal. Ruskin found several lifelong friends among the pupils of Winnington, some of whom became early members of the Guild of St George.<sup>96</sup> No evidence has been found to indicate that Mrs Greg was aware of this – her 1935 comment to the Master would suggest that she was not. However, among the various donations she made to the Guild towards the end of her life, there are further documents which support a connection with both John Ruskin and Winnington Hall. They also provide potential insight into Mary Hope’s young adult life.

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<sup>93</sup> Ruskin, ref.92, pp.149-150.

<sup>94</sup> Cited in Jeff Guy, *The View Across the River: Harriette Colenso and the Zulu Struggle Against Imperialism* (Oxford: James Curry, 2002) p.26.

<sup>95</sup> A small amount of archive material, including pupil Florence White’s notebook, two photographs c.1866 and A. S. Irvine’s research correspondence for a history of Winnington Hall are held at Cheshire Archives and Local Studies: DIC/BM15/24, 15/27, 16/1-2, DIC/X10/406, 10/413. Ruskin’s letters to Winnington (542 in total) are held at the Morgan Library & Museum, New York. See also Van Akin Burd, ref.90.

<sup>96</sup> Including Frances Colenso, Dora Livesey, Constance Oldham and Lily Armstrong.

## ‘My dear Ray’

In March 1939, Mrs Greg gave the Guild of St George a small bundle of letters, written by Ruskin in the autumn of 1879 to a young woman by the name of Ray (Fig.6.6).<sup>97</sup> Ray’s letters do not survive, but from Ruskin’s replies it seems that she had written to ask his advice on the sensitive matter of marriage and obedience to one’s parents. Over the course of six letters, Ruskin advised her to be resolute in determining her own fate, but to do so with as much respect and humility towards her parents as she could muster:

The laws of Nature and God are that the Parent is bound to educate his child as he thinks best for it, not for himself, and, when the child becomes a Man or Woman, he has no further power or Authority over its Mind or Body. He must neither dictate its religion – its duty – or its occupation. Every Man and Woman must choose and fulfil these, according to their own conscience. Much more, they must choose the partner of their lives according to their own love.<sup>98</sup>

The letters thus indicate a mentor/mentee relationship of some intimacy. They suggest that Ray was facing a difficult decision with regard to marriage, one in which she was at odds with her parents’ wishes. The final two letters introduce a lighter note, but again demonstrate an intimacy between the correspondents as Ruskin discusses a mutual friend and refers in passing to ‘old Winnington dances’.<sup>99</sup> There is no known associate of Ruskin by the name of Ray,<sup>100</sup> but Mary’s older sister Rebekah went by this name in later life.<sup>101</sup> Mrs Greg’s subsequent possession of the letters, along with other corroborating (though circumstantial) evidence, suggests that these were indeed written to Rebekah Hope, placing the Hope sisters, or at least one of them, in a relationship of some personal intimacy with John Ruskin.

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<sup>97</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18 1991/55. Letter from Alexander Farquharson to Mrs Greg, 30 March 1939. At the start of this research, these letters were unidentified in the collections at Sheffield Museums Trust, but subsequently traced by Louise Pullen, Ruskin Collection Curator. Louise Pullen, emails to Liz Mitchell, January 2013 – September 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG6142iii. Letter from John Ruskin to ‘Ray’, undated,

<sup>99</sup> Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG6142vi. Letter from John Ruskin to ‘Ray’, 27 November.

<sup>100</sup> Apart from a housemaid by the name of Martha Ray at Brantwood, with whom Ruskin would not have corresponded in such intimate fashion. Stuart Eagles, email to Liz Mitchell, 5 March 2017.

<sup>101</sup> This discovery was only made in June 2017, when I gave a lecture for the Guild of St George in Westmill, and found Rebekah Bateman-Hope’s headstone in the church yard, inscribed ‘Ray Bateman-Hope’. The lecture formed the basis of a publication which made a speculative case for Ray being a pet-name for Mary. See Liz Mitchell, *Treasuring Things of the Least: Mary Hope Greg, John Ruskin & Westmill, Hertfordshire* (York: Guild of St George, 2017).



Brankwood,  
Canisdon, Dorsetshire.

My dear Ray

There is not the least  
difficulty in answering any of  
your questions; and the difficulties  
you feel yourself are only the  
result of the quite needless  
desolation in which the entire  
modern world is lying, for the  
punishment of its wilful defiance  
of its professed religion.

The law of Nature and God  
are that the Parent is bound  
to educate his child as he  
thinks best for it, not for himself.  
and, when the child becomes  
a Man or Woman, he has no

Figure 6.6: Letter from John Ruskin to 'Ray', undated. Sheffield Museums Trust, accession number CGSG6142iii.

In 1879, of the 11 surviving Hope children, three remained unmarried and at home: Rebekah, aged 37, Harriet, 31, and Mary, 29. Making a good marriage was regarded as the primary duty of upper-middle-class Victorian girls. However, while class, wealth and regional variation make it hard to determine an average age at which Victorian women married,<sup>102</sup> all three were by then well beyond expected marrying age.<sup>103</sup> Despite the social expectation that all women would marry, many did not, and the role of spinster was not an attractive one.<sup>104</sup> In 1877, Mary Gladstone, still unmarried on her thirtieth birthday, lamented her life as 'a great failure'.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Beatrice Potter wrote in her diary in 1885, '[d]esper...Eight and twenty! Living a life without hope...The position of unmarried daughter at home is an unhappy one even for a strong woman'.<sup>106</sup> The Potter sisters and Mary and Helen Gladstone provide instructive comparators for the Hope family. They too were descended from Liberal Nonconformist Liverpool elites, Lawrence Heyworth and Sir John Gladstone respectively.

Another document in the Guild papers is also worth consideration. Among the Greg correspondence is a transcribed copy of a letter (Fig.6.7).<sup>107</sup> The date of the typewritten copy is not recorded, but the original date is given as 13 August 1879, some three weeks before the second Ruskin letter. It is addressed to 'My dear Miss Hope' and signed Stopford A. Brooke. It too appears to be written in response to a serious personal question on which advice is being sought, in this case on the subject of charitable work.

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<sup>102</sup> Michael Anderson, 'Marriage Patterns in Victorian Britain: an Analysis Based on Registration District Data for England and Wales 1861', *Journal of Family History*, 1 (55) (1976) pp.55-78.

<sup>103</sup> Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p.22. Jalland gives the expected age at which girls first took part in the London Season as 'about 17'. It was expected that a maximum of two or three seasons would be required before a suitable husband was found.

<sup>104</sup> From 1851-1911, between 29-35% of all women aged 25-35 and between 15-19% of women aged 35-45 were unmarried. See Jalland, ref.103.

<sup>105</sup> Jalland, ref.103, p.98.

<sup>106</sup> Jalland ref.103, p.257.

<sup>107</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18.

9.1.4  
Mr. Grey

Aug. 13. 79.

COPY

My dear Miss Hope,

I wonder if in my hurried note I thanked you as I meant to do for the flowers. Some of them still last, carefully watched over, and I never see them without being grateful. Thank you for the sermon which came safely. I had hoped that you had one preached at Westminster Abbey on One Thing is Needful - but I suppose it is lost. Keep the others as long as ever you like. I leave London on the 24th for Ireland and after a week there, I shall go to Italy, where I hope to feel as if life were new.

About your question - it is a little difficult to answer without knowing more. Work among the poor, if wisely done, is plainly useful and good; whereas self cultivation, unless it can be put into form, may not be useful at all. Then there are so many persons now who are cultivating their nature and so few who are trying to make others happier. If you are tired and feel that you do not do your work with pleasure and energy - then I would rest a little in a change of work - and write some pleasant book to help or cheer people: and when that was done, it may be you would hunger for your poor-work again. But I don't believe in sitting at home and reading and cultivating ones own inner garden, and in doing nothing else. I do believe in it when it is put into some actual form, as an artist does - poet, or writer or painter - etc. But merely cultivating oneself without any further reference to mankind is no good at all. There is more true cultivation gained in the knowledge of the human heart, and in the stirring of one's own heart, which moving among men, poor or rich, when they are in unworldly moments, awakens and supports. Culture is not knowledge, it is the power of feeling and using knowledge rightly for noble uses. It is to be sensitive to the right things and to enjoy them, and to be able to make other people see and enjoy them.

But - if you are weary - rest a while - And divide your work; do half as much among the poor - and give the rest of your time to producing something. But let it be creation, production: put reading into form, or art thinking into form - force things out of vague thought into the open air.

Give my very kind regards to your sister.

Yours very sincerely,  
STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

Figure 6.7: Typewritten copy of a letter from Stopford A. Brooke to Miss Hope, 13 August 1879. The date of the copy is unknown. Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18.

The Reverend Stopford Brooke (1832-1916) was an Anglo-Irish churchman, Chaplain in Ordinary to Queen Victoria from 1872-1880 (Fig.9). He was also a poet, literary critic and friend of John Ruskin.<sup>108</sup> In 1880, however, Brooke seceded from the Church of England to become a Unitarian minister at Bedford Chapel, Bloomsbury.<sup>109</sup> His letter to Miss Hope addresses the question of usefulness, and the importance of putting to good purpose one's own learning. 'Culture is not knowledge', he advises, 'it is the power of feeling and using knowledge rightly for noble uses. It is to be sensitive to the right things and to enjoy them, and to be able to make other people see and enjoy them'.<sup>110</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, this could almost read as a description of Mrs Greg's museum patronage, over forty years later. Moreover, Brooke goes on to suggest that:

...if you are weary – rest a while – And divide your work; do half as much among the poor – and give the rest of your time to producing something. But let it be creation, production: put reading into form, or art thinking into form – force things out of vague thought into the open air.<sup>111</sup>

This sentiment is markedly similar to that expressed by Mrs Greg in her later use of Carlyle's exhortation, 'Produce, produce, were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product'.<sup>112</sup>

Finding a purposeful role in life was a cause of difficulty for many unmarried women of Mary Hope's generation. Taken together, the Ruskin and Brooke letters suggest that at least one of the Hope sisters was experiencing a crisis of this sort. Barbara Caine and Pat Jalland's research into the lives of the Potter and Gladstone families respectively reveals a number of similarities in the way they navigated a path through the conflicted roles available to upper-middle-class women of their background. In 1873 Maggie Potter wrote to her sister Beatrice, expressing a frustration which echoes the sentiments of Stopford Brooke's letter and articulates the particular challenge this presented to women: '...I have rather come to Faust's opinion, that mere learning is not worth much unless it has some particular aim which alas! poor women can hardly have, unless they have some idea of their future'.<sup>113</sup> In *Sesame and Lilies*, Ruskin

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<sup>108</sup> See letters from John Ruskin to Lady Mount-Temple, January-March 1869, cited in John Lewis Bradley (ed.), *The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964) pp.191-4. See also Stopford A. Brooke, 'Ruskin's Lectures on Art', in *Macmillan Magazine*, 22 (October 1870) pp.423-34, reprinted in J. L. Bradley (ed.), *John Ruskin: The Critical Heritage* (Oxford: Routledge, 1984) pp.346-363.

<sup>109</sup> Lawrence Pearsall Jacks, *Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917).

<sup>110</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18. Undated copy of a letter from Stopford Brooke to Miss Hope, 13 August 1879.

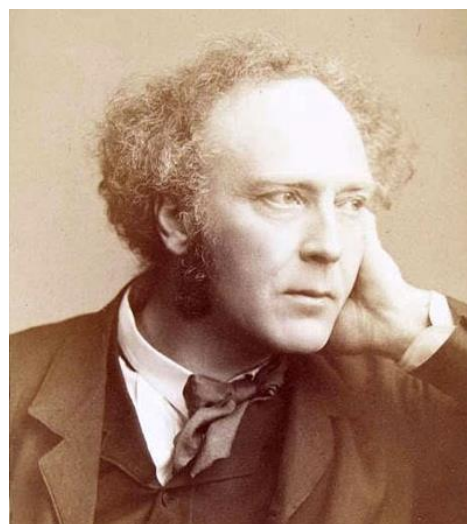
<sup>111</sup> Letter from Stopford Brooke to Miss Hope.

<sup>112</sup> Greg, ref.59, p.5.

<sup>113</sup> Caine, ref.9, p.58.

had argued that, whereas a man's knowledge and learning should be 'foundational and progressive', a woman's should equip her to be useful.<sup>114</sup> Brooke's letter to Miss Hope advises that 'self cultivation, unless it can be put into form, may not be useful at all'. Yet finding a useful outlet, for an unmarried woman, was a vexed question.<sup>115</sup> Charitable work among the poor had long been a respectable activity for upper-class young women, but as Margaret Simey observes in her study of nineteenth century Liverpool philanthropy, the growing institutionalisation of philanthropic endeavour, through predominantly male-organised committees, reduced the range of opportunities available to women. Excluded from practical social work, they were increasingly restricted to socially acceptable home-based activities such as the sewing of garments for the poor and the organising of charitable concerts.<sup>116</sup> Mary Hope was born into a family with a history of philanthropic commitment. To what extent she or her sisters were involved in charitable work remains unknown, but Brooke's letter suggests a debilitating sense of frustration and doubt on the part of his correspondent.

Both the Ruskin and Brooke letters suggest Hope family connections with significant figures in Victorian society. A pencil portrait of Mary Hope by Hubert von Herkomer, in the collection at Manchester and dated 1885 (Fig.6.10), also provides a link between the Hope family and the two men. Herkomer painted Ruskin's portrait in the autumn of 1879; with Brooke he was joint vice-president of the Sunday Society, which campaigned for the Sunday opening of museums, galleries, libraries and gardens (Figs.6.8-6.9).



Figures 6.8-6.9: John Ruskin (1819-1900), by Hubert von Herkomer, 1879, watercolour on paper (detail) (left); Reverend Stopford A. Brooke (1832-1916), by Elliott & Fry, c.1888, photograph (detail) (right).

<sup>114</sup> Ruskin, ref.92, p.148.

<sup>115</sup> See for example W. R. Greg, *Why are women redundant?* (London: N. Trübner & Co, 1869).

<sup>116</sup> Margaret Simey, *Charity Rediscovered: A Study of Philanthropic Effort in Nineteenth-Century Liverpool*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992).





Figure 6.10: *Miss Hope*, by Hubert von Herkomer, 9 November 1885. Manchester City Galleries, accession number 1941.74.



Rebekah, Harriet and Mary appear to have remained close throughout their life. A letter to Mrs Greg from Peter Entwistle, Deputy Curator of Liverpool Museum, written in 1923, concludes, 'I well remember yourself and your sisters years ago when you were in Liverpool'.<sup>117</sup> Brooke's letter also ends with a request to 'give my very kind regards to your sister'. The Ruskin letters imply that Thomas Arthur Hope was an authoritarian father, with whom at least one of his unmarried daughters was in conflict. Hope family history records that, in making his will in 1889, he assumed they would all remain spinsters.<sup>118</sup> However, both Rebekah and Mary did marry. In 1893, at the age of 50, Rebekah married Henry Richard Pinker (1850-1927), sculptor, stonemason, committed Unitarian, and widower with four children. Two years later Mary married Thomas Tylston Greg. Harriet remained unmarried. In later life the sisters stayed in close contact; the Manchester letters reference Mrs Greg's frequent trips to Bath to visit Harriet, who also contributed occasional gifts to the collections at both Manchester and Bethnal Green.<sup>119</sup> Rebekah died in 1924, followed by her husband three years later. Although they appear to have had no direct connection with Westmill, they are buried there, in the plot next to Thomas and Mary Greg.

### **Mrs Thomas Tylston Greg**

Mary Hope and Thomas Greg were married at the Unitarian Essex Street Chapel in Kensington in 1895. She was 45 years old, he was 38. Although brought up at Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire, Greg had no involvement in the family cotton business but was heir to the Coles estate at Westmill in Hertfordshire.<sup>120</sup> As a boy, he went to Rugby School and was in the same year as Mary's younger brother Collingwood Hope.<sup>121</sup> Both went from Rugby to Oxford and thence to the Inner Temple. Both were called to the Bar in 1882,<sup>122</sup> although Greg subsequently relinquished his position to practise as a solicitor. After their marriage Mr and Mrs Greg lived at 7 Campden Hill Square, not far from the Hope family's London residence. Some time before 1901 they moved to the Dial House in the village of Westmill; Greg inherited the estate in 1906 and they moved to Coles Park, where they spent the rest of their married life.

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<sup>117</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, D/Esm F5. Letter from Peter Entwistle to Mrs Greg, 19 October 1923.

<sup>118</sup> Hope family history notes compiled by Bettina Harden. Bettina Harden, emails to Liz Mitchell, January 2013 – September 2014.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 26 September 1935, MCG Archive. See also V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H. Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Sabin, 8 July 1923.

<sup>120</sup> In 1923 the Coles estate comprised 1268 acres of working agricultural land. See letter from Caroline Hill at Quarry Bank Mill to Katherine Baum at Manchester City Galleries, 19 June 2001, MCG Archive.

<sup>121</sup> Michell, ref.83, p.342.

<sup>122</sup> Inner Temple Admissions Database, entry for Collingwood Hope, admitted 07 November 1878, <http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/detail.asp?id=17616>, and for Thomas Tylston Greg, admitted 09 May 1879 <http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/detail.asp?id=17510> [accessed 02 March 2015].

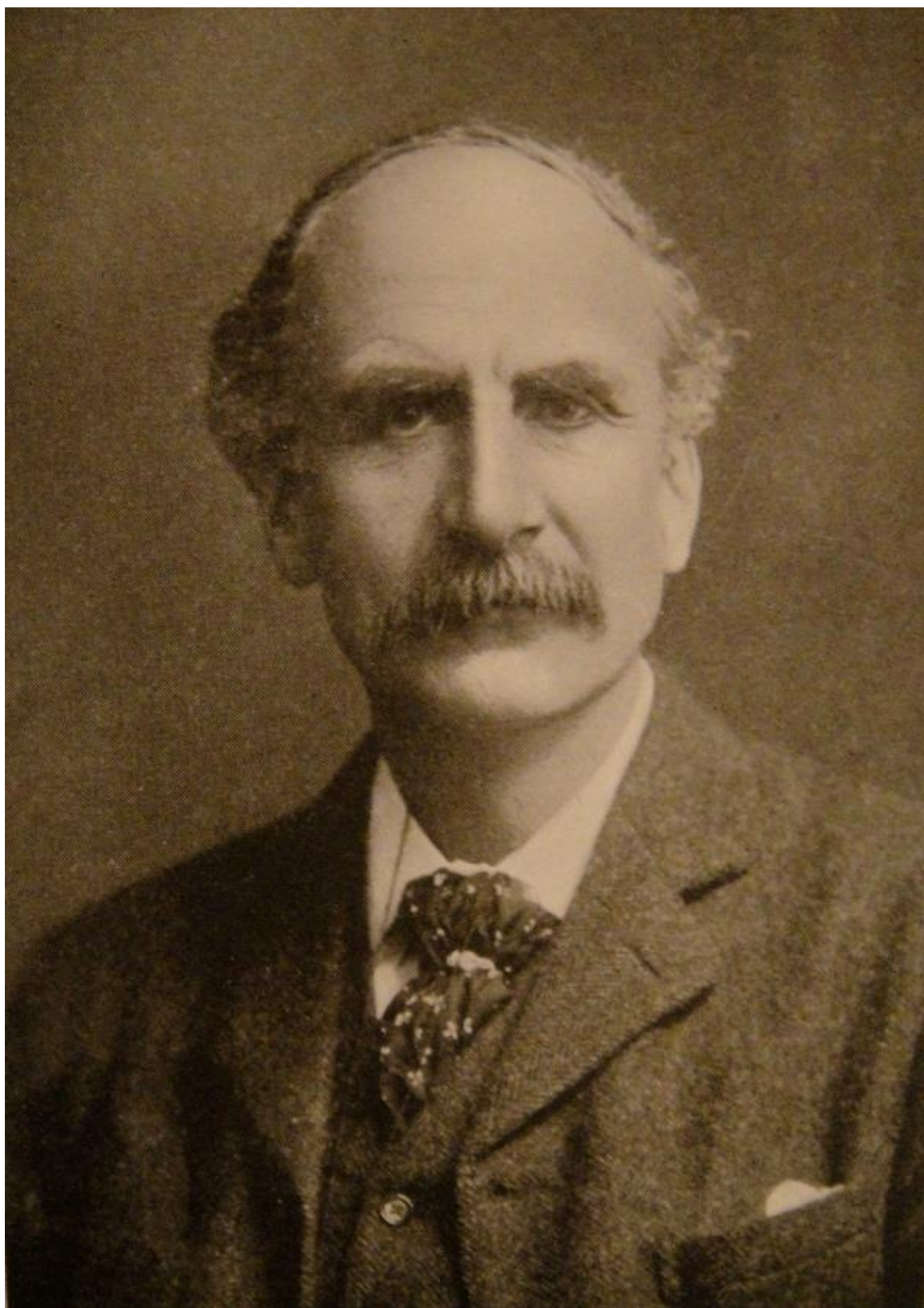


Figure 6.11: Thomas Tylston Greg (1858-1920), date unknown. MCG Archive.

Thomas Greg was a man of diverse interests (Fig 6.11). During the 1890s he was art critic for both the *Manchester Guardian* and *Birmingham Daily Post*, and contributed a number of humorous articles to the short-lived *National Observer*.<sup>123</sup> A selection of these was published posthumously in 1924 at the behest of Mrs Greg, along with two poems and the opening speech for the Westmill Village Hall.<sup>124</sup> An anonymously penned introduction describes the volume's purpose, 'to provide his many friends with some small personal memorial of the man they loved – whose voice, as they read, will speak for a moment in the old tones'.<sup>125</sup> *In Varying Mood* is an affectionate book, both in its epitaph on the author and in its content, a series of wry reflections on life. It outlines Greg's range of interests, including his membership of the Society of Antiquaries, a failed attempt to stand as Liberal MP, and governorship of the Gresham School at Holt, about which he wrote '[n]ext to my marriage...nothing has been so satisfactory to me'.<sup>126</sup> References to his married life make several appearances throughout, most overtly in the second essay. 'A Plague of Fresh Air' is a tongue-in-cheek account of the author's recent change in circumstance, from the comfortable life of bachelor to that of a newly married man. It provides a commentary on the power relations between a self-styled long-suffering husband and his determined new wife, one with which Mrs Greg was apparently comfortable as she included it in the selection. The narrator reflects on how,

...in a moment of unwisdom and forgetful of retribution, I elected to be made "the happiest of men" ...when the daughter of a man I had never seen consented to love, honour and disobey me.<sup>127</sup>

He is a man harried from his cosy fireside by open windows and rattling vents, for he has 'married a wife, and am hourly sacrificed on the altar of Hygiene'.<sup>128</sup> His unnamed spouse, 'this aerial child of nature',<sup>129</sup> is an enthusiastic advocate of fresh air as an antidote to the foul vapours that pour forth from the corrupted lungs of men. As such, she is immediately recognisable as the woman who later wrote enthusiastically to William Batho on such matters as ultra-violet light therapies and the benefits of the Hay Diet.<sup>130</sup> The narrator's 'dear warm draughtless house in the "swamps" of Addison Road', in London's Holland Park, is forcibly abandoned, his new wife's heart ideally set on 'the summit of the Campden Hill water-

<sup>123</sup> Michael R. Parkinson, *The Incomparable Art: English Pottery from the Thomas Greg Collection* (Manchester: City Art Gallery, 1969).

<sup>124</sup> Greg, ref.2.

<sup>125</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.vi.

<sup>126</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.x.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, 'A Plague of Fresh Air', in Greg, ref.2, pp.10-11.

<sup>128</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.11.

<sup>129</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.11.

<sup>130</sup> Letters from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 27 October 1926, 23 November 1936, MCG Archive.

tower',<sup>131</sup> but settling instead for a house nearby. It is an affectionate but teasing portrait that paints the new Mrs Greg as a force to be reckoned with. Sheila Ormerod's 1996 local history, *The Gregs of Westmill*, also suggests a woman of determined views on household matters, but is rather less sympathetic in its reference to Mrs Greg as 'an overly frugal housekeeper who would not allow her husband to have two eggs for breakfast and was much impressed by a lecturer who declared that margarine was better than butter for domestic staff.'<sup>132</sup>

Further comments in *In Varying Mood* hint that wider family relations were not necessarily easy. Reflecting on female beauty in portraiture, Greg observes 'I am no judge of woman's looks, and have endured in silence all manner of disparagements concerning those of some dear to me, and recked nothing the while except that they were all I could desire'.<sup>133</sup> This comment, combined with his reference to marrying the daughter of a man he had never met, the fact that she was eight years his senior, and that they did not have children, suggests that their marriage was one of choice rather than duty. Greg's repeated references to his wife as collaborator in their various projects further suggests that their marriage was indeed one of partnership and shared interests. Moving out of the polluted environs of the city to Hertfordshire in 1901, they were able to pursue a range of such interests both together and separately.

While Mr Greg cultivated the substantial collection of trees on the Coles estate, Mrs Greg embarked on a nature diary which she kept for nearly twenty years, from 1903 to 1922.<sup>134</sup> The diary includes watercolour sketches of plants and animals, written accounts of weather conditions and the changing seasons, snippets of local history, and a collection of proverbs and poems on the subject of nature (Figs 6.12-13). She recorded monthly rainfall; the first showings of hedgerow flowers; the return of swifts at the start of summer. She noted aspects of daily life including the ploughing of fields, gathering of the harvest and encounters with local characters such as road-mender Henry Patmore, 'a fine old man of the old school'.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.11. The Italianate water tower of the Camden Hill pumping station was a conspicuous local landmark from 1857 until its demolition in 1970. See F. H. W. Sheppard (ed.), 'Campden Hill Square area', *Survey of London: Volume 37, Northern Kensington* (London, 1973), pp. 87-100. *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol37/pp87-100> [accessed 18 August 2017].

<sup>132</sup> Sheila Ormerod, *The Gregs of Westmill* (Wheathampstead: Hertfordshire Education Service, 1996) p.18.

<sup>133</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, 'The Portrait of a Lady', in Greg, ref.2, p.5.

<sup>134</sup> Now held by the Sheffield Museums Trust, on behalf of the Guild of St George, accession numbers CGSG04941-2.

<sup>135</sup> Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG04942. Mrs Greg's nature diary, volume 1, 25 Feb 1904, p.32.

Mrs Greg's diary entries range from the purely documentary, such as lists of plants in flower, to more lyrical descriptive passages:

that wonderful subtle beauty which comes with veiled sunshine & mist & yet a deep blue sky colouring the mist - & the scent of damp earth & leaves & grass & the dew over everything making the gossamer of the spiders [sic] webs look like soft woolly thread - & to crown it all the delicious throaty caw of the rooks.<sup>136</sup>

Such entries suggest a poetic side to the enthusiastic and practically-minded 'aerial child of nature'. A later entry, however, also hints at her determination:

I so enjoy being out in a good wind, being half lifted & carried along by it or still better meeting it full in the face & battling with it!<sup>137</sup>

The diaries do not give much information about Mrs Greg's personal life. They do, however, give a sense of the general pattern of her life, of the seasonal markers of rural life, of walks in the local woods and fields, and the gardens at Coles Park, interspersed with regular trips to London and visits to friends and family in Shropshire, Surrey, Cheshire, and elsewhere. Most of this is documented in the plural 'we', and regular references to 'T' or 'Tom' throughout suggest they did much of it together.

Many years later, in 1939, Mrs Greg offered her diaries to the Guild of St George. She described them modestly as '...amateurish, I had no lessons'. But as she further explained, 'I tried to paint little things which I thought of interest or beauty - this Ruskin had taught me to aim at!'.<sup>138</sup> This statement could refer simply to Mrs Greg's reading of Ruskin, but in light of other sources, it also adds weight to the theory that she had known him personally. On the first page of the first volume she wrote out a line from the passage quoted earlier in this chapter: 'God has lent us the Earth for our life; it is a great entail'.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Mrs Greg's nature diary, ref.135, volume 1, 27 September 1904, p.114.

<sup>137</sup> Mrs Greg's nature diary, ref.135, volume 1, 30 December 1904, p.141.

<sup>138</sup> Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18. Letter from Mary Greg to the Secretary of the Guild of St George, 15 June 1940.

<sup>139</sup> Mrs Greg's nature diary, ref.135, volume 1, no page number.



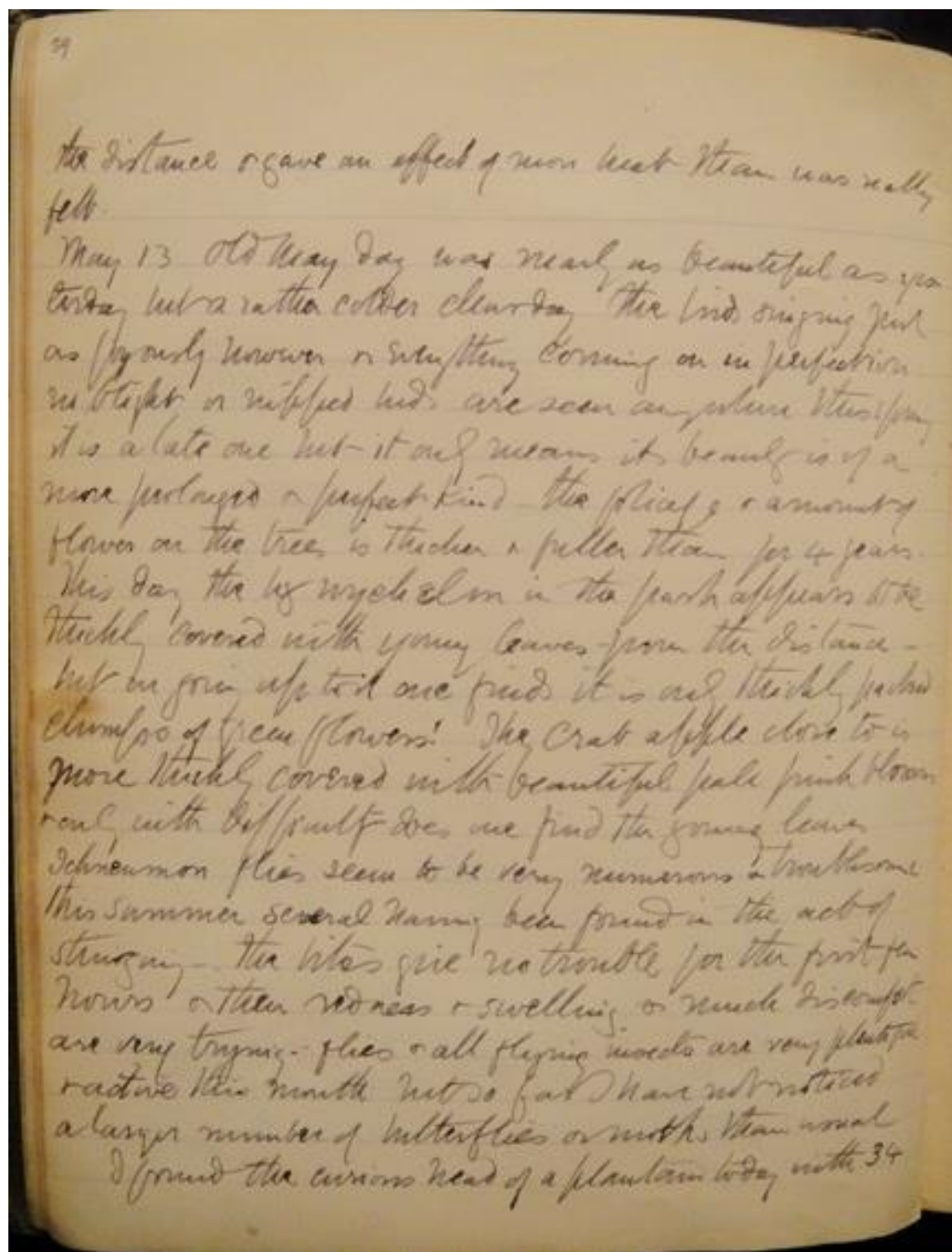


Figure 6.12: Mrs Greg's nature diary, Vol. 1, p.59, 13 May 1904. Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG04942.





Figure 6.13: Mrs Greg's nature diary, Vol. 1, p.60, May 1904. Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG04942.

## A collecting couple

Collecting was the other main passion shared by Mr and Mrs Greg. As the introduction to *In Varying Mood* makes clear, Thomas Greg's collecting began during his time at Oxford, when he developed an interest in English pottery. His management of the Coles estate was also, in part, a form of collecting, through his cultivation and development of the substantial body of trees on estate land. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the assemblage and organisation of objects became increasingly central to the process of knowledge-creation, as the proliferation of museums during this period attests.<sup>140</sup> Both Thomas and Mary Greg were children of the Victorian age. They grew up within affluent and influential families, whose success was built on the commercial and industrial growth of the city, but whose Nonconformist outlook linked wealth creation with social responsibility. Both were raised against a backdrop of active involvement in political reform, charitable work, and the promotion of education. Such intellectual pursuits were frequently accompanied by the development of collections. At the same time, the period also witnessed a craze for private collecting that framed it as an integral aspect of home-making. Charles Eastlake, author of *Hints on Household Taste* in 1868, argued that collecting provided a domestic lesson in aesthetic appreciation.<sup>141</sup> W. J. Loftie opened his 1876 *A Plea for Art in the House* with a chapter titled 'The Prudence of Collecting', stressing both the investment potential of judicious acquisition and its contribution to beauty in the home.<sup>142</sup> Alternatively, Clarence Cook advised collecting found objects, 'all the curiosities and pretty things gathered in the family walks and travels', as a way of consolidating family relationships.<sup>143</sup> Collecting was a civilizing and improving pursuit that might bring beauty, hope, joy and, in the long term, maybe even money, into the home; Barbara Black notes the relief of middle-class housing reformers such as Octavia Hill in their observations of 'the will to collect' in even the poorest London households.<sup>144</sup>

Both Thomas and Mary had family precedents for an interest in collecting. Robert Philips Greg (1826-1906), Thomas Greg's uncle and benefactor, was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, the Society of Antiquaries and the Geological Society; he inherited his father's

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<sup>140</sup> See Barbara J. Black, *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>141</sup> Charles Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1872 [1868]) pp.137-139.

<sup>142</sup> W. J. Loftie, *A Plea for Art in the House* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1978 [1876]), pp.1-20.

<sup>143</sup> Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995 [1877]) p.101.

<sup>144</sup> Black, ref.140, p.76.

substantial mineral collection, and published what was for many years a standard work on the subject.<sup>145</sup> The Liverpool Mechanics' Institution, of which both Mrs Greg's grandfathers were founder members, included its own Museum of Natural History, Gallery of Practical Science and Sculpture Gallery.<sup>146</sup> But more significantly, Mary Greg counted among her wider family connections Thomas Bateman, the archaeologist and antiquarian several of whose collected objects are found in the Greg collections. Mrs Greg's paternal grandmother was Rebekah Bateman (1794-1838), Thomas Bateman's aunt. The Hope and Bateman families were close, reflected down the generations in the naming of children (including two of Mary's siblings, Rebekah Bateman Hope and Bateman Hope). As Chapter Four relates, Thomas Bateman (1821-1861), known as the 'Barrow Knight' for his excavation of over 500 Anglo-Saxon burial sites,<sup>147</sup> amassed a vast collection of antiquities at his Derbyshire home, Lomberdale Hall, that built on already substantial antiquarian collections developed by his father and grandfather before him (Figs.6.14-15). His son, however, also called Thomas, lost the family fortune and was forced to sell the collection, which was broken up at auction in 1893 and 1895, the year of Thomas and Mary Greg's marriage. As has been discussed in previous chapters, multiple objects from the collection were acquired not just by the Gregs, but by other significant collectors of the period; today objects from the Bateman collection can be found in several major museums.<sup>148</sup>



**Figures 6.14-6.15: *Lomberdale Hall*, by William Bowman, c.1860 (left) and *Thomas Bateman (1821-1861) and his son*, by Thomas Joseph Banks, 1860 (right).**

As the probate inventory of Coles Park reveals, Thomas and Mary Greg built up a wide-ranging collection of their own that over time filled their house. By 1920, it included several 'hanging

<sup>145</sup> Ormerod, ref.132, pp.16-17.

<sup>146</sup> Liverpool Mechanics' Institution, ref.72.

<sup>147</sup> Robert McCombe, 'Anglo-Saxon Artefacts and Nationalist Discourse', *Museum History Journal*, 4 (2) (2011) pp.139-160.

<sup>148</sup> Including Museums Sheffield, the British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

cabinets' and glass shades containing groups of old Roman, Bristol and Nailsea glass, 'old Staffordshire ware', snuffboxes, 'spoons, combs and curios', and Venetian enamelled glass figures, as well antiquarian books, a large number of individual objects spread throughout the rooms of the house, and the pottery collection which had gone to Manchester in 1905.<sup>149</sup> Multiple objects on the inventory can be matched specifically to items in the handicrafts collection. At some point between 1895 and 1897, Thomas Greg wrote an article entitled 'The Arrogance of Ownership', later included in the selection for *In Varying Mood*.<sup>150</sup> It provides an insight into his motivation for collecting at this point, which differs to that written for Manchester City Art Galleries some two decades later. As its title suggests, the article dwells on the pleasures of possession, the 'glow' of 'inward satisfaction'<sup>151</sup> that ownership conveys and the personal gratification of showing and telling one's treasures. In what may be a reference to the fate of the Bateman collection, it reflects on the way such pleasure 'seldom descends to the second generation',<sup>152</sup> though the son who inherits may achieve his own satisfaction in the sale room. More pertinent for this research, however, are his thoughts on museums. Disputing the moral satisfactions of public patronage, Greg argues '[h]e is after all but a sorry varlet who is content to take his pleasures at second hand, satisfied that...all his china, glass and *objets d'art* are warehoused for him free of charge in the plate-glass prisons of South Kensington'.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, in a moment of self-professed frankness, he adds,

[l]et a man not deceive himself that he collects for the purpose of study. That is what he tells his parent or guardian when he is young. Let him not lay the flattering unction to his soul that he collects for posterity, and that some museum *in posse* is the goal and aim where his ambition would finally dispose of his rarities. That is the story he gives his wife when he is older.<sup>154</sup>

Conversely, twenty years later, shortly before his death, he wrote in the manuscript catalogue to the collection of brass tobacco boxes:

[n]o collector who is worthy of the name amasses a number of objects, be they pieces of old silver, old pottery, coins or postage stamps, simply for the selfish pleasure of looking at them or gloating over the fact that amongst his gallimaufry

<sup>149</sup> Hertfordshire Archives, ACC2579 Box 4. Hampton & Sons (Auctioneers), *Inventory of Knights Hill Cottage and Coles Park – furniture, china, glass, pictures, books, silver, plated articles, wine, wearing apparel, etc., the property of the late T. T. Greig [sic] Esq., and made for Probate purposes*, October 1920.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, 'The Arrogance of Ownership', in Greg, ref.2, pp.29-37.

<sup>151</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.34.

<sup>152</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.34.

<sup>153</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.30.

<sup>154</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.33.

of specimens he possesses one or more than his less favoured competitor has been able to attain.<sup>155</sup>

It is tempting to speculate, given the various accounts of Mrs Greg's influence over her apparently long-suffering husband, and the enthusiasm with which she embarked on museum donation after his death, whose idea it was to offer the English pottery collection to Manchester in 1904.

Mary Hope's early life may also have brought her into contact with another collector who became a major museum patron. Joseph Mayer (1803-1886), like Mary's maternal grandfather Christopher Hird Jones, was a Liverpool gold and silversmith. In 1852, he opened his own museum of Egyptian antiquities in Colquitt Street, Liverpool. By 1867, when he gave his collection to the recently founded Liverpool Museum, it totalled 15,000 objects including Anglo-Saxon antiquities, ivories, gems and early metalwork.<sup>156</sup> In the late 1850s Mayer moved to Bebington, at the same time that Thomas Arthur Hope and his family also moved into the village. He immediately became an active benefactor of the local community, introducing gas and water services, founding recreational clubs, a horticultural society and allotments. He established a library, public park and lecture hall, forming the Mayer Trust in 1878 to manage these after his death. Nearly forty years later, Thomas and Mary Greg pursued a similar programme in Westmill. They renovated tenants' housing, built new cottages, expanded the local school and established a new village hall (Figs.6.16-17). The hall was intended, in the fullness of time, to house a lending library, provide courses and lectures in handicrafts, and host concerts, readings and amateur theatricals.<sup>157</sup> In 1920, on Thomas Greg's death, Mrs Greg set up the T. and M. Greg Trust to ensure the future maintenance of tenanted properties, the village hall, playing field and allotments.

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<sup>155</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, *Catalogue of a Collection of Brass Tobacco Boxes 1760-1780* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1923) p.7.

<sup>156</sup> See Lionel Burman, 'Joseph Mayer and the Progress of 'The Art Pottery'', in Pat Starkey (ed.), *Riches into Art: Liverpool Collectors 1770-1880* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, Liverpool Historical Essays No.8, 1993) pp.27-44.

<sup>157</sup> Greg, ref.2, p.90.





**Figure 6.16: Hope Cottages, Westmill, built in 1911. Owned by the Guild of St George and administered by the T. and M. Greg Trust.**



**Figure 6.17: Westmill Village Hall, barn conversion by architect Charles Spooner, 1901. Owned by the Guild of St George and administered by the T. and M. Greg Trust.**



## Treasuring things of the least

In 1922, Mrs Greg also established a small museum in the village, comprising collections of rural implements and local domestic objects (Figs.6.18-19). A modest catalogue describes it as ‘a shrine to the memory of Men of Little Showing’, established in memory of Thomas Greg by his widow and ‘help-meet’.<sup>158</sup> Its aim was to preserve those elements of rural life that were seen to be disappearing with the spread of industrialisation. Bridget Yates’s PhD thesis on volunteer-run village museums includes Westmill Museum in its survey, drawing on further Greg letters held by Gloucestershire Archives.<sup>159</sup> Among the papers of Miss Eleanor Adlard, Honorary Secretary of the Winchcombe Church Parvise Museum, there are several letters from Mrs Greg, in response to a short piece written by Adlard for *The Times* in 1929. Reacting to the findings of the *Final Report of the Royal Commission of the National Museums and Galleries*, Adlard stressed the equal importance of ‘small, parochial’ museums,<sup>160</sup> in order to preserve fast-disappearing aspects of rural life. Mrs Greg immediately sent Miss Adlard a supporting letter along with a copy of the Westmill catalogue. On receiving a reply, she wrote again:

Your letter gives me great pleasure - it is so good to meet with anyone who is so keen on what one is so deeply interested in oneself & I feel the work of treasuring things of the least is most important.<sup>161</sup>

Again the phraseology is noticeably Ruskinian, bearing comparison with Ruskin’s 1880 assertion that in a museum, ‘the least things are to be there—and the greatest – but all good’.<sup>162</sup> Going further, Mrs Greg advised Miss Adlard to ensure that she did not neglect ‘lesser finds’ in favour of more glamorous or grand donations, explaining in relation to Westmill that, ‘you will notice in our catalogue that many things do not seem worth having – but I felt that we ought not to refuse anyone who offered their treasures’.<sup>163</sup> Such sentiment and vocabulary also informed her response to gifts such as those offered by Miss Tattersall and Mr Carrington for the dolls and dolls’ houses collection in Manchester.<sup>164</sup> Goodness for Mrs Greg, it would seem, was not so much in the design or finish or material of the thing, which may on the face

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<sup>158</sup> *Westmill Museum* (Westmill: T. and M. Greg Trust, 1924), unpaginated. A copy is held in the Ashwell Village Museum, accession number 1935.7.5.

<sup>159</sup> Bridget Yates, *Volunteer-run Museums in English Market Towns and Villages*, unpublished PhD (Cheltenham: University of Gloucestershire, 2010).

<sup>160</sup> Eleanor Adlard, letter to *The Times*, 14 October 1929, p.10.

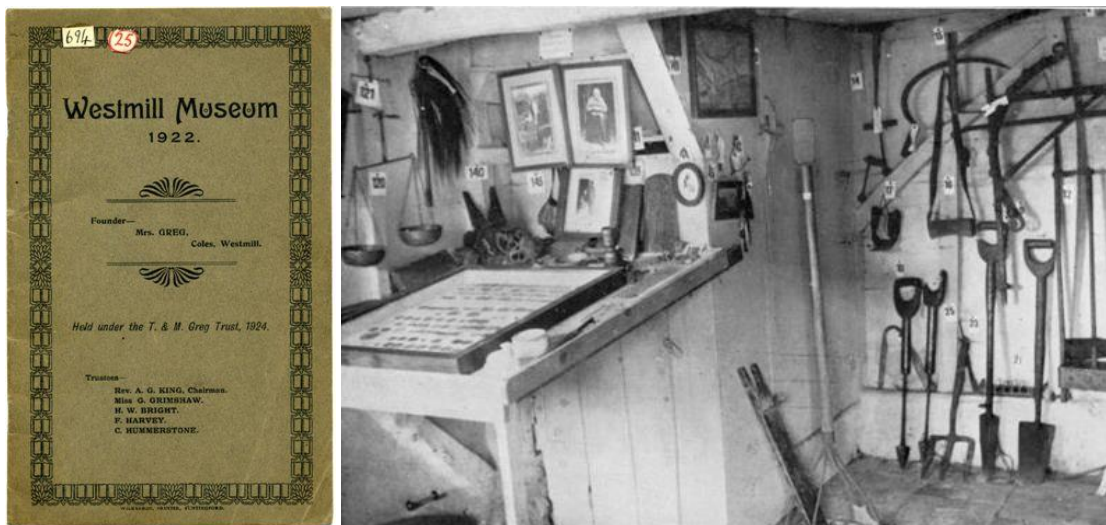
<sup>161</sup> Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3. Letter from Mrs Greg to Miss Adlard, 20 October 1929.

<sup>162</sup> Ruskin, ref.56, *Works*, 34, p.260.

<sup>163</sup> Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3. Letter from Mrs Greg to Miss Adlard, 20 October 1929. For more information about the Westmill and Winchcombe Museums see Yates, ref.160.

<sup>164</sup> See Chapter Five, p.188.

of it seem poor and worthless, but in the treasuring, the emotional investment that had been poured into it.



Figures 6.18-6.19: Catalogue and photograph of the Westmill Museum, c.1924.

The notion of ‘things of the least’ as a kind of treasure also runs through Mrs Greg’s nature diaries in their focus on the incidental details of day-to-day seasonal change. It is there too in the range of poems, proverbs and other sayings she collected. The front page of the first volume, along with Ruskin’s ‘great entail’ quote, also includes an extract from the poem ‘Across the Moon the Fog Lies Fair’ by Romantic Canadian poet Charles Robert (1860-1943):

Make thou my vision sane and clear  
That I may see what beauty clings  
In common forms, & find the soul  
Of unregarded things!<sup>165</sup>

Ten years later another poem develops this theme further. Mrs Greg’s diary entries by this time had become more sporadic, with months and even years between each one. But a single entry for June 1914, the first in over six years, draws on Wordsworth to articulate a kind of ecstatic revelation in nature, notwithstanding her failure to keep the diary going,

...not because I care less for what I see and learn – in this world so full of beauty and interest but because I have not the same leisure or strength to go about in the sweet wild places – my joy in it all is indeed far deeper, more reverent, more spiritual – for “I have felt a presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated

<sup>165</sup> Mrs Greg’s nature diary, ref.135, volume 1, unpaginated. Final verse from Charles G. D. Roberts, ‘Across the Moon the Fog Lies Fair’, *Songs of the Common Day, And Ave!: An Ode for the Shelley Centenary* (Toronto: Longmans, 1893) p.1.

thoughts” as I look at the sky and stars and sun and moon, birds, flowers, trees, everything!<sup>166</sup>

Included with this entry is the full transcript of a recently published poem, ‘Immanence’, by the Christian mystic Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941).<sup>167</sup> The poem articulates a theme that seems to underpin much of Mrs Greg’s philosophy in its refrain:

I come in the little things,  
Saith the Lord :

It speaks a narrative of home, through repeated architectural metaphors for the human heart – porch, threshold, lintel – and draws a parallel with nature in the imagery of the nest. It finds God not in the grand gesture but in the everyday – more particularly in the harmony between humanity and the natural world – and can be read as a paean to both the English countryside and the patterns of daily life, threatened not just by industrialisation but by the shadow of war.

The poem’s use of ‘things’ as a way into spiritual revelation is suggestive of Mrs Greg’s attitudes to material and spiritual worlds. She was born into a family of Baptists, married a Unitarian and, after his death, served for a time as church warden at St Mary’s (Anglican) Church in Westmill. If she did attend Winnington Hall, it would have brought her into contact with a range of religious perspectives, as it did Ruskin who went through his own religious crisis during this period. More significantly it would have introduced her to educational ideas founded in Nonconformist attitudes towards faith as the achievement of human potential rather than atonement for original sin. Pestalozzi’s ‘head, hand and heart’ philosophy, which became the cornerstone of progressive education in the later nineteenth century, led him to develop the model of the ‘object lesson’, which aimed to stimulate natural curiosity through hands-on investigation and observation of the material world. He pioneered a theory of learning from experience – the collection and absorption of external sense experiences that would yield internal understanding and knowledge.<sup>168</sup> Encouraging children to keep a nature notebook became a standard feature of such education, and it is worth noting that the second volume of Mrs Greg’s nature diaries is not a plain notebook (as is the first), but a school

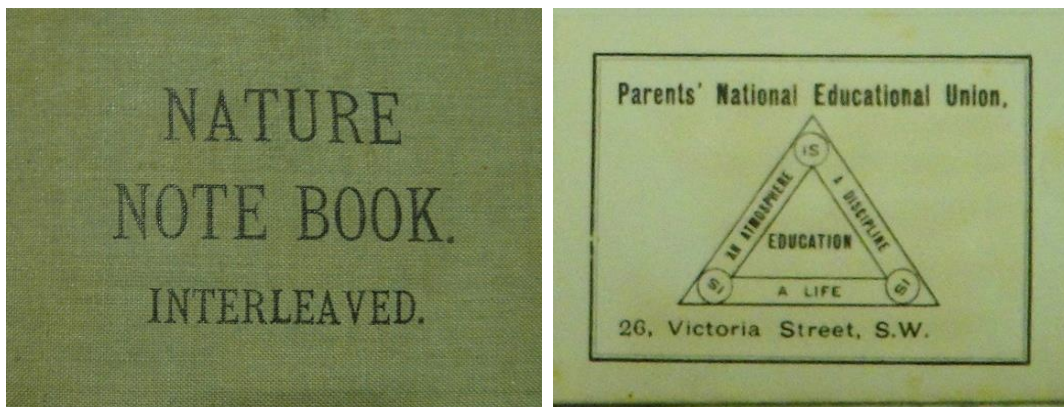
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<sup>166</sup> Mrs Greg’s nature diary, ref.135, volume 2, June 1914, p.97.

<sup>167</sup> Evelyn Underhill, ‘Immanence’, in Evelyn Underhill, *Immanence: A Book of Verses* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1912) pp.1-2.

<sup>168</sup> Laubach and Smith, ref.88.

exercise book produced for the Parents' National Educational Union (PNEU), an organisation that promoted a Pestalozzian learning model (Figs.6.20-21).<sup>169</sup>



Figures 6.20-6.21: Mrs Greg's nature diary, Vol. 2 (details). Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG04941.

In 1927 Mrs Greg left Westmill for a flat in West London; Thomas Greg's will had stipulated the sale of the estate, and anyway, as she wrote to William Batho, 'I had for some time found living there too much of a burden and so lonely'.<sup>170</sup> Thus, much of the material given for the new displays at Platt Hall in 1927 came from the family home she was in the process of dismantling. In London she continued to devote her time to museums, primarily Manchester, Bethnal Green and latterly Liverpool, where she gave a collection of dolls and dolls' houses to establish a Children's Corner.<sup>171</sup> The death of her sister Rebekah in 1924 had been 'a great blow',<sup>172</sup> and in 1928 her surviving sister, Harriet, moved into the neighbouring flat in her Kensington block. Harriet died in 1937; Mrs Greg remained in London until the outbreak of war, giving up her flat in 1941. For the remaining eight years of her life, she lived with family members, for a while in Chester and latterly in Sedgley, in the West Midlands. She died in September 1949, six months before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Manchester's Deputy Curator, S. D. Cleveland, wrote to her assistant Miss Tranter, recollecting her many visits and her long commitment to the Galleries' work:

<sup>169</sup> The PNEU was founded in 1887 by Charlotte Mason (1842-1923). In 1892, she established a women's training college, and the Parents' Union School. Its curriculum included the keeping of a nature note book, in which observations were recorded. See Aimee Natal, 'Charlotte Mason: education, atmosphere, habit and living ideas', *infed* (London: YMCA George Williams College, 2000), <http://infed.org/mobi/charlotte-mason-education-atmosphere-habit-and-living-ideas/> [accessed 29 January 2015]; Miss O'Ferrell, 'The Work and Aims of the Parents' Union School', *The Parents' Review*, 33 (11) (1922) pp.777-787.

<sup>170</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 19 December 1927, MCG Archive.

<sup>171</sup> National Museums Liverpool, accession numbers 1930-1947.10.

<sup>172</sup> Letter from Frank Ollerenshaw to Mr Batho, 1 October 1924, MCG Archive.

Her vitality was remarkable and her manner most gracious. Her death certainly severs a link with a more leisurely but perhaps in many respects a more satisfying period.<sup>173</sup>

Mrs Greg's ashes were returned to Westmill, and interred with those of her husband at St Mary's Church.

## Conclusion

Much of the evidence for Mrs Greg's life is circumstantial, based on glimpses, oblique references and inferences taken from personal documents. The narrative developed in this chapter is thus necessarily speculative. Diaries and letters often form the basis of the history of women's lives, and it has been argued that this has contributed to an overemphasis on female interiority.<sup>174</sup> However, what emerges from Mary Greg's diaries and letters is an active and outward looking fascination with the world, and a desire to engage with others. The woman who involved herself enthusiastically with Manchester City Art Galleries and a host of other institutions from 1920 comes across as practical and forward-looking, negotiating the shifting boundaries of public and private life, gender- and class-based social propriety, as best she could. Susan Pearce suggests that '[b]ereavement is [a] period in life when collecting sometimes seems to be important, particularly if the collection bears some relationship to the dead person, and can be seen as a way of continuing to respond to that person'.<sup>175</sup> Evidence suggests that Thomas and Mary Greg enjoyed a marriage of genuine companionship. Managing her husband's legacy may have offered Mrs Greg a source of consolation in loss; it certainly gave her a sense of purpose in her own right, possibly for the first time in her life. Barbara Caine argues that old age, for Victorian women, was the one period of life that lacked clear dimension or expectation. Consequently, she suggests, it may also have offered them new possibilities, particularly when accompanied by financial independence.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, Dianne Sachko Macleod cites critic Charles de Kay's 1885 observation about American art collector Mary Sexton Morgan: 'a strong passion seldom arises in old age unless circumstances have thwarted it earlier'.<sup>177</sup> The Ruskin and Brooke letters of 1879 suggest that at least one of the Hope sisters was struggling to find a sense of purpose in a world of restricted possibility for unmarried middle-class women. Both Rebekah and Mary later made marriages that by

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<sup>173</sup> Letter from Mr Cleveland to Miss Tranter, 4 October 1949, MCG Archive.

<sup>174</sup> Steedman, ref.5, pp.163-166.

<sup>175</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995) p.238.

<sup>176</sup> Caine, ref.9, p.185.

<sup>177</sup> Macleod, ref.7, p.48.

contemporary standards were somewhat unconventional, but which appear to have brought them some satisfaction.

Macleod argues that Morgan 'found comfort in playing with her art treasures as she struggled to make the transition from dutiful wife to independent widow'. She suggests that consolation for many women was to be found in the 'spontaneous interactions with enchanted objects in the privacy of their homes before gathering the courage to move outward into the cultural arena'.<sup>178</sup> Mrs Greg, however, seems to have taken solace in giving things away rather than keeping them close. To date, 32 museums, galleries and societies have been identified as being recipients of gifts from Mrs Greg; there may be more. Furthermore, the role of dutiful wife and widow seems to have enabled her to embrace independence. She played not in the privacy of her own home, but through the formation of new collecting relationships, primarily with William Batho and Arthur Sabin. Such relationships arguably replaced to some extent that which she had previously enjoyed with her husband, but with a subtle shift in the balance of power. If, as this chapter suggests, during her married life she operated as a private influence, 'behind-the-scenes' of her husband's more public profile, after his death she established a more dominant role as collector in her own right. However, it was one in which negotiation and persuasion, in this case with the professional world of the institution, was still an important strategy.

Given her particular focus on children and childhood after Thomas Greg's death, it is hard to avoid the fact that Mary Greg was a woman who did not have children of her own, in a period when motherhood was the primary role to which women were expected to aspire. She was 45 when she married, not necessarily beyond child-bearing age, but nearing it. Instead, however, she appears to have sought out ways of enacting a kind of social motherhood, through philanthropic interests. 'A Plague of Fresh Air' suggests Mrs Greg's possible awareness of developments in public health, in which women played an increasingly prominent role as health visitors.<sup>179</sup> Steedman notes the association of good hygiene with traditions of women's work; 'the movement for social hygiene...made overt connections between women's abilities to tidy up a house and to tidy up a society'.<sup>180</sup> Ruskin, too, based much of his political theory

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<sup>178</sup> Macleod, ref.7, pp.49-50.

<sup>179</sup> B.P. Bergman and S.A.StJ. Miller, 'Historical perspectives on health: The Parkes Museum of Hygiene and The Sanitary Institute', *The Journal of The Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 123 (1) (2003) pp.55-61.

<sup>180</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan 1860-1931* (London: Virago Press, 1990) p.134.



on the model of the household in which women were the 'true economists'.<sup>181</sup> Mrs Greg's nature notebook also suggests an association with the Parents National Educational Union, and the idea for the development of the dolls and dolls' houses collection appears to have originated in her connection with the Much Hadham Children's Home.

The evidence for Mrs Greg's life suggests she negotiated the challenges of upper-middle-class Victorian/Edwardian womanhood with varying degrees of success. As Barbara Caine notes of the Potter sisters, she did not overtly challenge contemporary expectations of her class and gender. There is no mention in any of the Greg correspondence of the question of suffrage, for example, although she was not above political commentary, lamenting to Mr Batho in November 1922 on the outcome of the General Election 'Alas! For England!'.<sup>182</sup> Instead, she appears to have worked strategically within such bounds. As a Ruskinian, she may have followed the model he offered in *Sesame and Lilies*, of the wife as guide and counsellor to her husband.<sup>183</sup> However, this did not necessarily endear her to all, in particular her in-laws. *From Smuggling to Cotton Kings: The Greg Story*, written and published by Greg descendent Michael Janes in 2010, includes a brief reference to Mrs Greg, based on received family wisdom:

Shortly before his death in 1920 he [Thomas Greg] was persuaded by his wife, Mary, to leave everything to her in absolute ownership. She then quickly abandoned Westmill for London's West End, and in 1925 Coles Park and its contents were auctioned off. Greg relatives were reduced to bidding against members of the public for treasures collected by their forebears. Three years later, the house was destroyed by fire.<sup>184</sup>

It suggests tensions between Mrs Greg and the wider Greg family that are also implied by instructions in her will regarding the eventual dispersal of her own estate.<sup>185</sup> Family history in this case is incorrect, however, as the sale of the estate was a stipulation of Thomas Greg's will, with much of the proceeds going to his brother Edward Hyde Greg.<sup>186</sup> Nonetheless, the

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<sup>181</sup> Eagles, ref.45, p.30.

<sup>182</sup> Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 19 November 1922, MCG Archive.

<sup>183</sup> Ruskin, ref.92, pp.134-135.

<sup>184</sup> Michael Janes, *From Smuggling to Cotton Kings: The Greg Story* (Cirencester: Memoirs Publishing, 2010), pp.105-6. See also Michael Janes, emails to Liz Mitchell, January to August 2013.

<sup>185</sup> Mary Hope Greg, d. 15 September 1949 (Probate 6 January 1950), Last Will and Testament, London Probate Registry. See England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1950, p.784. Section 11.3 reads 'I wish it to be clearly understood that my late husband having made monetary and other bequests to the Greg family as he thought fit and adequate left me full and absolute discretion as to the disposal of his possessions and therefore I trust that no member of that family will consider my bequests unjust'.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, d.18 September 1920 (Probate 7 December 1920), Last Will and Testament with codicil, London Probate Registry, Folio Number 2023. See England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1950, p.784.

estate (which had been in the family for 130 years) and much of its contents were sold by public auction, a fact which caused resentment among family members.

Mrs Greg's belief in the personal and spiritual growth to be found in paying close attention to the small things of life adds another dimension to her varied gifts to Manchester City Art Galleries and beyond. Her collections may embody a certain nostalgia for the past, but her motivation seems to have been to inspire the present and the future. Although keen to preserve disappearing traditions, she was not overtly anti-progress, as her enthusiasm for new theories of health and hygiene demonstrate. Her will, written in 1946, includes a donation to the London Homeopathic Hospital, as well as small bequests to a range of charitable and educational organisations including the Pontypool Educational Settlement, the Governesses Benevolent Institution and Oxford University's 'Societies of Women Students'.

During her lifetime, Mrs Greg appears to have been more comfortable 'behind the scenes', initially of her husband's overt public profile as a collector, and latterly of the public life of the Galleries. However, as the following chapter shows, the renewed interest in her collections at the beginning of the twenty-first century brought her to attention in her own right for the first time.



Figure 6.22: Valentine's card, "To thee my heart beats with affection sincerely" (1937.352) (detail)


★1-ACCESSION N° 1922.534		ITEM <b>Game</b>	★2-TYPE <b>GAME</b>	
APPEARANCE				
				
DESCRIPTION				
Alphabetical counters made of bone in a cylindrical case. The case has a moulded lid and contains 20 counters. Each round counter is carved with a capital letter on one side and the same letter in lower case on the reverse. The letters are coloured green. The lid is carved with 'ABC' and star shapes.				
★3-DATE Not known	★5-MATERIAL Animal material, bone	★ S C O R E S	1-ACCESSION N°	2
★4-SIZE 4cm	★6-TECHNIQUE Moulding (handmade)		2-TYPE	7
VALUE			3-DATE	3
			4-SIZE	10
			5-MATERIAL	8
			6-TECHNIQUE	9

Figure 7.1: Prototype for a Mary Greg Collection 'Top Trumps' game exploring different modes of value, designed by Jonathan Hitchens with Sharon Blakey (MSA), 2009.

## Everyday things in the art museum: The Mary Greg Collection

*'This is a troublesome box.'*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This chapter considers the Mary Greg Collection: the body of objects that emerged as both an idea and its material manifestation at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Previous chapters consider what the collection has been; this chapter considers what it has become. It follows the ways in which, like the Greg collections that preceded it, the Mary Greg Collection has evolved, in terms of how it is understood both by the institution that houses it and by those who have taken an interest in it. It thus moves from the Gallery of Craft & Design in 2002, to the profession-wide development of collections rationalisation, and the creative explorations of the project *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* that followed, to this research and its 're-collecting' of the collection. Previous chapters have reconstructed for the first time the historical trajectories of the Greg collections. I have considered the attitudes and motivations of the key protagonists who shaped them; their presentation and reception within Manchester City Art Galleries during the interwar period; and their subsequent dispersal and/or re-configuration within a changing institution. This chapter considers the Mary Greg Collection as the material remains of these past relationships and events, and the ways in which they resonate with contemporary interests and attitudes. It thus draws on my own curatorial experience and that of colleagues as well as historical and theoretical sources.

In *Museums and the Future of Collecting*, Simon Knell observes that '[t]hings from the past only ever exist in the present...They are not pieces of the past as such, but pieces of the present which have a past'.<sup>2</sup> I am often struck, however, when looking at objects in museum displays, by how that past is pinpointed to one particular moment: a 'then' against which to balance the 'now'. It is as if the time in between never happened, as one is invited to take an imaginative leap, to bridge anything from two to two million years in a single step. But what of the impact of that 'in between' that links these moments? The slow accumulation of time when a thing was used on a daily basis, so commonplace it became invisible; or was coveted and caressed, passed from person to person as a precious gift; or lay undisturbed, hidden in a cupboard or

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<sup>1</sup> From my notebook, in the attic store at Platt Hall, Friday 21 November 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Simon J. Knell (ed.), *Museums and the Future of Collecting* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004 [1999]) pp.32-33.

buried underground; or was simply forgotten, misplaced, stolen or damaged. This is not just Walter Benjamin's 'aura', 'the essence of all that is transmissible from its [the object's] beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to the history which it has experienced'.<sup>3</sup> It is also Dan Hicks' 'silting up of a ditch',<sup>4</sup> the slow accumulation of events that may not in themselves be identifiably 'meaningful', but which impact on later understanding. Poet and novelist Anne Michaels expresses the impact of incremental change that occurs quietly, unnoticed over time, in geological terms, when she asks 'at what moment does wood become stone, peat become coal, limestone become marble? The gradual instant'.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of the museum, Stephen Greenblatt observes that 'cultural artifacts do not stay still...they exist in time, and...they are bound up with personal and institutional conflicts, negotiations and appropriations'.<sup>6</sup> The traces of conflict, negotiation and appropriation, both direct and indirect, within and without the museum, may be regarded as sedimented in the object in time and space. As Knell similarly observes, 'just as the museum makes the past its subject, its collections inevitably become the past's product'.<sup>7</sup> Previous chapters have shown that the Mary Greg Collection is not a body of objects assembled in private and transferred in one decisive fixing moment into public ownership. It evolved over a period of time through negotiation and compromise in response to changing individual and institutional circumstances. Its meaning is embedded in the institution that houses it. How this is manifest, and what one makes of it, however, is another matter. As Susan Stewart asks, '[i]n *talking* of an object's qualities do we *form* an object's qualities?'.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the transformation of the earlier Greg collections into a single body of things may be seen as an example of precisely this; the Mary Greg Collection appeared at the beginning of the twenty-first century as a discursive rather than a physical entity.

Greg Noble proposes a similarly cumulative model of subjectivity, in terms of the 'density of lived experience', a kind of accumulated 'thickness...embodied in and between subjects and

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin [trans. Harry Zohn], 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003 [1936]) p.521.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Two, p.34. Dan Hicks, 'The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect', in Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) p.82.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997) p.140.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 43 (4) (1990) p.11.

<sup>7</sup> Knell, ref.2, p.32.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Stewart, 'Prologue: From the Museum of Touch', in Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley (eds.), *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (London: Berg, 1999) p.18 [original emphasis].



their objects and practices'.<sup>9</sup> Meaning may thus be seen to be generated in the coming together of such 'densities'; as Henri Bergson suggested in 1908, 'there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience'.<sup>10</sup> Such ideas may be useful in reflecting on how the Greg collections were perceived and understood when they were first acquired, as already 'old things', during the 1920s. As previous chapters have suggested, they offered the consolation of continuity in the face of change. Or perhaps more precisely, the consolation of change itself as 'steadfast'<sup>11</sup> – slow, incremental and dependable, rather than dramatic, unpredictable and devastating. Nearly a century later, the old things are older still; they themselves have changed, both in the museum and with the museum.

### **'Things in the museum grow old'<sup>12</sup>**

Museums, it has been said, were invented 'to capture and keep against a background of change' but 'not to change'.<sup>13</sup> However, as historians and theorists have increasingly argued, the museum's repeated attempts to classify and order the world, to create 'a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages',<sup>14</sup> have continually fallen short. Many of the arguments made at the start of the twenty-first century – in relation to the perceived lack of discrimination in past collecting, the existence of redundant, obsolete or excessive collections, their relevance to a contemporary audience, and the problem of what to do with it all – bear marked similarities to those made nearly a century earlier by Lawrence Haward, and before that, in the nineteenth century by Thomas Greenwood.<sup>15</sup> Since their inception, museums have continually re-ordered, re-classified and reassigned significance and meaning to material things, as contextual knowledge and understanding has changed. This brings unintended consequences, as elements that do not fit the new order fall from grace. Such material must then either be re-integrated according to new interpretations, or put out of sight to prevent it threatening the efficacy of the new order. For as Mary Douglas suggests, things which are 'out of place' but which retain a recognisable trace of past origins undermine

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<sup>9</sup> Greg Noble, 'Accumulating being', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7 (2) (2004) p.234.

<sup>10</sup> Henri Bergson, cited in Susan Stewart, ref.8, p.17.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter Three, p.111. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Penguin, 1964 [1927]) p.144.

<sup>12</sup> Knell, ref.2, p.32.

<sup>13</sup> Knell, ref.2, p.14 [original emphasis].

<sup>14</sup> Barbara J. Black, *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p.26.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter Three, pp.80-82.

the status quo, for 'their half-identity still clings to them and the clarity of the scene in which they obtrude is impaired by their presence'.<sup>16</sup>

The emergence of the Mary Greg Collection as a distinct entity coincided with a period of both renewal for Manchester City Galleries, and of re-evaluation for museum practice more widely. The 2002 Gallery of Craft & Design marked a shift in perspective set in train by the institution's redevelopment and, as part of that redevelopment, a desire to reflect on its own past. When Manchester City Art Gallery closed for refurbishment in 1998, the Greg collections had been in storage for several years. The Thomas Greg Collection had been taken off display in the early 1990s to make room for a wider thematic selection from the decorative art collections; the rest of the Greg material had not been publicly shown since the dismantling of the dolls' house display at Queens Park in 1984. However, in 2002, selected objects from the Greg collections were presented in the section of the Craft & Design Gallery that considered institutional history, as two of seven case studies that included both private and institutional collections (Figs.7.2-3).

The emphasis of the display was on past collecting practices rather than on the individual histories or aesthetic qualities of the things themselves. The collections were thus presented in the company of other bodies of things assembled as discrete collections and titled by name: the Thomas Horsfall Collection (ceramics, glass and metalwork, acquired in 1918), the Industrial Art Collection (ceramics, glass, furniture and textiles, collected during the 1930s), the Harold Raby Collection (enamels, given in 1958), the Mr and Mrs Edgar Assheton-Bennett Collection, (silver, given in 1979), and the ongoing Arts Council-funded Special Collections Scheme (furniture and lighting). The gallery thus presented a tidy snapshot of the decorative art collections as a timeline of discrete bodies of things, celebrating the character of Manchester's collections as formed through the partnership of institution and private patron. Each selection was consolidated around a single figure or institutional initiative, a necessary and pragmatic shorthand for the purposes of display. Some of these were more historically accurate than others; the Thomas Horsfall Collection, for example, was not, strictly speaking, a private collection given by one individual, but a group of objects from the Manchester Art Museum that had been transferred to Galleries' management in 1918.

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<sup>16</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966) p.160.



Figures 7.2-7.3: Gallery of Craft & Design, Manchester Art Gallery, 2002-2014.

As one of Manchester's acknowledged highlights, there was never any doubt that the Thomas Greg Collection would be one of these case studies. Presenting the pottery in terms of a sole collector and a coherent collecting agenda was relatively easy, arguably the summation of a process that had begun in 1907 with the publication of Greg's *History of English Pottery*.<sup>17</sup> His story of the development of pottery manufacture in Britain aligned a pioneering spirit of invention over 500 years with the sale room adventures of the questing collector, still hunting for the elusive treasure that would complete the set. This was further consolidated in 1969 by Michael Parkinson's account of the collection as the sole achievement of a collector of 'great knowledge, discernment and enthusiasm'.<sup>18</sup> There was no such prior narrative for Mary Greg. As this thesis has demonstrated, during the period of her involvement with the Galleries Mary Greg remained very much 'behind-the-scenes', assembling, managing and distributing large and small groups of objects to multiple museums, but with no accompanying account offered of herself as their collector. There was not the same kind of linear narrative to either the handicrafts or dolls' houses collections with which to connect a single authorial voice, and as indicated in previous chapters, the occasions when this opportunity did present itself – the writing of a preface to each collection catalogue – made her uncomfortable. However, the presentational framework of the 2002 display, the pre-existing identity of the Thomas Greg Collection, and a desire to include the Galleries' only significant female collector (in terms of quantity at least) led to the accompanying display of what has since become known as the Mary Greg Collection.

Two years later, academic and profession-wide debates on the sustainability of museums and collecting offered another perspective on historic collections. Simon Knell's provocative introduction to *Museums and the Future of Collecting* argued that, with the postmodern dismantling of concepts of knowledge and truth, museums were in danger of replacing 'knowledge value' with a generic and fetishistic 'oldness value', in which the museum collection of the past becomes self-perpetuating: it is in the museum because it was valuable, it is valuable because it has been in the museum a long time.<sup>19</sup> In an age of scarce resources and competitive funding, however, oldness alone should not be regarded as sufficient to justify the object's continued preservation. Thus Knell addressed another central orthodoxy of the museum: the preservation of material things 'in perpetuity'.<sup>20</sup> For an institution that wishes to

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Tylston Greg, *A Contribution to the History of English Pottery with Special Reference to the Greg Collection* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1907).

<sup>18</sup> Michael Parkinson, *The Incomparable Art* (Manchester: City Art Gallery, 1969), pp.3-4.

<sup>19</sup> Knell, ref.2, pp.32, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Knell, ref.2, pp.15-17.

continue acquiring new material, this is inherently problematic, for if you keep everything, you will eventually run out of space. And anyway, as with notions of order and knowledge, a look back at the history of museums demonstrates that they are not as good at preservation in perpetuity as they purport to be.

The following year, the Museums Association published the findings of its inquiry into the state of British museum collections. *Collections for the Future* found that, in spite of collections ostensibly being ‘at the heart of museums’,<sup>21</sup> they were fundamentally underused, under-resourced, poorly understood and expensive to maintain. Substantial amounts of collections material had been in long-term storage for years, curatorial expertise had eroded, and supporting information was inconsistent at best, absent at worst. Jane Glaister, chair of the inquiry steering group, put it in blunt economic terms, asking ‘what business would allow up to 80 per cent of its assets to go unused, while continuing to consume significant resources?’.<sup>22</sup> *Collections for the Future* marked a significant shift in museum philosophy. It replaced preservation in perpetuity with the concept of ‘the dynamic collection’: one which is continually reviewed and refined on the basis of contemporary relevance and fitness for purpose. Managed disposal, along with loans, transfer and open storage, was proposed as an integral part of responsible and ethical collections management in an environment of social and financial accountability. ‘Intelligent stewardship’, Glaister argued, ‘does not mean clinging on to everything unthinkingly’.<sup>23</sup> Rationalisation, the assessment of existing collections in terms of their relevance, accessibility and usefulness to the institution, became a core part of collections management policy; it is now a requirement of the UK Accreditation Standard.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Helen Wilkinson, *Collections for the Future: Report of a Museums Association Enquiry* (London: Museums Association, 2005), p.10.

<sup>22</sup> Wilkinson, ref.21, p.9.

<sup>23</sup> Wilkinson, ref.21, p.9.

<sup>24</sup> Arts Council England, *Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom: Accreditation Standard*, October 2011, [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Accreditation\\_standard.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Accreditation_standard.pdf) [accessed 13 September 2017].





Figures 7.4-7.5: Dolls' houses in storage at Queens Park, 2017.





Figure 7.6: Dolls' house interior, Queens Park, 2017.

In this context, the Mary Greg Collection looked rather different. The Gallery of Craft & Design display was only a tiny selection from a substantial body of things that had been in 'secondary' storage for many years. Its inclusion in the display had been in part due to its apparently idiosyncratic nature, the counterpoint it provided to other models of collecting, most obviously that of the 'scholarly' Thomas Greg. It had distinct curiosity value; the Georgian dolls' house and the taxidermy Frog House were actually among the Gallery's most popular exhibits. But the smallness of much of its content had proved challenging to display; there was very little supporting information to inform interpretation of individual objects and no curatorial expertise in this area; and much of it was in poor physical condition, in part due to inappropriate previous storage (Figs.7.4-6). Some objects, such as clothing, had been displaced over time by 'better' examples of type (i.e. in better condition and with documented provenance), while others had been de-accessioned and destroyed, probably because of physical deterioration. Other aspects of it occupied questionable status in terms of their identity as 'art'. As *Up Close* demonstrates, the re-branded public image of Manchester City Galleries focused exclusively on a history of art and design as framed by the city centre Art Gallery displays.<sup>25</sup> The wider collections, and the branch galleries in which they had traditionally been shown (including Platt Hall and the costume collection), were no longer part of this core identity. It was thus suggested that, while those parts of the collection that made sense in the context of the Galleries' new identity and were in good physical condition might be kept, much of the rest could be disposed of. The integrity of the collection as a single body of things, which had only emerged two years previously, was already in question.

The Mary Greg Collection represented a series of contradictions: a coherent collection united by its collector but also a disparate body of things of varying relevance; one of seven key moments in the history of the decorative art collections but also 'not-really-art'; celebrated in the Gallery of Craft & Design but also on the 'at risk' register of potential disposals. It occupied a kind of institutional limbo, part of the residual 'old' City Art Galleries, with its diverse collections and premises, only partially rehabilitated within the 'new' Manchester Art Gallery through the Gallery of Craft & Design. It was this very 'half-identity' that made it interesting to artists Sharon Blakey and Hazel Jones.

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Howard, *Up Close: A Guide to Manchester Art Gallery* (London: Scala Publishers, 2002).

## Artists in the art museum

The artist's intervention is a well-established interpretive practice in museums. Regarded as an effective way of reaching new audiences, or reanimating the moribund, especially when the artist has a high public profile, such projects can generate substantial popular appeal.<sup>26</sup> It became particularly popular during the 1990s, coinciding with a wider theorizing of the museum that increasingly challenged its supposed neutrality as producer of objective knowledge.<sup>27</sup> Art practice as institutional critique goes back to the 1960s, and the conscious rejection of the art gallery and its power structures by artists such as Marcel Broodthaers and Daniel Buren.<sup>28</sup> The intervention, however, works on the basis of interaction with the institution. From Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* of 1992 to Mark Dion's multiple projects of the early 2000s,<sup>29</sup> museums have increasingly invited artists to act as 'agents of change'<sup>30</sup> on their behalf, drawing attention to the knowledge structures and values of classification, unsettling received wisdoms, and exploring the very processes of 'musealisation' that curators may no longer even 'see'.<sup>31</sup> The curatorial projects of artists in the museum often invoke, directly or indirectly, the model of the *wunderkammer*, playing with the serendipity and caprice of unexpected combination, the rational and the irrational, juxtaposing and collaging those things which occupy uncertain territory on the museum's margins with the more overtly institutionalised mainstream.<sup>32</sup> Unencumbered by institutional accountability and afforded a relatively free hand, the artist is well-placed to shed light on the very processes Ludmilla Jordanova critiques as hidden from view.<sup>33</sup>

This may not always be comfortable, however, for institution, artist or audience. In 2002 Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska were invited to curate one of Manchester's two opening exhibitions. *Free Trade* explored the relationship between financial and cultural capital,

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<sup>26</sup> James Putnam, *Art and Artifact, The Museum as Medium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001) pp.31-32.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe (eds.), *Theorizing Museums: Representing identity and diversity in a changing world* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> See Noralee Frankel, 'Mining the Museum, Fred Wilson: Review', *The Public Historian*, 15 (3) (1993) pp.105-108; Colleen J. Sheehy (ed.), *Cabinet of Curiosities: Mark Dion and the University as Installation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Chris Dorsett, 'Making meaning beyond display', in Sandra H. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) pp.241-242.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter Two, p.23.

<sup>32</sup> Putnam, ref.26, p.132.

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter Two, p.24. Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006) pp.128-9.

interpreting another once-private collection, that of cotton heir George Beatson Blair (1859-1940), in terms of market values, profit and loss.<sup>34</sup> It showed objects in variable physical condition, piled together in the centre of the room, in a manner that caused dismay for some members of staff who felt their professionalism compromised, and difficulties for the artists who felt their vision similarly compromised.<sup>35</sup> Visitors seemed confused as much as intrigued. Such projects may afford the institution space to reflect on its own histories, address controversy and challenge assumptions, but they also incorporate risk – of alienating both colleagues and visitors made to feel too uncomfortable, or conversely of accusations of ‘institutional ventriloquism’, of both inviting and distancing critique by containing it within the parameters of an externally led one-off project.<sup>36</sup>

*Mary Mary Quite Contrary* (2006-2011) was an artist’s intervention in that it invited artists to explore the Mary Greg Collection and respond creatively to it. Like *Free Trade*, it considered questions of value in relation to a particular body of objects. However, it was not a commission; there was no pre-determined output in the form of exhibition or publication. Galleries’ staff were not positioned as facilitators but collaborators, part of a wider group that opened out to include undergraduate students and interested colleagues from both the Art Galleries and Manchester School of Art. It was prompted by curatorial recognition that the collection was not well understood, and that researching it was not a priority in terms of limited staff resource. It was not, however, framed as institutional critique. The project evolved over a five year period, developing a range of outputs along the way, from the blog, [www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk](http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk) (Fig.7.7), to new artworks, to the development of new Galleries and Art School learning programmes. Aspects of this have been analysed and discussed in detail elsewhere and do not need repeating here, beyond their implications for this history of the collection and its shifting status within the museum.<sup>37</sup> From this perspective, it is worth stating that it originated in the realisation that the collection, as it was then understood, had particular affinities with the work of two artist-lecturers at Manchester School of Art. Sharon Blakey and Hazel Jones are both interested in the affective and

<sup>34</sup> Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, *Free Trade* (Manchester: Manchester City Galleries, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Discussion with Ruth Shrigley, Principal Manager: Collections Access, 29 October 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Miranda Stearn, ‘Contemporary Challenges: Artist Interventions in Museums and Galleries Dealing with Challenging Histories’, in Jenny Kidd, Sam Cairns, Alex Drago, Amy Ryall and Miranda Stearn, *Challenging History in the Museum: International Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2016) pp.101-114.

<sup>37</sup> Sharon Blakey and Liz Mitchell, ‘A Question of Value: Rethinking the Mary Greg Collection’ in Amanda Ravetz, Alice Kettle and Helen Felcey (eds.), *Collaboration Through Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) pp.170-185; Myna Trustram, ‘The Little Madnesses of Museums’, in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Little Madnesses: Winnicott, Transitional Phenomena and Cultural Experience* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013) pp.187-201; Alexandra Woodall, *Sensory engagements with objects in art galleries: material interpretation and theological metaphor*, unpublished PhD (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2016).

imaginative potential of everyday things, in particular the disregarded, the obsolete and the broken. Both trained in craft disciplines – Blakey is a ceramicist, Jones works in metal – and thus have particular material sensibilities. And both are collectors for whom collecting and making are intimately interconnected. They offered a different kind of expertise through which to review the collection.

*Mary Mary Quite Contrary* was, like the Gallery of Craft & Design display, celebratory in tone. Like the display, it considered the collection in its institutional context. However, unlike the display, it found value in the very things that museums generally regard as failure – material decay, lack of information, incongruity and duplication, ‘contrariness’. It also followed an unusual methodological route in allowing participants to ‘rummage’ in the stores and see what they found (Figs.7.8-9).<sup>38</sup> In this sense it was, as Myna Trustram has described it, ‘slightly renegade’.<sup>39</sup> Through the different kinds of expertise it brought to bear, and the mode of encounter that it developed, the project offered a different perspective on the collection’s contemporary relevance. Blakey and Jones were interested in the poetic and affective qualities of close encounter with the materiality of the collection rather than its museological data-set. They were comfortable with, indeed desirous of, not knowing precisely what things were before they encountered them. For both artists this was heightened by the collection’s situation *within* the art museum, and thus (whatever the museum itself might think) positioned in some way or other *de facto* as ‘art’. The art museum values aesthetic response in a way that, according to Orna and Pettit at least, other types of museum do not.<sup>40</sup> The context of the Mary Greg Collection in a twenty-first century art museum, rather than a social history museum, prioritises the collection’s aesthetic, emotional, material resonance over its deployment as an illustration of past ways of life. It facilitates a dwelling at the level of the material, a looking ‘at’ rather than ‘through’.<sup>41</sup> Added to this was the fact that any encounter with the collection necessitated going into the store rooms, the spaces in which museum objects are at rest from the narrative structures of exhibition and interpretation.

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<sup>38</sup> See Woodall, ref.37, pp.129-136, for a discussion of the use and implications of this word in the context of the project.

<sup>39</sup> Trustram, ref.37, p.190.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter Two, p.30. Elizabeth Orna and Charles Pettit, *Information Management in Museums* (Aldershot: Gower, 1998) p.vii.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapter Four, p.157. Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) p.149.





Figures 7.7-7.8: *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, project blog homepage; Liz Mitchell (MCG) and Sharon Blakey (MSA) in the stores at Queens Park, 2008.





**Figure 7.9: Object selection during a visit to the collections in storage at Queens Park, 2008.**

Anthony Shelton refers to the museum store as melancholic, in its de-temporalizing of objects 'allowed to return to their ruinous state'.<sup>42</sup> Artists frequently find creative potential in such spaces: Mark Dion refers to the 'surrealistic quality of the back room',<sup>43</sup> Chris Dorsett to 'a reservoir that could be imaginatively 'topped up''.<sup>44</sup> In a recent reflection on our investigations of the collection, Blakey described the parallels she found between the museum store and the maker's workshop, the feeling both places give her of 'being engulfed within an intimate expansion of time' and consequently her growing sense of 'the store as an inherently creative place', a place of 'material on the brink of happening'.<sup>45</sup> Museum store rooms, I suggest in the same essay, are spaces of heightened physical self-awareness; in the stores one must act slowly and carefully, handle appropriately, in order to minimise risk of damage or accident. Attention to the material constitution and vulnerability of things is matched by the absence of explanatory information about them. They are simply there, in this place of preservation, under lock and key.<sup>46</sup> The quality of the museum store encounter is thus the opposite of that set up by the public exhibition. As *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* found, it changes the way things are understood.

Alongside exploration of the material collection in store, *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* also marked the start of historical research into its collector. In an unintentional parallel with interwar histories of everyday material culture by the likes of Marjorie Quennell and Dorothy Hartley,<sup>47</sup> the first historians of the Mary Greg Collection were artists and curators. The project brought into play for the first time the Greg correspondence, reading the letters in light of encounters with objects, and bringing the narrative counterpoint of their dialogue into responses to the objects themselves. The historical relationship between Mary Greg and William Batho, as imagined through their correspondence, provided an anchor that enabled a traversing back and forth between words and things, narrative and material. As Trustram observed, the project was 'quite deferential'<sup>48</sup> to Mary Greg, but it also conjured a relationship of intimacy with her; participants referred to her by given name, and spoke of the collection in

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<sup>42</sup> Anthony Alan Shelton, 'Museums and Museum Displays', In Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (eds.), *The Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage, 2006) p.484.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Dion, cited in Putnam, ref.26, p.74.

<sup>44</sup> Dorsett, ref.30, p.246.

<sup>45</sup> Sharon Blakey and Liz Mitchell, 'Unfolding: A multisensorial dialogue in 'material time'', *Studies in Material Thinking*, 17 (2017) pp.5-6, [https://www.materialthinking.org/sites/default/files/papers/SMT\\_Volume17\\_Paper%2001\\_FA2.pdf](https://www.materialthinking.org/sites/default/files/papers/SMT_Volume17_Paper%2001_FA2.pdf) [accessed 13 September 2017].

<sup>46</sup> Blakey and Mitchell, ref.45, p.7.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter Four, p.162.

<sup>48</sup> Trustram, ref.37, p.190.

terms of being close to her: 'it was as if Mary was there in the room with us!'.<sup>49</sup> Consolidating a process that began with the Gallery of Craft & Design display, the figure of Mary Greg was imagined back to life as the unifying characteristic that brought the collection together as a whole, even in her absence.

*Mary Mary Quite Contrary* formed the basis from which this research grew. It revealed that the collection was capable of evoking powerful and passionate responses in those who encountered it, when the circumstances of encounter were sensitive to its particular qualities. It suggested that far from being irrelevant, inappropriate or obsolete, it actually had much to offer a contemporary audience, but that the structures and restrictions of more conventional museum practice had diminished its potential.

## Intimacy and distance

The particular conditions of encounter set up by the project emphasised the fact that the majority of objects in the Mary Greg Collection were made first and foremost to be held, to be known and interacted with bodily. Clothing and jewellery, spectacles and thimbles, cutlery and tobacco pipes all work in concert with the body; they become extensions of it, both presenting it and protecting it, even penetrating it. In proxemic terms, they occupy the 'intimate zone', the space immediately surrounding the body that is reserved for our most intimate interactions with the world. Proxemics proposes that human beings interact in different ways across different distances and that these interactions are characterised by different kinds of sensory engagement and different ways of knowing. Relationships that operate in close proximity to the body, the 'intimate' and 'personal' zones, are primarily tactile/olfactory/visual, while those that take place across wider distances, the 'social' and 'public' zones, are mainly visual/aural. The intimate zone, up to 18 inches from the body, is characterised by:

...“unmistakable involvement” with other people and things as it is especially tied to physical contact and the sense of touch, although sensory inputs of all kinds are “greatly stepped up”. From this distance visual images are highly detailed or enlarged, and they are sometimes so close as to be ambiguous or even fragmented, for it is not possible to visually scan, to “take it all in”.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* participant comment, cited in Trustram, ref.37, p.190.

<sup>50</sup> Beverly Gordon, citing Edward T. Hall, 'Intimacy and Objects: A Proxemic Analysis of Gender-Based Response to the Material World', in Katharine Martinez and Kenneth L. Ames (eds.), *The Material Culture of Gender, The Gender of Material Culture* (Delaware, USA: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1997) pp.239-240.

It is the vulnerable space of contact between inside and outside, where the boundaries between self and other may become permeable and uncertain. It is a space of heightened awareness, of lovemaking and fighting, but also seemingly of no awareness at all, as when one does things automatically, 'without thinking'.

The dynamic of close up and far away is a theme that runs throughout the Mary Greg Collection. It is there in its timespan and geography, in the juxtaposition of what was, in 1922, both the immediate and the remote past, the familiar and the foreign. It is there in the letters, Mrs Greg's primary mode of communication, in the way written correspondence bridges time and distance. But it is particularly heightened in the reconfiguration of everyday things as museum objects. The dynamic is reversed, as those things that 'live' in close proximity to our everyday lives, but which we rarely notice, become objects worthy of our attention but are removed from the to-and-fro of daily interaction. The collection, paradoxically, draws attention to the humility of ordinary, everyday things, things that, as Stephen Greenblatt describes it, 'have little will to be observed'.<sup>51</sup>

To be understood 'on their own terms' as it were, such objects require a meeting place that is mutually conducive to understanding. This is what John Shotter describes as 'intimate interplay', an enabling of spontaneous response to the qualities and sensibilities of the situation that in turn may yield a 'certain kind of *expressive-responsive* understanding...quite unavailable to us as disengaged spectators'.<sup>52</sup> Susan Stewart similarly suggests that

[t]he things we handle will always reciprocate the treatment we administer to them. When our gestures are caring, the Heideggerean contends, they receive back a deeper disclosure of their ontological truth...<sup>53</sup>

The requirements of object preservation and security, however, make the intimate zone risky for museums; exhibition technologies, while not entirely removing the possibility of intimate encounter, reduce it significantly through the insertion of physical and psychological barriers to close proximity. But then the kinds of knowledge developed in the intimate zone are not those historically valued by the museum. Too close to see clearly, it is emotional, subjective, and thus not to be trusted in terms of rationality and reason. It is the zone of bodily rather than cognitive knowledge, the kind of knowledge that enables us to respond to the everyday world in ways most of us are barely conscious of. In makers' terms, however, it is a critically

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<sup>51</sup> Greenblatt, ref.6, p.25.

<sup>52</sup> John Shotter, 'Goethe and the Refiguring of Intellectual Inquiry: From 'Aboutness'-Thinking to 'Withness'-Thinking in Everyday Life', *Janus Head*, 8 (1) (2005) p.136.

<sup>53</sup> Stewart, ref.8, p.32.

important knowledge zone – that of ‘thinking through the skin’,<sup>54</sup> where material sensitivity and muscle memory are finely tuned. The intimacy with which participants in *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* were able to interact with the collection facilitated a heightened awareness of its objects in these terms.

For Sharon Blakey, it was the emotional resonance of the worn and broken remnants of past lives, the poignancy of a tablespoon ‘used so many times that one side of the bowl is almost worn flat’ (Fig.7.10).<sup>55</sup> It was the spoon’s remoteness, the impossibility of knowing its story, combined with an intimate and immediate familiarity, a bodily recognition of the repeated gesture that had caused its lop-sidedness. The imaginative connection with people in the past afforded by physical contact with the material culture of the past is well-documented, from Sophie de la Roche’s encounters in the British Museum in 1786 to Sally Macdonald’s interviews, in 2007, with curators, conservators and dealers exploring the role of touch in connoisseurship.<sup>56</sup> Damaged objects arguably heighten this connection, for as Greenblatt observes, such ‘wounded artifacts’ bear witness, not just to the ‘violence of history’, but also to ‘the openness to touch that was the condition of their creation’.<sup>57</sup> In preserving the touch of people long since dead, they reflect the vulnerability of both people and things. For Blakey, it was the multisensorial encounter with the misshapen bowl of the spoon that gave it its poignancy. In this respect the object is ‘made’ through a combination of factors: its original production, its subsequent history of use, and the manner in which it is now encountered.

Mary Greg’s introduction to the handicrafts catalogue moves freely between objects as the equipment of daily life and the product of creative acts. W. R. Lethaby’s notion of the ‘common art’ also identified use – from laying the table to cleaning the door-step – as a form of making.<sup>58</sup> A drawer full of worn spoons may thus embody both the craft of the maker who fashioned an object according to skill, material, design sensibility and awareness of prevailing dining habits, *and* the care, skill and investment with which unknown people cooked, served, ate or did a multitude of other less predictable things, with the very same object. In this sense the object in the drawer is the sum of multiple creative acts, known and unknown, laid down

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<sup>54</sup> Blakey and Mitchell, ref.45, p.8.

<sup>55</sup> Sharon Blakey, ‘About’, *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, no date, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/about> [accessed 24 August 2017].

<sup>56</sup> Sally MacDonald, ‘Exploring the Role of Touch in Connoisseurship and the Identification of Objects’, in Elizabeth Pye (ed.), *The Power of Touch: Handling Objects in Museum and Heritage Contexts* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2007) p.115.

<sup>57</sup> Greenblatt, ref.6, p.22.

<sup>58</sup> See Chapter Two, p.169. W. R. Lethaby, ‘The Need for Beauty’, in *Form in Civilization: Collected Papers on Art & Labour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), p.144.

over time. Furthermore, the individual who approaches the drawer brings with them a unique personal history of kitchens, dinner tables, meals, as well as the bodily knowledge of weight, balance, temperature and texture of cutlery in the hand and at the mouth: a specialist expertise that requires no third party explanation.<sup>59</sup>



Figure 7.10: Spoons from the Mary Greg Collection in storage at Queens Park (from left, 1922.843, 1922.846, 1922.846).

<sup>59</sup> For further exploration of this, see Liz Mitchell, 'In the Yellow Room', *FEAST: Laying the Table*, Issue 1 (2015), <http://feastjournal.co.uk/article/in-the-yellow-room/> [accessed 23 September 2017].



The idea of use as a kind of making situates each new encounter with that object as a potentially creative act in itself. Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, identifies the political ramifications of this, in the way it makes use of the practices and products of the dominant systems of Western production while resisting recuperation within them. Use as a form of making re-situates consumers, 'commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules',<sup>60</sup> as makers of meaning from the materials available to them in ways that, because it is afforded no 'place' in the system of production, is dispersed, hidden. One can only guess at what practices and products the spoons in the drawer have been party to in their past lives, or what impact they may have on those who encounter them in the future. The traces of makers and users inscribed in and on them are not those of the protagonists of a heroic and linear design history. The collection is rich with names, written on and in things, but nothing is known about most of these people beyond the fact that at some point they were connected with the object that still carries their name. They are everyone and no-one, unknown and unknowable, and thus resistant to being fixed in one time and place. Rather than the straight gridlines of classification, de Certeau describes the trajectories of users-as-makers in terms of wandering lines:

...that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written and pre-fabricated space through which they move. They are sentences that remain unpredictable within the space ordered by the organizing techniques of the system.<sup>61</sup>

This might be a good description of the Mary Greg Collection and its relationship to the knowledge structures and systems of the museum; it does not fit the pre-determined information units of the database with their reliance on measurable factual data.

Furthermore, use as a form of making also positions the object as never 'finished', but moving through a continual process of becoming, even to the point where it may no longer exist. The patina of everyday wear, the physical mark of damage and the longer term manifestation of material change are just as much a part of its making as the line of stitches or the chisel mark. All are traces of relationality, the interaction of people and materials in time, through which both person and material are changed. In 1884, John Ruskin described the continuity of relationships between people, places and things in terms of 'voicefulness', of 'walls that have

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<sup>60</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, USA: University of California Press, 1984) p.xi.

<sup>61</sup> de Certeau, ref.60, p.34.

long been washed by the passing waves of humanity'.<sup>62</sup> This description bears comparison with Greenblatt's concept of resonance, the 'felt intensity of names and, behind the names...of voices'.<sup>63</sup>

### **'So many splinters of the cross'**

The notion of 'voicefulness', combined with de Certeau's 'sentences that remain unpredictable', is also suggestive of the collection's narrative qualities: fragmented, non-linear, open. As a whole it does not follow a single overarching trajectory but, as the *Manchester Evening News* reviewer said of the handicrafts collection in 1922, is indefinitely extendible in multiple directions.<sup>64</sup> Its objects give hints and glimpses but little more; a short film made as part of *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* was titled *Stories waiting to be told*,<sup>65</sup> suggesting both the possibility that such things might offer up their back stories, but also that they might have roles to play in new ones. The collection is also full of small things: it includes fragments of larger things, such as patchwork pieces and their paper templates cut from old letters; inherently small objects, such as ear-rings and teaspoons; and miniatures, such as dolls' houses and their furnishings. Each is suggestive of detail, of parts of larger stories. Stephen Greenblatt makes frequent use of words that connote smallness in his discussion of the capacity of seemingly insignificant material things to open up complex and multivalent histories. His essay 'Resonance and Wonder' begins with an account of 'a bit of red cloth', displayed 'in a small glass case', a 'miniature history' that still radiates a 'tiny quantum of cultural energy'.<sup>66</sup> Smallness is a facilitator of wonder, if by wonder one means the moment 'when the act of attention draws around itself a circle from which everything but the object is excluded'.<sup>67</sup> This could be a description of looking through a microscope, in which intense and focused attention to very small things paradoxically opens up whole new worlds.

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<sup>62</sup> John Ruskin, cited in Siân Jones, 'Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity', *Journal of Material Culture Studies*, 15 (2010) p.189.

<sup>63</sup> Greenblatt, ref.6, p.25.

<sup>64</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 4 December 1922, Press Cuttings Book, MCG Archive.

<sup>65</sup> MAG, 'Stories waiting to be told', *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, 6 April 2010, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/archives/1492> [accessed 07 October 2017].

<sup>66</sup> Greenblatt, ref.6, p.14.

<sup>67</sup> Greenblatt, ref.6, p.28.



Figure 7.11: Cotton thread found by Hazel Jones in the Mary Greg correspondence.



Figures 7.12-7.16 (clockwise from top left): Box of 'string too small for use' belonging to Hazel Jones; *Quizzing Glasses* (2012), *String Dispensers* (2013) and *Oblong Bachelor Buttons for String Too Small for Use* (2013), all by Hazel Jones.

For Hazel Jones it was the ‘wonder’ of finding, in the Greg correspondence, an envelope containing a series of small card tabs wound around with lengths of thread (Fig.7.11), of attempting to decipher the words on the envelope, of reading ‘first yarn ever spun upon the mule’ and then the name of the addressee: Samuel Crompton. Samuel Crompton invented the spinning mule, which revolutionised cotton production and helped make Manchester the world’s first industrial city.<sup>68</sup> This was a potentially momentous discovery. But, while curatorial staff (myself included) rushed about trying to ‘validate’ this find in terms of corroborating historical evidence, for Jones the possibility that she had just found *a significant piece of industrial history* was of no greater significance than the *possibility* that she had just found a significant piece of industrial history. That something as ordinary and throwaway as a mere piece of string could hold such a history. It was the wonder of the seemingly impossible conjunction of large and small and the imaginative possibilities this opened up (Figs.7.12-16). The cotton threads are unusual in the context of the collection in referencing a globally significant historical moment. Most of its small things are considerably more personal, their past significance perhaps only meaningful to one or two people, impossible to corroborate and now irretrievably lost. But their imaginative possibilities remain. As Jones commented on the project blog, ‘[r]elics abound in religion... there are meant to be so many splinters of the cross’.<sup>69</sup>

Small things thus have a particular capacity to unsettle accepted or ‘common sense’ meaning. They draw one in, and in so doing, become large. Gaston Bachelard describes the ““plunge” into tininess”<sup>70</sup> as engulfing and vertiginous. This is further heightened when the object is deliberately, disconcertingly smaller than it should be. The Mary Greg Collection is full of miniatures: houses that are smaller than wardrobes, chairs that will sit on a mantelpiece, teacups and saucers almost too small to pick up. Thus the inherently familiar is rendered strange, unpredictable. On one level, the object miniaturised still ‘means’ the same as its full-

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<sup>68</sup> For a brief history of the spinning mule, see Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, ‘The Life of Samuel Crompton’ (2013), <http://www.boltonlams.co.uk/museum/museum-collection-highlights/local-history/the-life-of-samuel-crompton> [accessed 23 September 2017].

<sup>69</sup> Hazel Jones, ‘Samuel Crompton’, *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, 6 June 2009, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/archives/4> [accessed 24 August 2017]. Although not the *first* yarn ever spun on the mule, the threads were later selected for the BBC regional web project accompanying the Radio 4 series, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*. See BBC, ‘Crompton’s cotton threads (1841)’, *A History of the World*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/5mtwLXKHSi-vx6-rENLiFA> [accessed 16 September 2017]. See also Liz Mitchell, ‘Believe me, I remain: the finest cotton threads spun on the mule’, paper presented at *Encounters*, University of Manchester, 3-4 July 2013. They are also discussed in Woodall, ref.37, p140-142.

<sup>70</sup> Gaston Bachelard, citing Joë Bousquet, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 [1964]) p.172.



scale referent: a miniature book is still a book, is still recognised as such. But its meaning is disrupted through concentration into a smaller physical space and the consequent unsettling of both its material constitution and its relationships with other things. There is something inherently not quite 'right' about miniatures; they effect a separation of form and material in that material properties cannot be miniaturised and thus become exaggerated, even uncanny. The close up/far away dynamic is unsettled in the way smallness suggests distance, but material texture – wood grain and fabric weave – is magnified. Similarly, mundane acts, whether reading a book or drinking tea, become physically challenging and faintly ridiculous if attempted with miniature versions; they become a game of 'let's pretend' in which sensory self-awareness is heightened.

In de-familiarising the familiar, and throwing the user back into their own bodily space, the miniature is both inscrutable and conspiratorial. It exaggerates interiority, closing in on itself in order to occupy the smallest possible amount of compressed physical space. In this sense it is secretive, holding things within and further heightening the invitation to come close. Susan Stewart cites an account of the fashionable nineteenth century *Schloss Bijou Almanac*, of which there are several examples in the Greg collection: 'no stylishly gowned lady in England was complete unless her handbag carried one of the dainty little jeweled *Schloss Bijou* almanacs, about half the size of a postage stamp, enclosed in a small solander case and this in turn reposing in a tiny silk or plush lined and leather bound case' (Fig.7.17).<sup>71</sup> The description gives no heed to the purported function of the book as a thing to be read. Instead, the focus is on its preciousness as object, and its multiple layers of enclosure: words within a book within a case within a case within a bag. The Mary Greg Collection includes multiple examples not just of small things, but small things made to contain even smaller things. It includes vinaigrettes, pillboxes, tobacco, snuff and matchboxes, inkwells and scroll boxes, condiment holders, glass bottles, baskets, bags and purses, pockets, compartmentalised sewing boxes, objects with hidden compartments and just simply 'boxes'. Most of these contain empty space, but some hold (or once held) unexpected contents; a cardboard box full of shells, a 'matchbox' containing a tiny model figure of a downhill skier, a green wooden egg containing the 'smallest doll in the world' (now lost).

Such inscrutability, rather than diminishing the object's meaning, may in fact expand its potential. The interiority of the object may speak to the interiority of the person who encounters it. In 'The Little Madnesses of Museums', Myna Trustram invoked Donald

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<sup>71</sup> James Dougald Henderson, cited in Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 1993 [1984]) p.42.



Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomena in suggesting that *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* drew attention to 'the congruence between the physical objects and the inner life, and indeed the inner objects, of the participants'.<sup>72</sup> The collection, framed by this project, did seem to offer those who took part a space in which to dwell on things deeply personal to them, to experience the objects as doorways to personal memory and attachments. 3D Design student Carly McDermott described it in terms of 'inviting playfulness but projecting fragility...every piece in the collection is a depiction of my most fond memories' (Figs.7.18-20).<sup>73</sup>



Figure 7.17: *Schloss's English Bijou Almanac*, 1839 (1922.499).

<sup>72</sup> Trustram, ref.37, p.188.

<sup>73</sup> Carly McDermott, cited in Trustram, ref.37, p.192. Alex Woodall also gives an example of this kind of response on the part of an elderly man moved to speak about his WWII RAF experience by the encounter with a miniature glove from the collection. See Woodall, ref.37, p.177.



Figures 7.18-7.20: Work in progress by student Carly McDermott (MSA), family history brooches and pins inspired by silhouettes, tassies and a game of spillikins in the Mary Greg Collection, Gallery of Craft & Design, 2010; silhouette of a young woman (1922.1643).

‘Little madresses’ is a term coined by Donald Winnicott for ‘our most intensely felt enthusiasms, emotional investments and attachments within the sphere of culture’.<sup>74</sup> *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* played to the collection’s quality as a body of ‘emotional objects’,<sup>75</sup> or, to

<sup>74</sup> Annette Kuhn, ‘Little Madresses: An Introduction’, in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Little Madresses: Winnicott, Transitional Phenomena and Cultural Experience* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013) p.1.

<sup>75</sup> The term ‘emotional objects’ has achieved some resonance since the conference *Emotional Objects: Touching Emotions in Europe 1600-1900*, at the Institute for Historical Research in London, 11-12 October 2013. See Alice Dolan and Sally Holloway (eds.), *Emotional Objects: Touching Emotions in History*, 2013, <https://emotionalobjects.wordpress.com/> [accessed 25 August 2017].

return to Dianne Sachko Macleod, of 'objects that console the psyche'.<sup>76</sup> By Trustram's psychosocial interpretation, the project facilitated an emotional response through which objects were received internally and used psychically to create new internal objects. Again, the project's methodological approach, by which participants were able to explore the cupboards and navigate their own way through the collection was central to this, as Jones recalls:

It was brilliant – it was just – because you could *open* a drawer...the fact that we could go back more than once, and we did, was even better because each time you went back, even drawers you'd looked in quite well before, you found *even more* in that drawer...<sup>77</sup>

Thus the manner in which people encountered the collection mirrored particular qualities that were subsequently found within it, in the idea of an infinite interiority in which there is always more to be found. Such qualities also resonate with aspects of the collection's earlier history. The project drew attention to the psychological consolation offered by material things in their combination of vulnerability and durability; to the evocative potential of the imagined past as points on a continuum rather than a 'foreign country' where they 'do things differently';<sup>78</sup> to the potential of material things to inspire new creative acts. Where it diverges from the collection's earlier history, however, is in the way it followed the path established by the Gallery of Craft & Design display, in bringing Mary Greg centre-stage.

## Imagining Mary

The defining feature of the Mary Greg Collection, that differentiates it from the handicrafts and dolls' houses collections that preceded it, is the centrality of its collector. The figure of Mary Greg arguably provides the anchor, the sense of order, which enabled *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* to explore qualities of open-endedness, infinity even, within the collection and still maintain a sense of it as a collection. The overarching narrative that shaped this was provided by the Greg correspondence. The Greg letters offer an equivalent, for the handicrafts and dolls' houses collections, of Thomas Greg's writings in relation to the pottery, in that they give a contextual framing narrative, contemporary with the making of the collections and spoken

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<sup>76</sup> See Chapter Five, p.203. Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) p.15.

<sup>77</sup> Hazel Jones, cited in Woodall, ref.37, p.134.

<sup>78</sup> This phrase, originating from the novel *The Go-Between* by L. P. Hartley, is used as the title of David Lowenthal's study of nostalgia and heritage in our interpretation of the past, first published in 1985. See David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

(substantially) by their collector. But whereas Thomas Greg's essays and manuscript catalogues were written explicitly to accompany the objects, to place and interpret them for a wider public, the Greg letters were not. While no doubt composed from the institutional side with one eye on posterity in terms of office record-keeping, their focus is primarily on the immediacy of the moment, on the business in hand. In this respect they too are 'everyday things', in that their original function was as part of the close apparatus of daily working life. They too have passed out of that life and been transformed into artefacts, subject to a form of contemplation for which they were not intended. In so doing, they take their authors with them, not as singular individuals but as sets of relationships.

Many of the *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* participants responded as profoundly to the letters as they did to the objects. In fact, the Mary Greg Collection as it is now understood, and as this research has approached it, may be regarded as comprising both objects and archive. The letters act as a counterpoint to the collection rather than an explanation of it. They provide a narrative that draws attention to actions and interactions, to objects as things acted upon and responded to rather than as static, separate entities. As previous chapters have shown, the letters emphasise the social aspects of collecting, owning, using and sharing material things; they say more about people than things. The relationship between the archive and the collection was in itself a source of inspiration for *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* participants, as evidenced in Sharon Blakey and Ismini Samanidou's collaborative textile and ceramic piece, *Table Runner*, in which Mary Greg's handwriting, reduced to looped curling echoes of words, no longer legible but evocative of past voices, provides the backdrop to the shadowy woven imprint of spoons imaginatively returned to the table (Fig.7.21).<sup>79</sup>

The project thus *imagined* Mary Greg: through her voice as it seemed to speak in the letters – in the inky dip-pen loopiness of her handwriting and the urgent scribble of postscripts as much as in the words themselves – and through 'her' objects. In contrast to Mrs Greg's own manner of speaking, in relation to the dolls' house collection at least, participants in *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* continually referred to things as Mary's: 'I keep coming back to Mary's spoons'.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Sharon Blakey, 'Table Runner', *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, 1 July 2010, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/archives/2015> [accessed 24 August 2017].

<sup>80</sup> Sharon Blakey, 'Spoons', *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, 27 September 2009, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/archives/404> [accessed 16 September 2017].





Figure 7.21: *Table Runner* (detail), made by Sharon Blakey and Ismini Samanidou, 2011.

Discussing a handling session that developed out of the project, Manchester City Galleries' Schools and Colleges Manager explained that 'Mary Greg's objects for me aren't the same without her...they wouldn't work without Mary'.<sup>81</sup> Mary Greg seems to inhabit the collection, her 'presence' therein giving it value that it would not otherwise have. Walter Benjamin suggests that:

[t]he phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal collector. Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter.<sup>82</sup>

It would seem that the objects in the Mary Greg Collection have, in recent times, 'got their due' through the imaginative conjuring of the woman who assembled them. Conversely, one might also say that through a particular form of attention to the objects, a space was opened up in which the collector may re-emerge and get *her* due. Benjamin's passionate and materially evocative account of unpacking his library – the wrenching open of crates, the wood-dust-saturated air – locates the relationship between collector and collection as one of extreme intimacy, even interchangeability. Perhaps this is what he has in mind when he suggests that private collecting is 'socially objectionable'. For it is not that his collected objects 'come alive in him; it is he who lives in them'.<sup>83</sup> This suggests the heightened sensation and permeability of the intimate zone, where the distinction between inside and outside blur; or the enveloping absorption of small things grown huge, within which, Benjamin suggests, one may take refuge. It is also a permeability that is historically more often associated with women than men.

Edward Hall, writing in the 1960s, identified women as operating primarily within the closer proxemic zones, where 'involvement, texture and detail are particularly salient',<sup>84</sup> while men gravitated towards more distanced and formal interactions. Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, differentiates between the house built from the outside, by men, and the interiority of the house built by women.<sup>85</sup> Interiority and proximity have become defining characteristics of femininity, as women have been historically and culturally positioned as nurturers and care-

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<sup>81</sup> Woodall, ref.37, p.190, Interview N, 30/7/2013.

<sup>82</sup> Walter Benjamin [trans. Harry Zohn], 'Unpacking my library: A talk about book collecting', in Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) p.67.

<sup>83</sup> Benjamin, ref.82, p.67.

<sup>84</sup> Gordon, ref.50, p.239.

<sup>85</sup> Bachelard, ref.70, p.68.



givers.<sup>86</sup> This is most obviously manifest in the intimate spaces of the home. Women are the home makers, but also, as 'ornaments to society and the home',<sup>87</sup> they have been regarded as synonymous with the idea of home itself, as analogous to its objects. Paintings of domestic interiors from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century frequently present women as so integral to their setting as to be almost indistinguishable from it.<sup>88</sup> Dianne Sachko Macleod suggests that elite American women art collectors of this period turned the restrictive spaces of gendered identity to their own ends. Drawing attention to the psychologically and spatially close relationships they developed with their collected objects, she makes the case for an 'intimate, subjective and impromptu relationship that existed between women and things...such that they perceived their immediate environments as extensions of themselves'.<sup>89</sup> Susan Pearce similarly identifies a particular 'ability to invest objects with feeling without separating them in name and thought from the flow of things'<sup>90</sup> as characteristic of women's collecting practices, 'in which collected material mixes...with other kinds of goods, and the whole forms a unity to which no dividing of specifying self-consciousness is attached'.<sup>91</sup>

The Mary Greg Collection is domestic, intimate, small. Dominated by objects made, used or worn by women, and 'peopled' by women in the form of the hundred or so dolls, it arguably invites gendered personification. Mrs Greg herself commented in relation to the dolls' house collection, 'it is not so much a man's subject as a woman's'.<sup>92</sup> The collection combines a bringing into public space of the intimate, sensory, private life of the home, in the inclusion of objects made for everyday domestic use, with a re-staging of the public function of the home in the display of ornamental collections which had previously been part of the Gregs' home. Its apparent eclecticism is thus perhaps not surprising, for as Greg Noble suggests, 'domestic accumulations have the logic more of a collage, or a juxtaposition of not always commensurate

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<sup>86</sup> This is still the case, as contemporary statistics on gender inequality in unpaid care work around the world demonstrate. See Gaëlle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando and Keiko Nowacka, *Unpaid care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes*, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre, December 2014, [www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid\\_care\\_work.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf) [accessed 23 July 2017].

<sup>87</sup> Wendy Steiner, *The Trouble with Beauty* (London: William Heinemann, 2001) p.57.

<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of this, see Juliet Kinchin, 'From Drawing Room to Scullery: Reading the Domestic Interior in the Paintings of Walter Sickert and the Camden Town Group', in Helena Bonett, Ysanne Holt, Jennifer Munday (eds.), *The Camden Town Group in Context* (London: Tate Research Publications, 2012), [www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/juliet-kinchin-from-drawing-room-to-scullery-reading-the-domestic-interior-in-the-r1104375](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/juliet-kinchin-from-drawing-room-to-scullery-reading-the-domestic-interior-in-the-r1104375) [accessed 19 July 2017].

<sup>89</sup> Macleod, ref.76, p.6.

<sup>90</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.203.

<sup>91</sup> Pearce, ref.90, p.207.

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Mary Greg to William Batho, 26 December 1922, MCG Archive.

objects, than an ordered collection based on taxonomic logic'.<sup>93</sup> Neither is it surprising, then, that it also includes multiple objects with specific Hope family histories. In this sense Mary Greg does inhabit the collection, in the form of personal biography. There is a child's cot sheet inscribed with her father's name, Thomas Arthur Hope (Fig.7.22); an embroidered sampler sewn by her mother, Emily Hird Jones (Fig.7.23); the key to the Borough Bank of Liverpool, founded by her grandfather Samuel Hope; a passport belonging to her sister Rebekah Bateman Hope. Thomas Greg is there too, in a mourning ring for his great-uncle and namesake Thomas Tylston Greg; a pair of child's shoes bearing the name of his cousin, Albert Greg (Figs.7.24-25); a Valentines card received in 1876 (Fig.7.26). It includes not just objects from the collection of Thomas Bateman, but also his hat. In this respect it is a personal collection, combining domestic possessions and collected objects, gathered through networks of family and friends as much as sale rooms and dealers. Thus it lends itself to the imagining of the person whose personal life and family history were once so tied up with it.

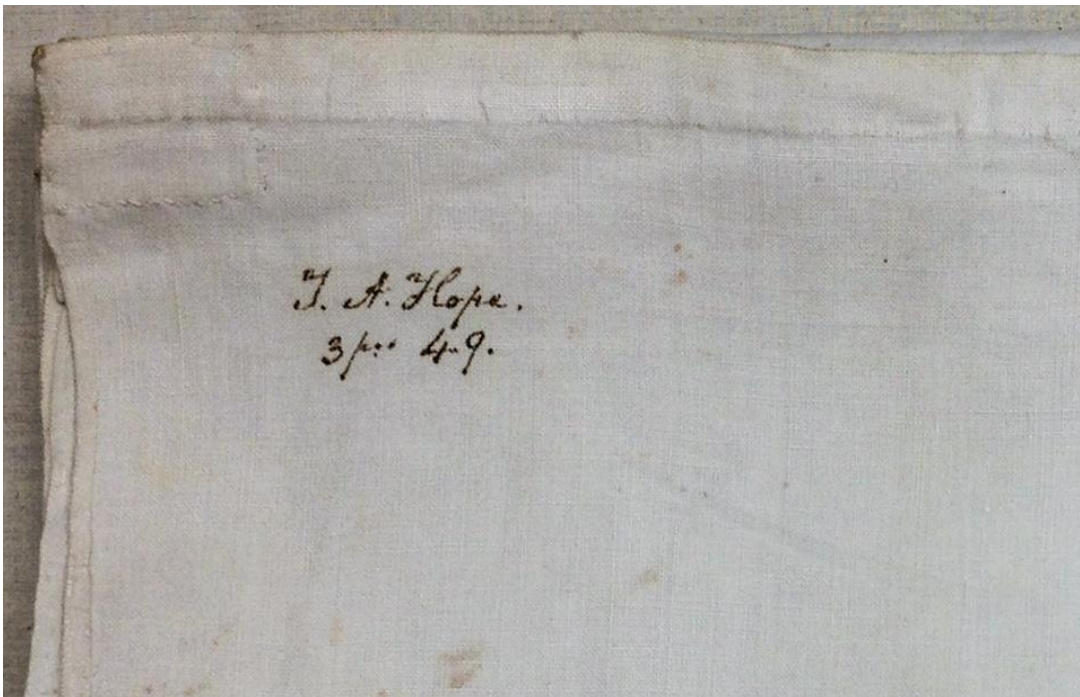


Figure 7.22: Linen sheet for a cradle or cot, inscribed T. A. Hope (1922.2190).

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<sup>93</sup> Noble, ref.9, p.234.

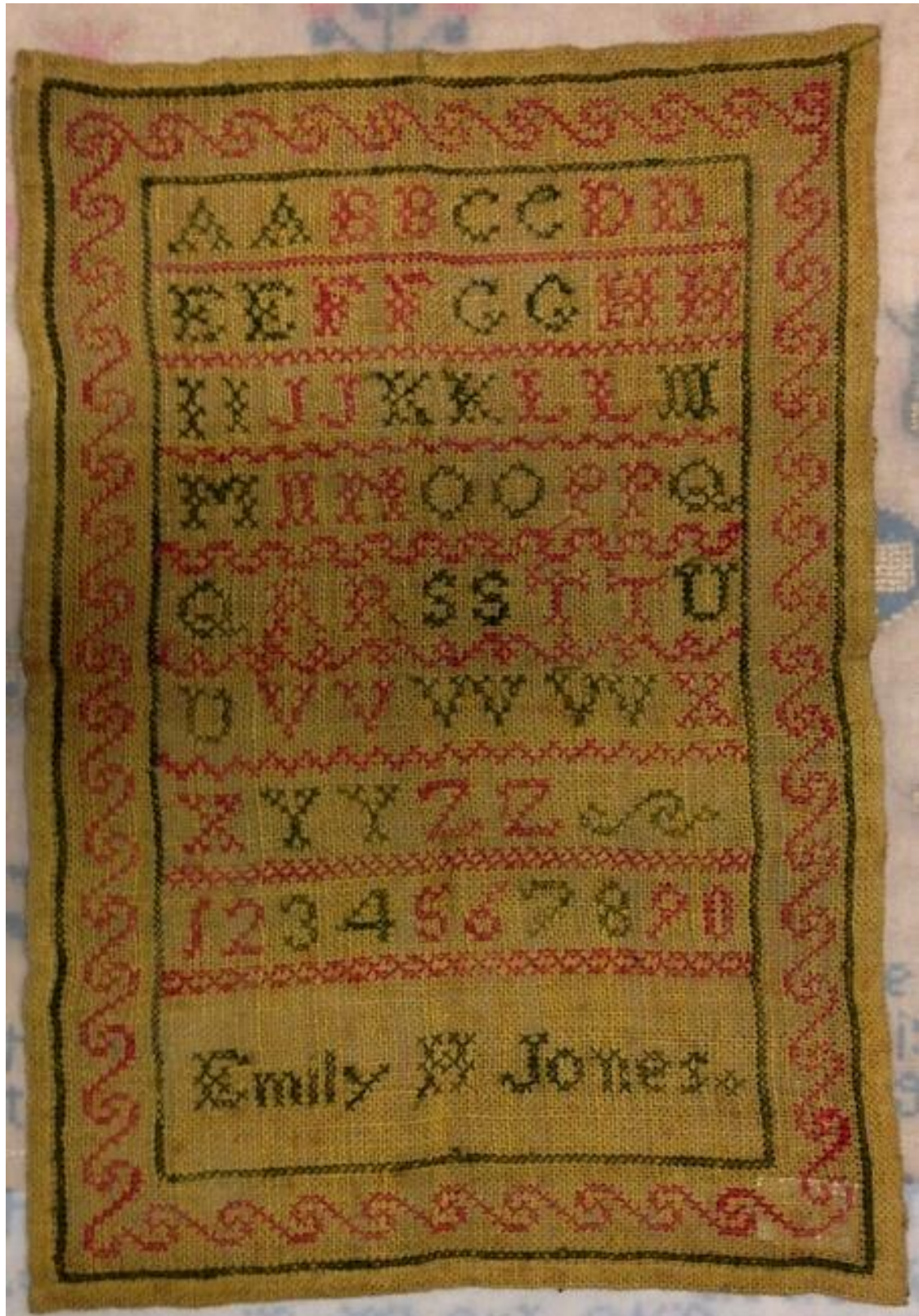


Figure 7.23: Sampler, coarse yellow linen, worked by Emily H. Jones (1922.2140).



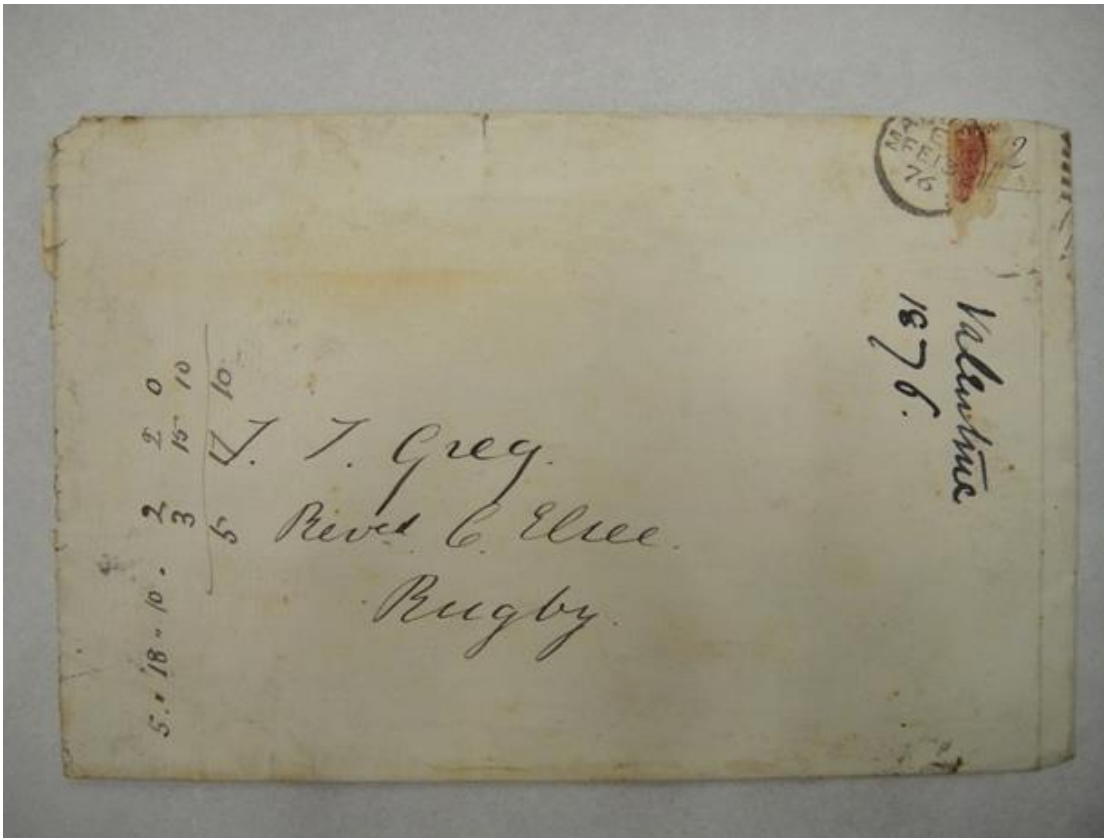


Figure 7.24-7.26: Pair of child's shoes inscribed 'Albert Greg' (1922.1775); envelope containing Valentines card addressed to Thomas Greg, 1876 (1922.1272).

However, as the above examples demonstrate, it is not just a collection of women's things, nor even a collection entirely assembled by a woman. It also combines the remains of multiple collections made by men. Parts of it were developed by both Mary and Thomas Greg during their married life together, and evidence suggests that it may have been Mary rather than Thomas who initiated the transfer of privately pleasurable objects into public ownership. It was, in the end, Mrs Greg who enacted it. In fact, while Thomas Greg wrote at length about the pleasures of material possession,<sup>94</sup> Mary Greg's letters suggest that she felt more 'alive' in giving things away than keeping them close. Furthermore, she did not just give them to one place, but dispersed them far and wide to multiple museums, including at least one as far away as New Zealand.<sup>95</sup> With the exception of Thomas Bateman's hat, none of the family connections listed above were recorded on entry to the museum. The absence of contextualising information across the collection is as true of family objects, the individual histories of which must have been known, as it is of things acquired by other means; they have only come to light through this research.

Pearce suggests that one reason why collections formed by women are so rare in museums is that frequently they did not regard their accumulated objects as collections in the sense of being 'separated off from normal living, and embodying a vision or a philosophy which is itself distinct'.<sup>96</sup> Mary Greg did have a distinct philosophy – the 'treasuring' of 'good work'. In pursuit of this, family objects appear to have been divested of their specific relational significance, their 'normal living', becoming instead part of the collection's wider 'voicefulness'. Mary Greg's most passionate emotions, in writing at least, appear to have been generated by being outdoors; by skies and wind and the changing seasons, by the conjunction of smallness and immensity. This punctuates all her correspondence, as well as providing the motivation for her nature diaries. It is perhaps possible to read a sense of this in the collection. In its gathering of material 'moments' with minimal back story, it offers a kind of commemoration of everyman – and woman. Britain had embraced something akin to this in 1920, the year Mrs Greg first became involved with Manchester City Art Galleries, when a single soldier, of unknown name and rank, was buried in the nave of Westminster Abbey, in

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<sup>94</sup> Greg, ref.2.

<sup>95</sup> The existence of objects given by Mary Greg in the South Canterbury Museum, Timaru, New Zealand was discovered during the *Mary Mary Quite Contrary* project. See Melanie Williamson, 'Timaru!', *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, 28 August 2009, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/archives/266> [accessed 26 October 2017].

<sup>96</sup> Pearce, ref.90, p.208.

commemoration of all those who died in the Great War.<sup>97</sup> In this context, maybe it did not matter that the maker of the sampler bearing the name E. H. Jones was Mrs Greg's mother.

In the context of the reconfigured Mary Greg Collection, however, it becomes significant. It adds another dimension to the collection as a way of coming to know the collector, of the collection as offering historical insights into the material landscape of a life. As family relics, these objects oscillate between the identities of collected object and souvenir, between collection and biography. This knowledge also changes the way one approaches other objects, as possibly also having more intimate connections with their collector. Furthermore, it raises the question of expertise in relation to attribution. Mrs Greg's descriptions of things have been gradually de-valued over time, regarded as increasingly amateurish in the context of professional curatorial and historical knowledge. Where curatorial intervention in the collection has occurred, successive generations of curator have either distanced themselves from previous descriptions or revised them entirely. The 'man's smock made by an old Shropshire woman of 80 in 1910', for example, an object with an uncharacteristically detailed description, was re-attributed at some later point to the 1870s. This was probably done by Anne Buck, the Galleries' first dedicated costume curator and an acknowledged expert on rural smocks. However, this example may well have been acquired through friendship networks during one of the Gregs' several documented visits to Church Stretton during this period.<sup>98</sup> It seems unlikely, given the lack of information given elsewhere, that she provided this attribution without reason.

Similarly, accession number 1922.1895/2 is described in the earliest collection inventory as a wedding dress. There is nothing intrinsic to the design or material of the garment to suggest this function, and thus the attribution has become questionable over time.<sup>99</sup> However, the recorded date of c.1896, coupled with its sober but respectable style and, most significantly, the name 'M. Hope' written inside the lace collar, all suggest that this may be Mrs Greg's wedding dress (Figs.7.27-29). Examining the dress in the store room at Platt Hall – uncoupling its many hooks and eyes, feeling the stiffness of the boned bodice and the weight of its long skirt – and then finding a familiar name written inside the collar provides a powerful sense of female experience, of what it was like, bodily, to be a Victorian woman, that no amount of

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<sup>97</sup> Westminster Abbey, 'Unknown Warrior', 2017, <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/unknown-warrior> [accessed 19 September 2017].

<sup>98</sup> Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG04942. Mrs Greg's nature diary, volume 1, 14 April 1904, p.50, for example.

<sup>99</sup> Conversation with Miles Lambert, Curator, Platt Hall Gallery of Costume, 28 April 2014.



reading can convey.<sup>100</sup> This admittedly speculative attribution is dependent on knowing Mrs Greg's maiden name. It thus also offers a glimpse of the ways in which societal structures of gendered identity, in this case the changing of a name through marriage, may further disrupt the pathways that validate knowledge.



Figures 7.27-7.29: Wedding dress, c.1896, with inscription 'M. Hope' (1922.1895).

<sup>100</sup> Liz Mitchell, 'Believe me, I remain: encountering Mary's wedding dress', paper presented at *How Do We Study Objects? – Analyses in Artefact Studies*, Artefacta: The Finnish Network for Artefact Studies, Helsinki, Finland, 8-9 May 2014. See also Liz Mitchell, 'An ordinary day dress', *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection*, 28 May 2014, <http://www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk/archives/2718> [accessed 23 August 2017].

## Good and bad objects

*Mary Mary Quite Contrary* found value in those aspects of the collection that, from the perspective of the rational museum, are regarded as undesirable. Its objects are fragmentary, indeterminate, unstable, secretive – qualities that sit uncomfortably in the museum unless mitigated by the status of art. As Antony Hudek suggests:

The world of objects, however ‘ordinary’, is a trove of disguises, concealments, subterfuges, provocations and triggers that no singular, embodied and knowledgeable subject can exhaust. This is precisely why artists have a say in any discussion of the object’s plurivocality, since the artwork is a prime example of the object’s capacity to evade the knowing grasp.<sup>101</sup>

But here too, the collection is contradictory. It is art but not art; it sits in the art museum but does not enjoy the status of artwork as validated by the artist, who says ‘this is art’ and makes it so. It was Blakey and Jones who proposed the project’s title, taken from a nursery rhyme illustration by Jessie Willcox Smith (Fig.7.30). ‘Mary Mary Quite Contrary’ worked on several levels: it reflected the contradictory nature of the collection as it sat within the institution, and the particular ‘contrarian’ qualities found by both artists in its objects. At the same time, it focused attention onto Mary Greg herself, in terms of the uncertainty of her identity in relation to the institution. As a title, ‘Mary Mary Quite Contrary’ ran the risk, perhaps, of belittling the seriousness of her intent, of falling prey to historically gendered differentiations of behaviour and attitude by which the interests and ambitions of women have been trivialised as childish or eccentric. However, in drawing attention to this, it is perhaps most fitting of all.

In *Bad Objects: Essays Popular and Unpopular*, Naomi Schor writes, ‘at any given time, within the carefully policed precincts of the academy, some critical objects are promoted to the status of good objects...while others are tabooed’.<sup>102</sup> The idea of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ objects may seem like an overly anthropomorphic and inappropriate value judgement for inanimate lumps of matter. But it runs throughout the history of this collection, from Ruskinian ‘goodness’ and Arthur Sabin’s objects made with love, to Lawrence Haward’s denigration of the ‘glorified curiosity shop’ and objects grown monstrous in ‘that hothouse atmosphere that every gallery generates’.<sup>103</sup> It is central to the historical premise of the municipal art museum, in its desire to

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<sup>101</sup> Antony Hudek (ed.) *The Object: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2014) p.14.

<sup>102</sup> Naomi Schor, cited in Ellen Rooney, ‘Foreword: An Aesthetic of Bad Objects’, in Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007 [1987]) p.xiii.

<sup>103</sup> See Chapter Three, p.80. Lawrence Haward, ‘The Problem of Provincial Galleries and Art Museums with special reference to Manchester’, *The Museums Journal*, 22 (July 1922) p.10.

ameliorate suffering through beauty during the Victorian era, and to instil good taste and thus good citizenship in the era that followed. It is central to the historical function of the museum *per se*, as guarantor of authenticity and ultimate arbiter of what is and is not worthy of preservation. This is goodness premised on registers of stability, from Enlightenment reason to Victorian morals to Ruskinian and modernist aesthetics. More recently, however, Mark O’Neil’s description of the museum as ‘taming’ objects and ‘diminishing their power’,<sup>104</sup> is indicative of a shift in thought, in which the mutable, evasive and resistant qualities of material things, what Elizabeth Edwards refers to as their volatility,<sup>105</sup> have become characteristics worth investigating in themselves. As Schor admits, ‘I am drawn to what I perceive rightly or wrongly as the bad objects’.<sup>106</sup> Good and bad objects are a matter of perspective, as Mary Douglas also attests in her work on pollution and taboo.

*Reading in Detail*, Schor’s best-known work, traces the history of one particular bad object, the aesthetic detail.<sup>107</sup> The detail, she says, is disruptive, a genetic mutation of the Ideal. According to Reynolds’ *Discourses on Art* (1769-1790), detail keeps one stuck at the level of the particular, the inferior material manifestation of the underlying universal. Detail draws attention to itself, subverting hierarchies of order. It is Roland Barthes’ ‘punctum’, the snag that pulls the eye away from the main picture, but which cannot be predicted or deliberately set up because it is different for each of us.<sup>108</sup> The detail undermines intent. Small, close, subjective, but also unpredictable, distracting and dangerous, the detail is ‘doubly gendered’ as feminine:

bounded on one side by the *ornamental*, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence, and on the other, by the *everyday*, whose “prosiness” is rooted in the domestic sphere of social life presided over by women.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See Chapter Two, p.20. Mark O’Neill, cited in Sandra H. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) pp.4-5.

<sup>105</sup> See Chapter Two, p.29. Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Photographs between evidence and affect’, keynote lecture presented at: *How Do We Study Objects? – Analyses in Artefact Studies*, Artefacta: The Finnish Network for Artefact Studies, Helsinki, Finland, 8-9 May 2014.

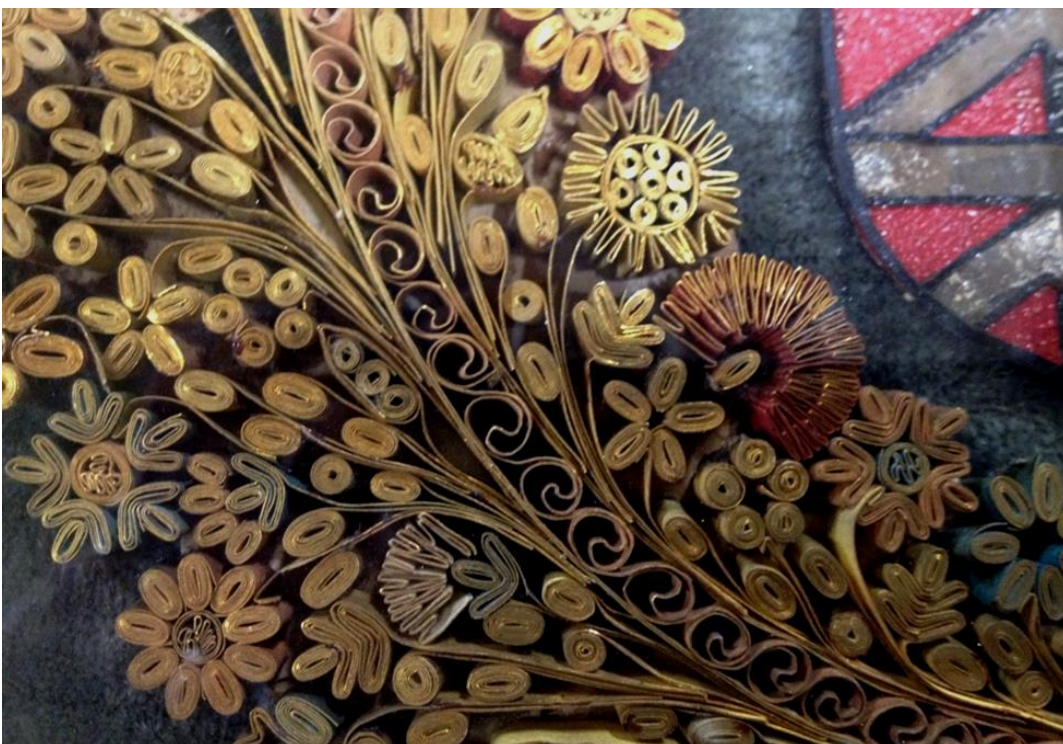
<sup>106</sup> Schor, cited in Rooney, ref.102.

<sup>107</sup> Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007 [1987]).

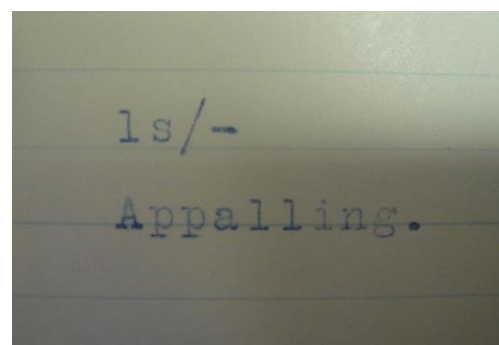
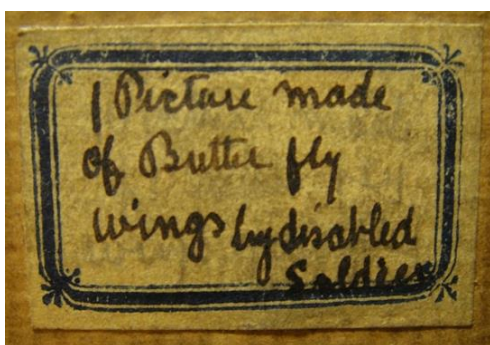
<sup>108</sup> Schor, ref.107, pp.107-108.

<sup>109</sup> Schor, ref.107, p.xlii [original emphasis].





Figures 7.30-7.31: 'Mary Mary Quite Contrary', lithograph, by Jessie Willcox Smith, c.1920 (1922.668); Arms of Carey of Devon, worked in rolled paper by Napoleonic prisoners-of-war (1922.1682) (detail).



Figures 7.32-7.34: Picture of a lady made from butterfly wings, with accompanying label and catalogue card commentary (details) (1922.1861).

The Mary Greg Collection is indeed bounded by the ornamental and the everyday, in its combination of the utilitarian and the decorative and the frequent overlap between the two. In its assemblage of objects made, used and worn by people whose traces remain but are otherwise unknown, it is a collection of incidentals, 'things of the least' that were never intended to occupy the centre-stage. In its inclusion of amateur craftwork, of collaged pictures, rolled paper work and straw marquetry, it delights in the material manifestation of detail, the potentially excessive pleasures of surface pattern and texture (Fig.7.31). Such things were troublesome for the Art Gallery from the start, in the context of a developing modernism that increasingly eschewed extraneous ornamentation. In this respect it is perhaps not surprising that, as 'good' modernist design infiltrated the city centre Art Gallery during the 1930s, handicrafts were kept at arm's length in the branch galleries, where nonetheless they enjoyed considerable popularity. A picture of a crinoline lady made out of butterfly wings by a convalescent soldier is summed up in a single word in the bottom corner of the catalogue card that accompanies it – 'Appalling' (Figs 7.32-34). Yet it was kept.

Notions of good and bad are thus in tension throughout the history of the collection and within its objects. The crinoline lady is bad according to a particular aesthetic standard, in its inappropriate combination of material, subject matter and skill (or lack of it), but also good, in the therapeutic benefit the making of such things was widely thought to afford their makers in the period after the First World War. Mary Greg, in her focus on things that had been the subject of emotional attachment, things that were 'treasured', adhered to the latter measure rather than the former. The capacity of objects to hold multiple, even contradictory, meanings in play at the same time was what captured Hazel Jones' attention in her finding of the Samuel Crompton cotton threads. Focusing on the point of possibility rather than resolution, the juncture of both looking 'at' *and* looking 'through', where meaning and material coincide, aligns the quality of the bad object as having 'the structure of a secret',<sup>110</sup> of not giving everything away, with the good object of wonder. Wonder is a term that crops up again and again in both Thomas and Mary Greg's writing, as 'the protoplasm of education', the lifeblood of knowledge generation.<sup>111</sup> Peter de Bolla discusses wonder in terms of a delicate tension between the familiar and the incomprehensible. More compelling than surprise, less engrossing than rapture, he describes it as 'a push-me-pull-me state of knowing', an aesthetic state that does not settle:

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<sup>110</sup> Rooney, ref.102, p.xvii.

<sup>111</sup> Greg, ref.17, p.ii; Mary Greg, 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1922) p.6.



I feel absorbed but unable to touch the source of that absorption, keenly aware, in a heightened state of perception yet at the same time lacking focus. It is almost as if my self lacks consistency or precision...Such dumbfounderment may cause a sense of inadequacy in the face of the object that prompted the wonder, as if I am forced to recognize the limits of my perceptual powers. But this feeling is also often replaced by an intensification of self-presence.<sup>112</sup>

He is talking about great works of art, but is this not applicable also to those ordinary objects that, curiously, have been placed in the same context as great works of art? Myna Trustram too acknowledges that Winnicott's notion of 'little madnnesses' might be more obviously applied to encounters with unique artworks, but similarly reflects on 'the power of these humble objects to conjure aesthetic attachments'.<sup>113</sup> The objects in the Mary Greg Collection, it would seem, embody contradictory identities, in that they are, in their art museum status, not remotely 'ordinary' or 'everyday', yet still manifest aspects of this quality capable of evoking deeply personal response. Trustram invokes Christopher Bollas' concept of 'nameless forms', the notion that 'on some occasions it is the forms of objects which moves us rather than our knowledge of them',<sup>114</sup> as a possible source of the collection's attraction.

The Mary Greg Collection in the context of the art museum places the kinds of things that embody the deeply familiar, bodily rather than cognitively known sights, sounds, smells and surfaces of everyday life centre-stage for our contemplation.<sup>115</sup> In their invitation to come close, to engage in a subjective, imaginative dialogue with others, known or unknown, its objects invoke a kind of reverie that reaches both inward and outward. The kinds of 'knowledge' this might produce are antithetical to knowledge as classification and order predicated on separation and mastery. In a Winnicottian sense, it is knowledge as a form of madness. As Trustram suggests, the museum, 'the responsible, rational father of society which foresightedly stows away treasures for the future',<sup>116</sup> might seem an unlikely place for this kind of knowledge. But then again, as historians and theorists increasingly acknowledge and as this research shows, museums are not the inherently rational institutions they purport to be.

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<sup>112</sup> Peter de Bolla, 'The state of wonder', in Sandra H. Dudley, *Museum Objects: Experiencing the Properties of Things* (London: Routledge, 2012) p.159.

<sup>113</sup> Trustram, ref.37, p.187.

<sup>114</sup> Trustram, ref.37, p.194.

<sup>115</sup> Further discussion and analysis of this idea can be found in Blakey and Mitchell, ref.45.

<sup>116</sup> Trustram, ref.37, p.194.

## Conclusion

The history of the Mary Greg Collection demonstrates that entry to the museum is far from being the 'final step' in the life-cycle of a collected object; nor does the acquisition of museum status guarantee 'immortality'.<sup>117</sup> These words, written more than twenty years ago, were almost certainly not intended to carry the weight that, in singling them out, I afford them. Their author, Susan Pearce, has also written at length about the ways in which both museum objects and private collections are imbued with multiple and shifting meanings.<sup>118</sup> However, the unqualified manner in which they are written here, in the same place as the very arguments which undermine them, is indicative of the underlying persistence of the idea that museums fix things. Similarly, Simon Knell's 2004 essay provides a history of the museum as essentially irrational, but at the same time makes the case for its rationalisation. On the one hand, he deconstructs historical manifestations of museological rationalism, from the early museum's belief in objective truth to the professionalism of the late twentieth century collecting policy, as illusory. He makes a convincing case for the continually shifting meaning and relevance of museum collections, and for the double-bind of collecting as a practice infused with desire and belief, that in its very motivation questions its own validity.<sup>119</sup> His account demonstrates that Walter Benjamin's description of personal collecting as 'a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear as order',<sup>120</sup> might just as well apply to the museum. Yet at the same time, and arguably echoing the very efforts of the past he has called into question, he asserts the need for institutions to 'make collecting more efficient and collections more rational'.<sup>121</sup> In this context rationality is equated with sustainability and accountability, issues that particularly dominated professional and political debate during the first years of the twenty-first century.

In 2005, what Knell calls 'oldness value' had indeed been part of the curatorial argument for keeping the Mary Greg Collection, an argument that did not actually bear close scrutiny as it turned out museum staff could not articulate what that value was. Knell's argument that old things automatically acquire 'false' value predicated on mere survival thus has some relevance here.<sup>122</sup> However, the Greg collections' 'oldness' within the museum had also

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<sup>117</sup> See Chapter Three, p.71. Pearce, ref.90, p.26.

<sup>118</sup> See for example Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992); *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>119</sup> Knell, ref.2, p.1.

<sup>120</sup> Benjamin, ref.82, p.60.

<sup>121</sup> Knell, ref.2, p.41.

<sup>122</sup> Knell, ref.2, p.32.

contributed to their de-valuation over time. Once an object becomes part of a collection, it attracts others like it. 'Better' examples of type may be acquired as opportunities arise and expertise develops, rendering earlier acquisitions obsolete. Things in the museum are indeed continually changing, as the world they inhabit, even from inside a locked cupboard, changes around them; as other things fall in and out of circulation; as 'ways of knowing'<sup>123</sup> change; as chemical transformation occurs in response to environmental fluctuation, however carefully managed. But in doing so, they may become something else, something new, given the opportunity. The Mary Greg Collection emerged through a combination of institutional renewal and review, creative investigation and reflection. *Mary Mary Quite Contrary*, and the various projects and investigations that resulted from it, prioritised not the rationalism of order but the potency of its disruption. They responded to the 'stoppage' of curiosity. As Alberto Manguel suggests, this invariably leads to questions rather than answers; as Jacques Rancière argues, these are frequently questions you are not supposed to ask.<sup>124</sup> The instability of the collection in the context of professional and institutional rationalisation provided a field for such questions. And in the unsettling of the status quo, new ideas have emerged.

Evidently, the objects in the Mary Greg Collection are intrinsically neither good nor bad. They are pieces of the world fashioned through the interplay of matter and action and environment, making their way through that world and changing both it and themselves to a greater or lesser extent as they do so. As this chapter demonstrates, however, they embody certain characteristics that, in a rationalist context, are denoted as bad. The bad object is the snag in the cloth, the thing that is smaller, or larger, than it should be, that both affirms and denies its own meaning. But as the insignificant detail that refuses to go away, it has, as Ellen Rooney suggests, 'critical force'.<sup>125</sup> In *The Return of Curiosity: What museums are good for in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Nicholas Thomas identifies the contemporary relevance of museums and their collections precisely in terms of the destabilising effects of curiosity.<sup>126</sup> Drawing on Edmund Burke's account of it as both childish and giddy but also integral to human passions, Thomas describes curiosity as 'an eagerness to encounter what is new or unfamiliar, an openness to difference and perhaps a willingness to suspend judgement'.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, he

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<sup>123</sup> Knell, ref.2, p.12.

<sup>124</sup> See Chapter One, p.2. Hydrarchy, 'Interview with Jacques Rancière by Lawrence Liang, Lodi Gardens, Delhi, 5 February 2009', 26 January 2010, <http://hydrarchy.blogspot.co.uk/2010/01/interview-with-jacques-ranciere.html> [accessed 07 August 2017].

<sup>125</sup> Rooney, ref.102, p.xxiii.

<sup>126</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity: What museums are good for in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016) p.15.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas, ref.126, p.15.

suggests, in an age of increasing hostility towards otherness, expressed in national isolationism and the rise of far right politics, curiosity is 'fertile and necessary, not only for people in general, but specifically for those of us alive in the twenty-first century'.<sup>128</sup> Thomas' book places collections explicitly centre-stage, not just as resources for understanding the past, or even the present, but also as 'creative technologies that people can use to create new things'.<sup>129</sup>

Over the past 15 years, the Mary Greg Collection has facilitated the creation of multiple new things: artworks, essays, arguments; learning programmes, handling resources, research projects; external and internal objects. All have coalesced to a greater or lesser extent around the affective potential of material engagement. The digital age has yielded not just global communication and technological advance on a previously unimaginable scale, but with it a growing sense of the necessity of intimate, sensorial, emotional encounters that are grounded in the tangible material world. This is evident not just in academic 'turns' but more widely through the renewed popularity in recent years of things assumed to be obsolete: vinyl records, 35mm photography, the typewriter and the board game. All are enjoying a resurgence of interest, not just as nostalgic remembrance among the old but with younger generations for whom they are new.<sup>130</sup> Amateur crafts and do-it-yourself are on the rise, particularly when combined with opportunities for face-to-face social interaction, from knitting circles to repair cafes.<sup>131</sup> The Slow Movement, in everything from food to fashion to cinema to scholarship, has emerged as an attempt to resist the accelerated digital world and its pressures.<sup>132</sup> Aligned to this, 'mindfulness', a form of meditation involving 'reconnecting with our bodies and the sensations they experience',<sup>133</sup> is a growth area, incorporated into museum learning and engagement programmes under the wider umbrella of 'health and

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<sup>128</sup> Thomas, ref.126, p.16.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas, ref.126, p.17.

<sup>130</sup> See David Sax, *The Revenge of Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016). See also Liz Mitchell, 'What is Art School For?' in Laura Robertson (ed.), *On Being Curious: New Critical Writing on Contemporary Art From the North West of England* (Liverpool: The Double Negative, 2016) pp.5-11, for an account of the 2015 Manchester School of Art project *adoptaslide* which also evidences this renewal of interest.

<sup>131</sup> See Kim Stoddart and Patrick Collinson, 'Meet the fix-perts, an army of experts determined to get Britain on the mend', *The Guardian*, 15 April 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2017/apr/15/repair-cafe-fix-yourself-laptop-save-fortune> [accessed 23 September 2017].

<sup>132</sup> Carl Honore, *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (London: Orion Books, 2004).

<sup>133</sup> Professor Mark Williams, cited in National Health Service, 'Mindfulness', 06 January 2016, <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx#what> [accessed 23 September 2017].

wellbeing'.<sup>134</sup> In this context, the Mary Greg Collection, in its quiet smallness, its drawing of attention to the often unnoticed but profoundly grounding interactions of everyday life – its focus on 'things of the least' no less – has considerable relevance.

In 2011, the V&A exhibition *Power of Making* brought together a range of objects, from dry stone walling and nail art to crochet and precision engineering. It celebrated making as a key ingredient of personal and social life, 'a continuum that must be protected and encouraged'.<sup>135</sup> An introductory essay by Daniel Miller identified craft skill as not just the domain of the trained professional but an intrinsic part of everyday life. He linked it to the 'art of care...as cousin to the care that we retain for other people and their labour, and to a care and concern for our environment and its future'.<sup>136</sup> He thus instructed the reader to:

...go out and learn to make something, just because you can. Feel for yourself that sense of achievement and exhilaration when you see before you the finished object of your own labour, and how that object has in turn made you more than you otherwise had been.<sup>137</sup>

Miller's words echo those expressed by Mary Greg nearly a century earlier: "'Produce, produce...'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee; out with it then, up, up. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might, work while it is called today,"'.<sup>138</sup>

Since *Mary Mary Quite Contrary*, parts of the collection have become more integrated into the contemporary life of the Galleries. They now form the subject of a regular handling session, and have been selected for inclusion in multiple collections-based exhibitions by both curators and visiting artists. They continue to be used by staff and students at Manchester School of Art, and a project is currently underway with ceramicist Kate Haywood to make work in response to the collection. In September 2017 the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester requested the loan of the Samuel Crompton cotton threads for a new display in their Textiles Gallery. Curator Katherine Belshaw explained that '[a]s I've been drawing up the object list for the new gallery, I've found I've kept coming back to the threads...They tell such

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<sup>134</sup> See for example Manchester City Galleries' project, *The Mindful Museum*, Manchester Art Gallery, 'What is the Mindful Museum?', no date, <http://manchesterartgallery.org/whatis-the-mindful-museum/> [accessed 23 September 2017].

<sup>135</sup> Daniel Charny (ed.), *Power of Making* (London: V&A Publishing, 2011) p.8.

<sup>136</sup> Daniel Miller, 'The Power of Making', in Charny, ref.135, p.22.

<sup>137</sup> Miller, ref.136, p.15.

<sup>138</sup> Greg, ref.111, p.6.

a fantastic story'.<sup>139</sup> It is a story not of the epiphanic 'light bulb' moment of invention, but of the gradual, incremental and often faltering footsteps by which new ideas develop.

Most of the collection, however, is still sitting in cupboards and boxes and drawers, in rooms across the city, apparently oblivious to all the talking and writing and thinking that has gone on around it in the past decade. It sits in the precarious space that Walter Benjamin describes as the 'dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order'.<sup>140</sup> Which is perhaps a good description of museums and the things they care for on behalf of society; continually engaged in the creative production of order and meaning that will always eventually unravel, that will yield new possibilities and then fall apart, over and over and over again.

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<sup>139</sup> Katherine Belshaw, Curator of Industrial Heritage, Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester, email to Janet Boston, Craft and Design Curator, Manchester City Galleries, 31 August 2017.

<sup>140</sup> Benjamin, ref.82, p.60.







Figure 8.1: Miniature jam jar, no number. From the Mary Greg Collection.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion

*'...a jam jar sits on a wooden table. It is huge...'*<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen years ago I placed a tiny jar of pretend jam on a miniature wooden table in a toy house in an art gallery. Five years ago I pressed my nose to the glass of the showcase, revisited that moment and imagined myself back into the house. This research has followed a similar trajectory of revisiting, moving from inside to outside and back again but differently. *'Believe me, I remain...': The Mary Greg Collection at Manchester City Galleries* is the work of a curator-turned-historian. Its starting point was my professional and emotional investment in both the collection and institution, built up over two decades, and my observation, at the start of the twenty-first century, of an emergent sense of conflict regarding the status and meaning of the collection within that institution. It is, in this respect, an object-centred study,<sup>2</sup> in that it was motivated by a curiosity about the objects themselves and their apparently incongruous situation; a quiet but stubborn persistence in simply 'being there', regardless of whether or not they should be.

At the same time, however, it is a piece of historical research. It comprises an analysis of the scope, content and character of the collection as conducted through an investigation of its historical trajectory through the institution. It thus treats the collection as both subject and source. The relationship between these two identities is complex. The past that this research addresses is not neatly separated from the present of the research itself but merges into it. Furthermore, it is a past which also merges with the personal history of the researcher. I am not positioned solely as observer, nose pressed (in this case) to the window of history, but am also one of its later protagonists. My own experiences, encounters, relationships and memories form part of the evidence for the story. Even the starting point for this thesis, my account of revisiting the collection on display in November 2012, has fallen into history. The jam jar is no longer on the kitchen table; the Gallery of Craft & Design has been dismantled.

Over the five year period of this research other things have changed, including my own relationship with the collection. I have become more 'historian' and less 'curator', a shift which has influenced the final shape of this thesis. It is primarily a historical account, a narrative

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<sup>1</sup> Prologue, p.xiii.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Two, p.25. Karen Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009) p.4.

timeline of events and actions and a speculation on their causes and effects based on analysis of a variety of sources. As the research progressed and the historical narrative began to emerge, it seemed increasingly important to give this the space it required. At the same time, however, my sense of responsibility to the collection itself remained undimmed. It is a collection which still exists as a material entity in the present. This research emerged from a sense of curiosity about the apparently conflicting identities of the collection as *both* historical narrative and material entity that earlier institutional discussions had made manifest. A key motivation for undertaking it was to provide a more informed understanding of its potential value *as* material entity, to provide a deeper context for future institutional decision-making around it. Thus, I have attempted to navigate a careful path between these identities and to consider the correspondences between them. In doing so, the collection and its content emerges as embedded in successive generations of relationships, the complex interactions between people, place and things. This thesis approaches the Mary Greg Collection through these relationships, from the imagined 'voicefulness'<sup>3</sup> of the unknown and unknowable people who once made and used its objects, to the collectors and curators who gathered them together, to the artists, curators and researchers who have since used them, and continue to use them, to make new things.

## Words and things

The account which this thesis relates is profoundly shaped by my attention to a body of objects and a body of letters. Both the collection and the archive have been considered in terms of the specific historical evidence they yield *and* their sensorial affective properties. For as Aristotle claims, 'nothing is found in the intellect which was not first found in the senses'.<sup>4</sup> However, articulating this within the parameters and structure of a written thesis presented a particular challenge. To return to Amy Woodson-Boulton's 'at/through' distinction,<sup>5</sup> I have tried to stay both on the 'surface' of things in terms of responding to material encounters in the present, and to move through them, to use the collection and archive in order to reach back into the past. But it was impossible to hold two focal points in play at any one time; I could only move back and forth between them. Thus, Chapters Three to Six, being located firmly in the past, are

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter Seven, pp.287-288. John Ruskin, cited in Siân Jones, 'Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity', *Journal of Material Culture Studies*, 15 (2010) p.189.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Ross Birrell, 'Editorial: A Gathering of Artistic Research: From *New Science* to *Nameless Science*', *ART & RESEARCH: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, 2 (2) (2009), <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/v2n2editorial.html> [accessed 10 March 2018].

<sup>5</sup> Chapter Four, p.157. Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) p.149.

predominantly narrative. I could have stopped at this point, neatly separating the historical identity of the collection from its present-day existence by restricting it to the period of Mary Greg's own lifetime. Chapter Seven, however, reflecting on the more recent past in which I have played a central part, enabled me to foreground the material qualities of the collection more explicitly, and to reflect on the relationship between past and present. Even so, sensory response is hard to articulate in a meaningful way, perhaps precisely because of the ways in which the material artefact 'speaks what *cannot* be spoken, writes what *cannot* be written'<sup>6</sup> [my emphasis]. In attempting to write about sensorial encounters, something is always lost in translation. In the end, the text of this thesis approaches this from the perspective of human interactions with objects.

As a result, the objects themselves are most present within this thesis in the form of photographs. In some respects, I have thus done exactly what I set out not to do, but I hope that the kinds of photographs that punctuate the writing provide more than 'merely illustration to the plot'.<sup>7</sup> The close-up detail photographs that sit between certain chapters, and within Chapter Seven, are my best efforts at capturing the experience of days spent looking and handling in the store rooms at Manchester Art Gallery, Platt Hall and Queens Park. They are close up and in situ, partial and sometimes fuzzy. They include crumpled tissue paper, the edges of tables or wardrobe doors, and are lit according to the conditions of the moment, my own shadow sometimes darkening certain areas. Occupying Edward Hall's intimate zone, they focus on the incidental details – names or stitches or marks of repair – that, like Barthes' punctum, I found inexplicably poignant. They are not what I set out to do, but happened as the by-product of encounter, the fall-out from the event. Thus, they document particular moments in time and space. In this respect they differ from conventional museum object photography, the aim of which is to isolate the object from its temporal and spatial embeddedness through a combination of tight framing, neutral backdrop and arm's length proximity.

What my photographs fail to capture, of course, are the sounds, smells and other sensations that accompanied these moments – the heavy rustle and 'shush' of silk, the scratch of coarse wool, the still warmth of the Platt Hall attic on a summer afternoon and the smell that reminded me of my grandmother's house. On reflection, I wonder if such sensations are best expressed in kind, through material response itself. Hence my instinctive progression, as the

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter Two p.25. Christopher Tilley, 'Objectification', in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer, *The Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE Publications) p.62.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter Two, p.28.

research developed, from writing to photography, and latterly to drawing and sewing. This is probably influenced by having conducted my research in the context of an art school, surrounded by creative practitioners. Nonetheless, the images that accompany this thesis are intended to balance, as far as possible, a sense of the collection as a material entity in the present with the historical narrative of the collection's development in the past; to enable the reader to shift between looking 'through' and 'at' at strategic points. This is fundamentally important to the argument this thesis makes for the ongoing mutability of objects, even in museums, as embedded in interconnected relationships through time and space.

## Findings

In treating the collection as both subject matter and historical source, this thesis sets out a number of findings. At a basic level, the main finding is the collection itself. That which has, over time, become dispersed across disciplinary areas, physical sites and information systems has been re-gathered, and for the first time a full picture of the wider Greg collections has come to light. As a result, received wisdoms about the shape and scope of the collections and the processes by which they were assembled and transferred into public ownership have been revised. The division of objects into two gender-differentiated bodies is revealed as a construct of the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the reliability of core institutional records such as the accessions register is shown to be questionable, and official narratives of acquisition to have been retrospectively tidied up.

This research also draws attention to the Greg correspondence as a significant historical source, one which substantially changes the way the collections are understood. They neither begin nor end in 1922, despite the proliferation of numbers written, stamped and stitched on their objects, pinning them neatly to a definitive moment on the cusp between Lawrence Haward's 'old world' and 'new order'.<sup>8</sup> Through attention to both official records and letters, the Greg collections are instead identified as the product of a series of collaborative relationships between individuals and institution, enacted in response to changing personal, political and social circumstances over a period of nearly sixty years. Seen from this perspective, the Thomas Greg Collection, previously characterised as a singular and self-contained body of things, is re-situated as one aspect of a wider project embarked on jointly by a married couple and further shaped by the motivations and agendas of both the surviving partner and the institution itself. Furthermore, in paying particular attention to those parts of

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<sup>8</sup> Chapter Three, p.80. Lawrence Haward, 'The Function of Art Museums', *The Museums Journal*, 21, (January 1922) p.136.



the Greg collections that have not previously received academic attention, the extent and significance of Mary Greg's contribution to British museum culture in her own right begins to emerge.

The Greg collections incorporate, in microcosm, a history of changing attitudes towards the material culture of the domestic past, from the nineteenth century antiquarianism of Thomas Bateman, through an Arts and Crafts sensibility combined with developments in domestic ethnography, to the theorising of childhood and the interwar handicrafts revival. On a smaller scale, they share qualities with a number of better known examples: with the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Cambridge Archaeology Museum in an ethnographic focus on disappearing domestic traditions; with the Haslemere Peasant Arts Society and Harry Peach's Dryad collection in a focus on the redemptive capacities of hand making; with the Bethnal Green Museum in collecting the things of childhood. Mary Greg is shown to be not merely a follower of such initiatives but a fellow innovator. Together with her husband, she played a significant role in the development of Manchester City Art Galleries, the combined Greg collections paving the way for the development of the Galleries' wider decorative art collections. However, it was Mary Greg alone who, in the period after Thomas' death, made permanent the gift of the Greg collections and further developed them over the next three decades. In terms of numbers of objects given, she thus represents one of Manchester's most significant individual donors. More than this, though, she also contributed to the expansion of what was considered worthy of museum attention.

Mary Greg's focus on the material culture of childhood marks the first such museum project in Britain; although it was not further developed after the interwar period, her similar contributions to Bethnal Green set it on the path to becoming the National Museum of Childhood. Of considerably longer lasting impact in Manchester was her gift of some 600 items of clothing, textiles and accessories. It provided the origins of what is now recognised as one of the UK's pre-eminent collections of dress. The official history of Platt Hall Gallery of Costume begins in 1947 with the acquisition of the C. Willett Cunnington Collection and the appointment of Anne Buck as Curator. However, this has tended to obscure the quarter century of dress collecting that preceded it, and which began with Mary Greg.<sup>9</sup> In 1937, by which time the Galleries were actively collecting in this area, Cunnington described the

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<sup>9</sup> See for example Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) pp.134-5.

collection as rivalling 'any in the country',<sup>10</sup> a fact which contributed substantially to his decision to make Manchester the home of his own collection.<sup>11</sup> Open almost any cupboard in the stores at Platt Hall today, and the list of contents will be dominated by 1947 accession numbers. However, it almost invariably begins with 1922.

This research has also identified the Greg collections in Manchester as part of a wider body of objects given by Mary Greg to multiple museums and galleries across Britain and beyond. Although my focus is on the Manchester collections, the research draws attention to this wider context where it touches on Manchester's history. Biographical research into Mary Greg herself reveals a range of interconnected philanthropic interests founded in a Nonconformist Liberal upbringing and informed by her association with influential thinkers of the late nineteenth century, most notably John Ruskin. Previously unpublished letters from Ruskin and the Reverend Stopford A. Brooke have been uncovered in the collections of Sheffield Museums Trust and Sheffield Archives, letters which provide an insight into the challenges of late Victorian middle-class womanhood and which also suggest a potential source of inspiration for Mary Greg's later museum patronage. Evidence gleaned from a range of sources also makes a strong case for Mary Greg as a central influence in her husband's collecting and philanthropic activities during their married life together.

However, this research also demonstrates how the very sociality of her collecting and the strategic manner in which she approached it contributed to her disappearance from the historical record. Management of her husband's legacy enabled Mrs Greg to achieve her own ambitions but at the same time rendered her invisible. She maintained a consistently low profile, preferring in the main to act in the name of her late husband. While she insisted on the pottery collection staying together in one place as a visible testament to his legacy, her own collecting involved a widespread distribution of things. In this respect, the Manchester collection is just one part of a larger body of things, but one which is harder to 'see' than her husband's pottery collection, due to its geographical and institutional spread. Similarly, the social nature of her collecting makes it intrinsically harder to pin down, in terms of achievement, than that of the solitary pioneer. It makes for a more complicated story – one that can be easily overlooked. The Greg correspondence in Manchester survives in part because of a lack of overt archiving in the past. At the V&A, however, Civil Service archiving

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<sup>10</sup> C. Willett Cunningham, *English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937) p.444.

<sup>11</sup> See Jane Tozer and Sarah Levitt, *Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes 1770-1870* (Carno: Laura Ashley, 1983).

practices during the mid-twentieth century included the regular ‘weeding’ of records. As a result, Mary Greg’s side of a lengthy and close correspondence with Arthur Sabin, documented in the Hertfordshire Archives, is almost entirely gone (Fig.8.2). It is unclear precisely why this is so, but the embedding of business matters in letters of friendship may have led to them being regarded as unimportant in terms of institutional history.<sup>12</sup> Thus practices of documentation and decision-making in the moment as to what may or may not be significant in the future have also contributed to her erasure from the record. And while Mary Greg actively managed her husband’s legacy in the period after his death, there was no-one to do the same for her when the time came.

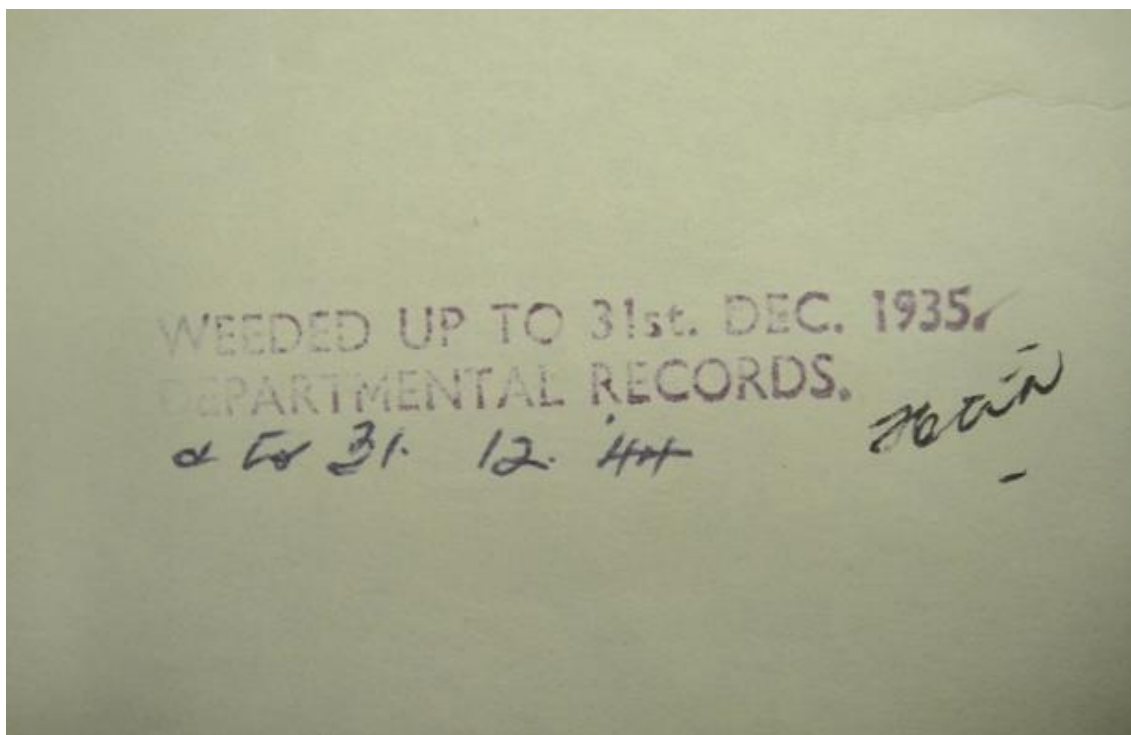


Figure 8.2: V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H. (detail).

In tracing the history of the Greg collections after this point, this research demonstrates how changing attitudes, interests and hierarchies of value contributed to a re-configuring of the material. The pottery collection acquired a reputation of national significance, centred around the figure of Thomas Greg as a man of discerning judgement and pioneering scholarship. Interpreted in terms of its formal aesthetic qualities, and framed as a coherent and disciplined body of objects, the pottery was distanced from material that did not support this narrative and threatened to disrupt it. The remainder of the Greg collections were gradually downgraded until they no longer counted as art but were regarded purely in terms of social

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Marsden, Senior Archivist, V&A Museum, email to Liz Mitchell, 23 October 2014.

history, kept at arm's length in the suburban branch galleries or dispersed within the wider collections. Thus, attitudes towards decorative art and the domestic within the art museum, combined with gendered approaches to the understanding and interpretation of both material things and their collecting, contributed to a gradual de-valuing of those aspects of the Greg collections associated with Mary Greg. It was in these terms, as a corollary to the better known pottery collection, that the Mary Greg Collection first appeared as a discrete entity at the start of this century.

## Contribution to knowledge

This research, and the findings outlined above, constitute a contribution to knowledge in multiple ways. Its primary contribution is to historical knowledge in the fields of collecting, gender and the art museum during the interwar period. However, it also develops a range of ideas that have implications for contemporary museum practice in relation to objects and collections.

The nineteenth century phenomenon of the art museum has a substantial and well-established literature. However, less attention has been paid to its development in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> As Amy Woodson-Boulton noted in 2012, the history of the municipal art museum in particular remains under-researched.<sup>14</sup> *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* evidences how the Victorian art museum developed in response to the concerns of industrial society. This research offers a perspective on the period that followed. It identifies the early twentieth century as a period of transition, from Victorian picture gallery to modern art museum, from rational recreation to democratic citizenship, from the collective rule of gentlemanly art committees to the artistic vision of the professional curator. It was not, however, a seamless transformation, the imposition of 'order and controlling will',<sup>15</sup> but characterised rather by a combination of ambition and opportunism, negotiation and compromise, within a global context of political and economic instability.

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<sup>13</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh's *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994) provides specific information relating to this particular period in the wider context of museums per se. Most recent literature on the twentieth century history of the art museum focuses on national institutions, eg. Nick Prior, *Museums & Modernity: Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); David Carrier, *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.5, p.17. See also Giles Waterfield, *The People's Galleries: Art Museums and Exhibitions in Britain, 1800-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Chapter Three, p.82. Haward, ref.8, p.141.

During this period, Manchester's collections expanded dramatically. In 1900, 73 years after the RMI acquired its first painting, the collection totalled 695 objects. Over the next 40 years a further 14,745 objects were acquired. What had been primarily a collection of painting and sculpture expanded to include British, European and Asian ceramics, glass, metalwork, furniture, textiles and clothing; global antiquities and local archaeological remains; contemporary craft and industrial design. One city centre site became a portfolio of eight, comprising both purpose-built civic premises and once-private houses, spread throughout the city's suburbs. The Victorian era may be regarded as the great age of museum building,<sup>16</sup> but in Manchester's case the first half of the twentieth century saw a dramatic expansion of scope, shaped in part by the singular vision of the Galleries' first professional curator, but also by the combined enthusiasms of committee members and influential patrons. Much of this was categorised as decorative art.

This research draws attention to the unsettled and continually shifting status of decorative art in the art museum even as the museum enthusiastically and deliberately set about collecting it. It demonstrates the difficulties of classification in the way objects oscillated between aesthetic and ethnographic interpretation within a hierarchical structure that valued the former more highly than the latter. It situates these within the context of increasing interest in ideas of home. Both Amy Woodson-Boulton and Kate Hill identify the Victorian museum as a domestic space in the public sphere, in its provision of sanctuary from the ugliness of urban industrial life.<sup>17</sup> In the aftermath of the First World War, the Greg collections arguably offered a similar sense of respite from the devastation of conflict in their depiction of the everyday rituals of domestic life and the potentially therapeutic benefits of craft practice. The acquisition of once-domestic houses as branch galleries also introduced an overtly domestic quality to the art gallery environment, one that was particularly appropriate to the display not only of domestic objects but of contemporary fine art that was itself increasingly domestic in scale and subject matter. As the period progressed, however, a more overt and instructive focus on the home emerged, manifest in the collecting and display of contemporary domestic furnishings as exemplars of good design. While authors including Pat Kirkham, Tanya Harrod and Fiona Hackney have explored the interwar development of both amateur and domestic

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<sup>16</sup> Barbara J. Black, *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000) pp.4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Woodson-Boulton, ref.5; Kate Hill, *Women and Museums 1850-1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

handicrafts and the role of craft in the state-sponsored drive to improve standards of design in industry, none have addressed the role of the museum in this respect.<sup>18</sup>

Gender is implicated in this history in multiple ways. The differing trajectories of both the Thomas and Mary Greg Collections manifests gendered approaches to the valuing and significance of material things and practices of collecting. It is implicated in the interpretation of the functional and aesthetic qualities of individual objects; in the ways they are organised, ordered and interpreted as evidence from which knowledge may be generated; in the kinds of expertise that has been considered as valid for their analysis and understanding. It informed the ways in which individuals conducted themselves according to contemporary rules of social propriety, but also how their actions and behaviours have been interpreted since. This research demonstrates how, as recently as 2002, assumptions about gender difference have influenced the interpretation of Mary and Thomas Greg's contributions to the museum. The Mary Greg Collection has been characterised as domestic, intimate, emotional, while the Thomas Greg Collection is scholarly, methodical, objective. Objects have been imbued with qualities that reflect the perceived attributes of their collectors.

This research complicates that picture. As a case study, it both upholds and unsettles wider perceptions of the gendered nature of collecting, in which acquisition, order and detachment are positioned as masculine, preservation, display and intimacy as feminine.<sup>19</sup> It demonstrates the interconnected origins of both Greg collections, and the partnership of Mary and Thomas Greg in their early development. It also suggests that, contrary to dominant perceptions of gendered behaviour, while Thomas Greg found personal satisfaction in dwelling on his collected objects in the privacy of his own home, Mary Greg appears to have found her greatest comfort in giving things away. If spatial distribution and placement are central elements in collecting, then one might regard the Manchester collection as just one part of a larger and more widely distributed body of things, through which Mary Greg positioned herself at the centre of a network of relationships. It is an inherently social model, based on the sharing and dispersal of things through which meaningful relationships with people are forged.

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<sup>18</sup> Pat Kirkham, 'Women and the Inter-war Handicrafts Revival', in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (eds.) *A View from the Interior: Women & Design* (London: The Women's Press, 1989) pp.174-183; Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999); Fiona Hackney, 'Use Your Hands for Happiness: Home Craft and Make-do-and-Mend in British Women's Magazines in the 1920s and 1930s', *Journal of Design History*, 19(1) (2006) pp.23-38.

<sup>19</sup> Chapter One, p.13. Russell W. Belk and Melanie Wallendorf, 'Of Mice and Men: Gender Identity in Collecting', in Katharine Martinez and Kenneth L. Ames (eds.), *The Material Culture of Gender, The Gender of Material Culture* (Delaware: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1997) p.10.



Finally, in bringing the history of the Mary Greg Collection up to the present day, this research provides a case study of the ways in which objects are continually subject to shifts in meaning and value as the context around them changes, even after they have achieved the supposed ‘immortality’<sup>20</sup> of museum status. Today, they are not the same objects that were given to the institution nearly a century ago; both institution and collection have grown old together. However, this research challenges Simon Knell’s assertion that museum collections of the past necessarily exchange ‘knowledge value’ for a merely fetishistic ‘oldness value’.<sup>21</sup> Chapter Seven identifies ways in which the modes and conditions of encounter with material things – spatial environment, codes of conduct, degrees of proximity, contextual information and the companionship (or not) of others – informs the way they are understood, and can enable them to be made anew. For the Mary Greg Collection, the particular conditions of encounter provided by the museum store room, rather than the exhibition gallery, enabled an intimacy of interaction that facilitated a deeper understanding of the material itself. As a result, shared qualities have been found between contemporary and historical concerns, in particular a renewed focus on the tangible but grounding interactions of everyday life and making as a form of care, in an age of digital rather than industrial acceleration. It has suggested new criteria of value found in the very characteristics that previously rendered the collection redundant in more conventional museological terms. This has potential implications for contemporary museum practice.

## Further research

To date, 32 museums and institutions across Britain and as far afield as New Zealand have been identified as recipients of gifts from Mary Greg. This research does not address what might be described as the dispersed Greg collection, and further research to determine the nature of this dispersal and its extent may provide further insights into spatial distribution as an aspect of collecting practice. Mary Greg’s dispersal of objects across multiple institutions bears comparison to that described by Susan Pearce on the part of Anne Hull Grundy in the 1980s. Bedridden through long-term illness, Grundy was nonetheless an avid collector of jewellery, much of which she immediately gave to museums in an act of dispersal that, ‘through the particular way in which it was done, achieved a close and continuing relationship

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<sup>20</sup> Chapter Seven, p.312. Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.26.

<sup>21</sup> Chapter Seven, p.272. Simon J. Knell (ed.), *Museums and the Future of Collecting* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004 [1999]) p.32.

with the receiving curators'.<sup>22</sup> This suggests parallels with Mary Greg's earlier collecting, in the way it facilitated particular forms of intimacy within otherwise restrictive circumstances. Related to this, further attention to the collaborative nature of collecting in terms of the partnership of Thomas and Mary Greg is worth pursuing. This research set out to investigate the Mary Greg Collection, then positioned as the complementary 'other' to the Thomas Greg Collection. Its findings, however, suggest a much closer and more collaborative relationship in play, one that problematises previous characterisations of both collectors. Both the gathering of objects by a married couple, and their subsequent dispersal through familial and institutional networks,<sup>23</sup> suggest practices of collecting motivated, in part at least, by the strengthening of emotional bonds. This has the potential to contribute further to current thought on aspects of gender, identity and emotion in collecting.

In relation to the interwar history of art and design, developing attitudes toward the domestic during this period also suggest room for further research. An idealisation of home – from the Omega Workshops to Winifred Nicholson's 'fusing of art and daily life';<sup>24</sup> from W. R. Lethaby's 'common art'<sup>25</sup> to the 1920s fascination with dolls' houses; from the collecting of domestic objects of the past to the art museum's display of 'good' design of the present – permeates this thesis. Domestic space is framed as both site and subject of creative practice, one in which women played a particularly dominant role, as artists, designers, historians and collectors. As the interwar period progressed, the notion of the 'everyday' became increasingly widespread, evidenced in popular histories such as those written by the Quennells, Dorothy Hartley and Margaret Elliot, and later Margaret Lambert and Enid Marx. Laura Carter links this to a democratizing of culture, in which visual and material modes of communication were potentially more accessible than the written word.<sup>26</sup> But it is also characterised by a foregrounding of creative practice; the authors cited above were artists, designers and collectors whose creative pursuits informed their historical research.

Relating to this, I am intrigued by the potential of multi-sensorial and creative responses to material things for historical investigation. This research emerged from a project that

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<sup>22</sup> Pearce, ref.19, p.203.

<sup>23</sup> The New Zealand connection is provided by Mary Greg's émigré brother, Arthur Hope, who settled in New Zealand in 1876. Another brother, Bateman Hope, emigrated to Canada, suggesting possible further lines of inquiry.

<sup>24</sup> Chapter Four, p.158. Jim Ede, 'Foreword', *Kettle's Yard house guide* (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard, 2002) p.5.

<sup>25</sup> Chapter Four, p.168. W. R. Lethaby, 'The Need for Beauty', in *Form in Civilization: Collected Papers on Art & Labour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), p.144.

<sup>26</sup> Chapter Four, pp.159-162. Laura Carter, 'The Quennells and the 'History of Everyday Life in England', c.1918-69', *History Workshop Journal*, 81 (1) (2016) pp.106-134.

combined these elements; it has attempted to continue in this vein, albeit only partially successfully. But it suggests a potentially mutually beneficial relationship between museum collections as documents of the past and ‘creative technologies’<sup>27</sup> for the future. The municipal museum is now over a century old; it carries within it with the cumulative legacies of its own historical practices. As *Collections for the Future* made clear in 2005, the question Barbara Black poses as central to the nineteenth century museum project has not gone away: ‘what does one do with all the things of the world?’.<sup>28</sup> In 2002 Simon Knell advocated rationalism; in 2016 Nicholas Thomas invoked curiosity, its apparent polar opposite.<sup>29</sup> In the context of rationalisation, the Mary Greg Collection appeared precisely as the ‘surplus in the field of the sensible’<sup>30</sup> that Tyson Lewis claims as necessary to curiosity. Subsequently, this research has suggested alternative criteria of value and potential uses for such collections, grounded in sensorial and intimate material encounter. However, this raises multiple challenges for an institution predicated on the preservation of material things, for close proximity changes things. But then, things are changing anyway, as this research shows. Perhaps it is time for museums to recognise that ‘order and controlling will’ are illusory.

The history of the Mary Greg Collection at Manchester City Galleries combines both preservation and letting go, gathering and giving away. The intertwined dynamics of intimacy and distance are key throughout. This ranges from the ‘absent presence’ of written correspondence, to the imaginative conjurings inspired by close contact with things from the past. It includes the sense of immensity held in smallness and the simultaneous surrender and resistance of material things that hide nothing yet remain secretive. It reflects the intimacy and distance involved in all human interaction as we struggle to grasp how it feels to be in someone else’s shoes, knowing that we never really can. All effect a kind of permeability, an intermingling of interior and exterior. The Mary Greg Collection is not simply an assemblage of objects, however they may be organised. It is found in the interconnectedness of object, archive and institution – things, words and place – and the manner in which they are encountered. It is both ‘object-subject interaction’ and ‘object-information package’,<sup>31</sup> but it adds to these elements the significance and meaning of place. Oddly, it is this very

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<sup>27</sup> Chapter One, p.2. Nicholas Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity: What museums are good for in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016) p.8.

<sup>28</sup> Black, ref.16, p.15.

<sup>29</sup> Knell, ref.21; Thomas, ref.25.

<sup>30</sup> Chapter One, p.2. Tyson E. Lewis, ‘Teaching with Pensive Images: Rethinking Curiosity in Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed’, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 46 (1) (2012) p.37.

<sup>31</sup> Sandra H. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) pp.3-5.

embeddedness that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, made the collection seem incongruous, even out of place. The value of the Mary Greg Collection at Manchester City Galleries was found in this very incongruity, as the snag, the stoppage, the necessary prompt to curiosity.



Figure 8.3: 'Polonaise and Bodice; yellow taffeta (No skirt) 1870-2' (1922.1892) (detail).





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Manchester City Galleries	Accessions Registers Annual Reports Committee Minutes Collection card index and database Collection catalogues and guide books Curator's Instruction Book Greg correspondence Press Cuttings Books
Sheffield Archives and Local Studies	Box GSG 21, 1991/55, 2010/3, Box 18
Sheffield Museums Trust	CGSG04941, CGSG04942, CGSG6142
Victoria & Albert Museum	V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H.
The Inner Temple Admissions Database	<a href="http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/">http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/</a>

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All images are taken by the author unless otherwise specified.

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- Figure 3.28 Manchester Art Museum, 1900. Photograph by W. Ellis © Manchester Libraries, reference m58955.
- Figure 3.29 Platt Hall, Rusholme, 1955. Photograph by T. Baddeley © Manchester Libraries, reference m47957.
- Figure 3.30 Wythenshawe Hall, Northenden, c.1955. Photograph by S. J. Hemington © Manchester Libraries, reference m47582.

## **Chapter Four      ‘Knucklebones and needlework’: The Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times**

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- Figure 4.12 Cat.192, 'Apple corer, 1746' (1922.832). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries
- Figure 4.13 Cat.178, 'Pipe: carving Adam and Eve...1751. Dutch' (1922.1174). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
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- Figure 4.15 Cat.218, 'A set of Roundels or Fruit Trenchers. Relics of the domestic life of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries' (1922.836). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.16 Cat.227, 'Old English scales' (1922.1238).
- Figure 4.17 Cat.215, 'Box in ivory, piqué. French' (1922.1162).
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- Figure 4.19 Cat.256, 'Brass snuffers' (1922.779). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.20 Cat.244, 'Lantern with flint glass' (1922.774). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.21 Cat.233, 'Oil lamp' (1922.791). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.22 Cat.234, 'Old candlestick. End of 18<sup>th</sup> century. From Glenquach, Perthshire' (1922.781). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.23 Cat.240, 'Flint tinder box' (1922.796). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.24 Cat.321, 'Six keys. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.695). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.25 Cat.291, three of 'Five ornamental keys. 17<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.694). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
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- Figure 4.27 Cat.316, 'Key found in the ruins of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus' (1922.691). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.28 Cat.231, 'Horse Shoe' (1922.1237). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.29 Cat.247, 'Spinning whorl' (1922.876). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.

- Figure 4.30 Cat.262, 'Two pointed shoes dug up in London, one with hay in it...Henry V 1413-1422' (1922.1804). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.31 Cat.245, 'Charms put into the water which cattle drink to make the animals more prolific. Anglo-Saxon' (1922.1284).
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- Figure 4.33 Cat.11, 'Child's bonnet, 1849' (1922.2085).
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- Figure 4.38 Cat.1, one of 'Three dresses. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1760). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.39 Cat.68, 'Three pairs of blue glass earrings. Brought by the Breton sailors for their sweethearts. End of 19<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.965).
- Figure 4.40 Cat.128, one of 'Seven small pincushions' (1922.895/7). Photograph ©Manchester City Galleries.
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- Figure 4.66 Kwakiutl Indian woman spinning, British Columbia, 1894, photograph by O. C. Hastings for Franz Boas. American Museum of Natural History, reference no.11608.
- Figure 4.67 Cat.264, 'A Fox Hunt. Cut out in paper' (1922.1677).
- Figure 4.68 Cat.265, 'Candlestick, cut work, silver and brass' (1922.792). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.69 Cat.283, 'Glass casket' (1922.1321).
- Figure 4.70 Cat.270, one of '11 pieces of inlaid straw work done by the French prisoners in the Napoleonic war' (1922.1297). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.71 Cat.268, 'Beaded work. The Battle of Ravenna. Italian' (1922.1848)
- Figure 4.72 Cat.281a, one of 'Two drinking horns: one showing mail coach attacked by Lion, and the other portrait of a lady' (1922.806). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.73 Cat.276, 'One of the earliest specimens of machine made lace. English. 1800' (1922.1847).
- Figure 4.74 Cat.269, 'Cards with the signs of Zodiac' (1922.1278). Photograph © Ben Blackall and Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.75 Cat.273, one of 'Two glass harps' (1922.1292).
- Figure 4.76 Cat.53, 'Sampler work by Jane Elizabeth Underwood, 18<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1822).
- Figure 4.77 Cat.45a, 'Ribbonwork satchet. About 1850' (1922.1823).
- Figure 4.78 Cat.54, 'Old English petit point work. William and Mary period' (1922.1821).
- Figure 4.79 Cat.49, 'Child's cap, corded work. 17<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1833).
- Figure 4.80 Cat.44, 'Henry VIII's Ship, "Harry Grace à Dieu", embroidered by Mrs T. T. Greg' (1922.1844).
- Figure 4.81-4.83 *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1922, p.6 (details).
- Figure 4.84 Platt Hall, Rusholme, c.1908. Photograph © Manchester Libraries, reference m48789.
- Figure 4.85 Cat.37, 'Vase of flowers made of applied cut silks, in old carved frame' (1922.1334). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.86 *Red Hot Pokers*, Vanessa Bell, 1921. From the Rutherford Collection. Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.87 '269 Plaster Casts, Isteria Imperiati' (1922.1470/269).
- Figure 4.88 'Candlestick, old, wood, used at Eton College' (1922.778).
- Figure 4.89 'Mug, glass, white line decoration, Nailsea ware. Late 18<sup>th</sup> century' (1922.1320).
- Figure 4.90 'Bowl...leaf decoration in brown and green' (Della Robbia art pottery) (1922.1629). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.91 'Flower Vase...Enoch Wood, Burslem ware' (1922.1568). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.92 '89 pieces of old glass, dug up in London' (1922.1402).
- Figure 4.93 'Caribbean basket, brown natural straw' (1922.1382). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.94 'Corn Sieve, straw work in artistic design' (1922.1392). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.

- Figure 4.95 'Corn Sieve, Nigeria Benin straw work' (1922.1383). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.96 'Bag, pale green and natural coloured straw' (1922.1370). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.97 'Basket, circular, made of wood like fibre, reddish brown' (1922.1373). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.98 'Raffia basket, fine plain straw, round, Made by the Queen Alexander craftworkers' (1922.1396). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 4.99 Distribution of objects across ethnographic categories in accession number order, from 1922.686-1922.1750. Probably done c.1932.

## **Chapter Five      These seemingly little things: The Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses**

- Figure 5.1 Cat.26, 'Greengrocer's Shop: fruit modelled in wax: by Mrs. Greg, 1922' (1922.92)
- Figure 5.2 Heaton Hall, Heaton Park, 12 June 1905. Photograph by T. Baddeley © Manchester Libraries, ref m47774.
- Figure 5.3 Whit Sunday in Heaton Park, 8 June 1919. Photograph by T. Baddeley © Manchester Libraries, ref m58253.
- Figure 5.4 Ex-cat, 'Doll; dressed complete, a Fishwife, more than 100 years old' (1922.100).
- Figure 5.5 Cat.31, 'Doll's House with furniture in each room: Adam period, c.1750' (1922.96). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.6 Cat.287, 'Whitewood Armchairs' (1922.437). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.7 Cat.71, 'Doll: Stuart period' (1922.437).
- Figure 5.8 Cat.200, 'Tea Set: blue glass: on mirror' (1922.342). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.9 Cat.463, The Thumb Bible, one of multiple 'Children's Miniature Books, Almanacs, Nursery Rhyme Books, Plays etc' (1922.550). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.10 Ex-cat, 'Tin Carriage with Coachman and Grey Horse' (1922.608). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.11 Cat.497, 'Ring-a-ring-a-roses', Jessie Willcox Smith, one of several 'Coloured Pictures illustrating Nursery Rhymes' (1922.676). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.12 Memo from Arthur Sabin to the V&A Textile Department, Minute Paper Paper 1925/657, 28 October 1924, V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H.
- Figure 5.13 Embroidered sampler, 'Charlotte Reeves Aged 12 1829' (1922.1843).
- Figure 5.14 Cat.102, 'Bedstead: original woven hangings: Jacobean period' (1922.212). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figures 5.15-5.16 Cat.22, 'Doll's Furniture: painted wood, flower decoration' (1922.88). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.

- Figure 5.17 Cat.156, 'Chair: high-back: mahogany' (1922.428). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.18 Cat.359, 'Furniture made by a Shepherd on Salisbury Plain, 1921' (1922.531). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.19 Cats.331-332, 'Furniture made by a father for his children: 1818' (1922.488). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.20 Cat.144, 'Chair: rush-bottomed: 1780' (1922.260). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.21 Cat.149, 'Garden chairs: wood' (1922.255). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.22 Cat.325, 'Monkey on a stick' (1922.452). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.23 Cat.368, 'Monkey on a stick' (1922.542). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.24 Ex-cat., one of 'Two dolls, Louis XIV period' (1922.384).
- Figure 5.25 Cat.84, "'Queen Adelaide": c.1836' (1922.190).
- Figure 5.26 Cat.285, "'Patty: 1860' (1922.381).
- Figure 5.27 Cat.59, "'Lucy: 1850' (1922.177).
- Figure 5.28 Cat.279, "'Clarissa": holding baby doll: mid-Victorian' (1922.436).
- Figure 5.29 Cat.238, 'Doll with Two Bonnets: c.1830' (1922.420).
- Figure 5.30 Cat.234, 'Doll: Pedlar with Basket' (1922.415).
- Figure 5.31 Cat.142, 'Washerwoman: c.1800' (1922.257).
- Figure 5.32 Cat.104, 'Model of a Nuremberg Kitchen: made by Mr. Hummerston for Mrs. Greg' (1922.257). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.33 Nuremberg Kitchen, c.1800, National Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green (V&A Museum), given by Mary Greg, accession number Misc.217-1923. Photograph © V&A Museum.
- Figures 5.34-5.45 Cat.458, 'Doll's House and Furniture: George III', exterior and interior (furniture missing) (1922.637). Photographs © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figures 5.36-5.37 Cat.448, 'A Doll's House made by a father for his children', exterior and interior (1922.635). Photographs © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figures 5.38-5.39 Ex-cat., 'Doll's House and Furniture. 150 articles', exterior and interior (furniture missing) (1922.642). Photographs © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.40 Cat.385, 'Sedan chair and Carriers' (1922.569). Photograph © Ben Blackall and Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.41 Cat.492, 'Noah's Ark: modern (Pomona)' (1935.999). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 5.42 Objects from the Greg Collection of Dolls & Dolls' Houses, illustrated in C. Geoffrey Holme, *Toys of Yesterday* (London: The Studio, 1932) p.69.
- Figure 5.43 Cutting from *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 December 1922, Press Cuttings book, MCG Archive.

## Chapter Six      ‘Treasuring things of the least’: Mary Hope Greg (1859-1949)

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- Figure 6.2      Letter from Mrs Greg to Mr Batho, 25 October 1922. MCG Archive.
- Figure 6.3      Letter from Mr Batho to Mrs Greg, 27 October 1922. MCG Archive.
- Figure 6.4      Interior of the St George’s Museum, Walkley, Sheffield, c.1876.  
Reproduced from Robert Hewison, ‘John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye’, *the Victorian Web*,  
<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/hewison/7.html> [accessed 21 August 2017].
- Figure 6.5      Winington Hall, Northwich, Cheshire, date unknown. Reproduced from ‘Miss Bell and the Leadbetter Aunts’, *C. W. Leadbetter 1854-1934*,  
<https://cwleadbeater.wordpress.com/2016/11/08/miss-bell-and-the-leadbeater-aunts/> [accessed 10 October 2017].
- Figure 6.6      Letter from John Ruskin to ‘Ray’, undated, Sheffield Museums Trust, accession number CGSG6142iii.
- Figure 6.7      Typewritten copy of a letter from Stopford A. Brooke to Miss Hope, 13 August 1879. The date of the copy is unknown. Sheffield Archives, GSG21/18.
- Figure 6.8      *John Ruskin* (1819-1900), by Hubert von Herkomer, 1879, watercolour on paper (detail). National Portrait Gallery accession number 1336,  
<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitExtended/mw05508/John-Ruskin> [accessed 10 October 2017].
- Figure 6.9      Reverend Stopford A. Brooke (1832-1916), by Elliott & Fry, c.1888, photograph (detail). Reproduced from ‘Clarence Edmund Fry of Elliott & Fry of London’, *Sussex PhotoHistory*, <http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/FryClarence.htm> [accessed 10 October 2017].
- Figure 6.10      *Miss Hope*, by Hubert von Herkomer, 9 November 1885. Manchester City Galleries, accession number 1941.74.
- Figure 6.11      Thomas Tylston Greg (1858-1920), date unknown. MCG Archive.
- Figure 6.12      Mrs Greg’s nature diary, Vol. 1, p.59, 13 May 1904. Museums Sheffield, reference CGSG04942.
- Figure 6.13      Mrs Greg’s nature diary, Vol. 1, p.60, May 1904. Museums Sheffield, reference CGSG04942.
- Figure 6.14      Lomberdale Hall, by William Bowman, c.1860. Photograph © North East Midlands Photographic Record, reference DCHQ200009,  
[http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/frontend.php?action=printdetails&keywords=Ref\\_No\\_increment;EQUALS;DCHQ200009](http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/frontend.php?action=printdetails&keywords=Ref_No_increment;EQUALS;DCHQ200009) [accessed 10 October 2017].
- Figure 6.15      *Thomas Bateman (1821-1861) and his son*, by Thomas Joseph Banks, 1860. Museums Sheffield, accession number 1961.182.
- Figure 6.16      Hope Cottages, Westmill, built in 1911, owned by the Guild of St George and administered by the T. and M. Greg Trust, 2013.



- Figure 6.17 Westmill Village Hall, barn conversion by Charles Spooner, 1901, owned by the Guild of St George and administered by the T. and M. Greg Trust, 2013. Reproduced from *Beautiful England photos.uk*, <https://www.beautifulenglandphotos.uk/villagehallwestmill2/> [accessed 10 October 2017].
- Figure 6.18-6.19 Catalogue and photograph of the Westmill Museum, c.1924. Photograph © Ashwell Village Museum.
- Figure 6.20-6.21 Mrs Greg's nature diary, Vol. 2 (details). Sheffield Museums Trust, CGSG04941.
- Figure 6.22 Valentine's card, "To thee my heart beats with affection sincerely" (1937.352) (detail).

## Chapter Seven **Everyday things in the art museum: The Mary Greg Collection**

- Figure 7.1 Prototype for a Mary Greg Collection 'Top Trumps' game exploring different modes of value, designed by Jonathan Hitchens with Sharon Blakey (MSA), 2009. Photograph © Jonathan Hitchens.
- Figures 7.2-7.3 Gallery of Craft & Design, Manchester Art Gallery, 2002-2014.
- Figures 7.4-7.5 Dolls' houses in storage at Queens Park, 2017.
- Figure 7.6 Dolls' house interior, Queens Park, 2017.
- Figure 7.7 *Mary Mary Quite Contrary: Investigating the Mary Greg Collection* project blog homepage.
- Figure 7.8 Liz Mitchell (MCG) and Sharon Blakey (MSA) in the stores at Queens Park, 2008. Photograph © Alex Woodall.
- Figure 7.9 Object selection during a visit to the collections in storage at Queens Park, 2008. Photograph © Alex Woodall.
- Figure 7.10 Spoons from the collection in storage at Queens Park (from left, 1922.843, 1922.846, 1922.846).
- Figure 7.11 Cotton thread found by Hazel Jones in the Mary Greg correspondence. Photograph © Hazel Jones.
- Figures 7.12-7.13 Box of 'string too small for use' belonging to Hazel Jones. Photographs © Hazel Jones.
- Figure 7.14 *Quizzing Glasses*, Hazel Jones, 2012. Photograph © Hazel Jones.
- Figure 7.15 *String Dispensers*, Hazel Jones, 2013. Photograph © Hazel Jones.
- Figure 7.16 *Oblong Bachelor Buttons for String Too Small for Use*, 2013. Photograph © Hazel Jones.
- Figure 7.17 Schloss's English Bijou Almanac, 1839 (1922.499).
- Figure 7.18 Work in progress by student Carly McDermott, family history brooches and pins inspired by silhouettes, tassies and a game of spillikins in the Mary Greg Collection, on display in the Gallery of Craft & Design, 2010.
- Figure 7.19 Silhouette of a young woman (1922.1643).
- Figure 7.20 Work in progress by student, Carly McDermott.
- Figure 7.21 *Table Runner* (detail), Sharon Blakey and Ismini Samanidou, 2011. Photograph © Sharon Blakey and Ismini Samanidou.

- Figure 7.22 Linen sheet for a cradle or cot, inscribed 'T. A. Hope' (1922.2190).
- Figure 7.23 Sampler, coarse yellow linen, worked by Emily H. Jones (1922.2140).
- Figures 7.24-7.25 Pair of child's shoes, inscribed 'Albert Greg' (1922.1775).
- Figure 7.26 Envelope containing valentine's card addressed to Thomas Greg, 1876 (1922.1272).
- Figures 7.27-7.29 Wedding dress, c.1896, with inscription 'M. Hope' (1922.1895).
- Figure 7.30 'Mary Mary Quite Contrary', lithograph by Jessie Willcox Smith, c.1920 (1922.668). Photograph © Manchester City Galleries.
- Figure 7.31 Arms of Carey of Devon, worked in rolled paper by Napoleonic prisoners-of-war (1922.1682) (detail).
- Figures 7.32-7.34 Picture of a lady made from butterfly wings, with accompanying label and catalogue card commentary (details) (1922.1861).
- Figure 7.35 Noah's Ark animals (1922.486). Photograph © Ben Blackall and Manchester City Galleries.

## **Chapter Eight Conclusion**

- Figure 8.1 Miniature jam jar, no number. From the Mary Greg Collection.
- Figure 8.2 V&A Museum Registry, nominal file Greg, Mrs Mary H. (detail).
- Figure 8.3 'Polonaise and Bodice; yellow taffeta (No skirt) 1870-2' (1922.1892) (detail).

## Appendices

### Appendix One

Appendix One is supplied on the CD accompanying the hard copy of this thesis. It comprises three Excel spreadsheets which provide inventories of the Greg Collections of Handicrafts of Bygone Times and Dolls and Dolls' Houses, as they were accessioned in c.1932. A third inventory lists objects either not included in the accession lists or given after this date.

Each inventory comprises a cross-referencing of the original accession list, the published Greg catalogues and the current collections database. Where photographs existed for the objects prior to this research they have been included. Much of the collection was not photographed, however, and a substantial amount of further material (though not all due to the scale of the task), predominantly clothing and dolls, has been photographed as part of this research and is also included. Further references, where relevant (for example identified matches with Thomas Bateman's published catalogues) have also been included. The location of objects, at Manchester Art Gallery, Platt Hall or Queens Park when the research was undertaken, is also given.

- 1.1 Inventory of the Greg Collection of Handicrafts of Bygone Times.
- 1.2 Inventory of the Greg Collection of Dolls and Dolls' Houses.
- 1.3 Inventory of material donated by Mary Greg not listed in either of the above.

### Appendix Two

List of museums and other institutions identified as being in receipt of objects from Mary Greg, based on correspondence held by Hertfordshire Archives and supplemented with further examples identified during the course of this research.

Architectural and Archaeological Society of Buckinghamshire  
 The Beaney Institute, Canterbury  
 Bethnal Green Museum  
 Buckinghamshire County Museum  
 Brentford Public Library and Museum  
 Brighton Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery  
 Bristol Museum and Art Gallery  
 British Museum  
 Buxton Museum and Art Gallery  
 Carisbrooke Castle  
 Dorset County Museum, Dorchester  
 Edinburgh Corporation Museum  
 Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge  
 Geffrye Museum, London

Guildhall, Winchester  
 Hertfordshire County Museum  
 Hertfordshire Institute of Agriculture  
 Ipswich Museum  
 Letchworth Museum  
 London Museum  
 Liverpool Museum  
 Luton Public Museum  
 Manchester City Art Galleries  
 Manchester Museum  
 Norwich Castle Museum  
 Southwark Public Library  
 Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter  
 South Canterbury Museum, Timaru, New Zealand  
 Stevenage Museum  
 Victoria & Albert Museum  
 Wellcome Historical Medical Museum  
 Worcester Royal Porcelain Museum

## Appendix Three

Publications produced during the period of this research, to which this research has contributed.

- 3.1 Blakey, S., & Mitchell, L. (2017). 'Unfolding: a multisensorial dialogue in 'material time''. In Robertson, F., and Roy, E. A. (ed.), *Studies in Material Thinking: Multisensorial materialities in the art school*, 17, 3-19. <https://www.materialthinking.org/papers/246>.
- 3.2 Mitchell, L. (2017). *'Treasuring things of the least': Mary Hope Greg, John Ruskin and Westmill, Hertfordshire*. York: Guild of St George.
- 3.3 Mitchell, L. (2016). What is Art School For? In Robertson, L. (ed.), *On Being Curious: New Critical Writing on Contemporary Art from the North West of England*. Liverpool: The Double Negative. 5-11. Also available at <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2015/09/what-is-art-school-for/>
- 3.4 Mitchell, L. (2015). In the Yellow Room. In Mansfield, L., and Oliver, E. (eds.), *FEAST: Laying the Table*, (1). <http://feastjournal.co.uk/article/in-the-yellow-room/>.

## Appendix Four

Conference papers given during the period of this research, to which this research has contributed.

- 4.1 Mitchell, L. 'The Lady Vanishes: Researching Mary Greg at Manchester City Galleries'. Paper presented at *Gendering Museum Histories*. Museums and Galleries History Group Annual Conference, Ashmolean Museum, 6-7 September 2016.
- 4.2 Mitchell, L. 'Unbecoming: behaving badly in the museum stores'. Paper presented at *Material Culture in Action: Practices of making, collecting and re-enacting art and design*. Glasgow School of Art, 7-8 September 2015.
- 4.3 Mitchell, L. 'Belonging: the miscellaneous collections of Mary Hope Greg'. Paper presented at *Collectors and Collecting*. University of Portsmouth, 5 June 2015.
- 4.4 Mitchell, L. 'Believe me, I remain... Encountering Mary's wedding dress'. Paper presented at *How Do We Study Objects? Analyses in Artefact Studies*. Artefacta: The Finnish Network for Artefact Studies, Helsinki, 8-9 May 2014.
- 4.5 Mitchell, L. 'Creativity and wonder: the handicraft collection of Mary Hope Greg'. Paper presented at *Enid Marx and her contemporaries: Women designers and the popularisation of 'folk arts' in Britain 1920-1960*. Manchester School of Art and Compton Verney, Warwickshire, 13 September 2013.
- 4.6 Mitchell, L. 'Believe me, I remain... The finest cotton threads spun upon the mule?'. Paper presented at *Encounters*, University of Manchester, Morgan Centre, 3-4 July 2013.
- 4.7 Mitchell, L. 'The Intimate Glimpse: Familial Narratives and the Mary Greg Collection'. Paper presented at *Siblings*, University of Manchester and Manchester Art Gallery, 23 March 2013.