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intangible cultural heritage**

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IT'S ALL RELATIVE: THE SMALL CRAFT MUSEUM'S  
CONTRIBUTION TO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

The Heritage Crafts Association's Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts illustrates the importance of perpetuating the intangible cultural heritage of heritage crafts in the UK. This study considers the ways in which small craft museums contribute to the UK's intangible cultural heritage. This is achieved through the exploration of five small heritage craft museums: The Clockmakers' Museum, The Fan Museum, The Lace Guild Museum, The Quilt Museum and Gallery, and The Stained Glass Museum.

This study seeks to elucidate the characteristics of these individual organisations, each of which serve two separate yet mutually dependent purposes that are atypical for most museums; 1) the perpetuation of their specific heritage craft and 2) the support of the individual communities of people that have a connection to the craft and without whom the specific craft practice could face extinction. This thesis is concerned with the importance of these heritage crafts in so far as they are the 'raison d'être' of each of these small museums, rather than a definitive exploration of the minutia and skills required for the individual handcrafts.

This thesis demonstrates that small heritage craft museums offer an important avenue for the continuous transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge between craft practitioners and non-practitioners and an important resource for practical and social interaction through their communities of practice. The continued viability of these museums and their heritage crafts is contingent upon inspiring future generations to actively engage in perpetuating the intangible cultural heritage of these crafts.

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## List of Images

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that all of the work contained in this thesis is my own work.

Kelly Cordes

April 2018

## Abbreviations

ACE	Arts Council England
AIM	Association of Independent Museums
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
HCA	Heritage Crafts Association
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum

## Introduction

As I write this thesis introduction there has yet to be any definitive data that states the number of small independent museums that currently exist in the UK. AIM cites that there are 'at least 1600'; a number that the organisation says is 'more than half' of all museums in the UK (Association of Independent Museums, 2016). According to AIM, two thirds of these independents are subject specific specialist museums and two thirds have annual incomes of less than £100,000, while a quarter make less than £10,000 (2016). And yet, independent museums in England are a valuable national asset, generating more annual income for the museum sector 'than any other type of museums': £1.17 billion (Association of Independent Museums, 2016). This thesis examines five of these small independent specialist museums located around the country and includes, in alphabetical order:

- The Clockmakers' Museum in London
- The Fan Museum in Greenwich
- The Lace Guild Museum in Stourbridge
- The Quilt Museum and Gallery in York
- The Stained Glass Museum in Ely

Through an exploration of these five small museums, specifically focused on five different heritage crafts being practiced within the UK, the overarching aim of this study is to consider the ways in which small craft museums act as repositories of specific heritage crafts that contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK.

While the monetary contribution of independent museums to the overall museum sector and national economy is less vague than their physical numbers, that aspect of these small museums' value has been excluded from this study. The initial phases of research for this thesis sought to demonstrate why, as important centres of specific types of knowledge, these museums should be classified as a distinct group within the museum and cultural sector for the purposes of government funding and public and private sector support. However, subsequent research found innumerable examples over the course

of many years where individuals, groups and organisations have argued for funding initiatives for the arts and culture in the UK (Great Britain. Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2016; Steele, 2016; Greenlees, 2015b; Jury, 2015a; 2015c; 2015f; Arts Council England, 2014; Harris, 2014b; Steel, 2014b; Harris, 2013; Kendal, 2013f; Stark, Gordan and Powell, 2013; Sharp, 2006; Selwood and Davies, 2005; Evans et al., 2001; Middleton, 1990) but, regardless of their veracity, the debate surrounding the complicated aspects of funding continues virtually unchanged to the present day and this thesis is not intended to be a political treatise on the fluctuations of governmental funding of arts and culture. Therefore, while the context of this study's original objectives is largely unchanged, its objectives have been narrowed to focus strictly on an exploration of these museums as repositories of heritage craft, and their subsequent contribution to intangible cultural heritage within the UK, and eliminated any efforts towards justifying the reclassification of heritage craft specific museums for the purposes of monetary support.

During the period from the start of this thesis, in January 2014, to its completion in early 2018, the craft sector has seen a resurgence in interest and active engagement with handcrafts; the evidence of which can be found across a variety of sources, including popular and social media, as cited in the Literature Review chapter of this paper (Bannerman, 2017; The Great Pottery Throw Down, 2017; 2015; Lincoln Cathedral, 2017; Watts, 2017; Steinway, 2016; Waitrose Weekend, 2016; 2015a; The Great British Sewing Bee, 2016; 2015; 2014; 2013; Wolfram Cox and Minahan, 2015; Blanchard, 2014; Dove, 2014). The Heritage Craft Association (HCA), as the advocacy body for traditional heritage crafts in the UK, feels that the modern digital age has contributed to this resurgence,

For most of our history, making things by hand was the norm, and the skills were passed from one generation to the next. In this digital age, when so many spend their days in front of a computer screen, the thrill and sense of satisfaction in taking time to make something yourself is that much more important. (2015)

American Craft Council Fellow, Sharon Church, agrees, stating, 'craft connects us to what it means to be human. To make something with your hands - to know that you exist and see the impact of that existence - has enormous value' (2012). The evidence of the growing popularity of handcrafts, combined with multiple visits to craft related museums, served to affirm my understanding of these small museums as important 'representatives' for their individual crafts and craft practitioners. Each handcraft has its own personality and characteristics that are reflected in its specific museum in subtle ways that, intentional or not, are indicative of the specific craft itself. For example, quilts hang on the walls of a medieval guildhall, lace is displayed in small glass display cases in a suburban house, hand fans are displayed in a Georgian townhouse in glass cases using mirrors so as to see both sides of the fan and stained glass is displayed in massive light boxes in the triforium of a cathedral. As a result, the questions this research has sought to explore have followed an evolutionary path from their initial focus on the concept of value, both tangible and intangible, to an emphasis on the various intangible and unique aspects that can be found in these individual museums; individual museums that also happen to share the common goal of celebrating their specific heritage craft within their community of practitioners and, in the process, inspiring the wider public to join them.

### **Research Questions:**

This study seeks to elucidate the characteristics of these individual organisations, each of which serve two separate yet mutually dependent purposes that are atypical for most museums; 1) the perpetuation of their specific heritage craft and 2) the support of the individual communities of people, whether they be an associated guild and its membership, the numerous active staff volunteers, or the community of practitioners of the specific heritage craft, without whom the specific craft practice could face extinction. However, for the purposes of clarification, it is important to state here that, within the context of heritage craft, this study is concerned with the importance of these heritage crafts in so far as they are the 'raison d'être' of

each of these small museums, rather than a definitive exploration of the minutia and skills required for the individual handcrafts. Hence, the evolution of my research, with its primary focus on the exploration of small heritage craft museums in the UK as repositories of intangible cultural heritage, ultimately led this thesis to the following research question:

- In what ways do small craft museums contribute to intangible cultural heritage?

To answer this question in depth the following must also be addressed:

- How do small craft museums encourage and support their communities of practitioners and enthusiasts?
- How do small craft museums engage the wider public with their heritage craft?
- How are small museums, and small craft museums in particular, represented in the literature?
- What challenges do small craft museums face in realising their craft related objectives?

As such, these questions are addressed in this study across three separate thematic chapters entitled, 'Collections', 'Exhibitions' and 'Learning', respectively. While this thesis includes a dedicated Literature Review chapter, each thematic chapter begins with information, in the form of a theme-specific literature review, that serves to introduce the reader to the corresponding theme, followed by case studies that demonstrate the characteristics of each museum that are relevant to the theme. The individual case studies vary in length across the themes based on the characteristics and activities of the individual organisations.

### **The Origins of This Study:**

This thesis has its roots in my MA dissertation that focused on four of the small single subject/specialist museums here in Britain that remain a part of this study. My desire to continue researching this subject, beyond the MA, was motivated by perspectives gained during my initial MA research. One insight



was the contribution of independent museums to the wider museum sector. Arguably, the small museum's focus on a specific subject affords visitors an opportunity for a more immersive level of engagement with the subject matter. Although each of the heritage craft museums presented here is, by definition, unique, some similarities do still exist in terms of visitor experience. These would include smaller, quieter, less-crowded exhibition spaces, greater 'access' to collections, craft education opportunities and access to a community of craft practitioners.

While there is a broad range of literature available about 'visitor experience' and 'engagement' within the museum sector, it is primarily focused on large museums. There is a noticeable lack of sector discourse about what small subject-specific museums have to offer the public relative to large museums, much less those museums that celebrate a particular craft or skill and their communities of practitioners. These small museums tend to be unknown by the general public outside their local community and/or practitioner community. From the start of my research, the majority of people in the general public who expressed interest in my thesis topic had never heard of small single subject museums. However disheartening and frustrating this may be for these organisations, I do not find it surprising. Museums have been a part of this researcher's life since the age of five when I made the decision that art would be my adult profession. Saturday art classes from the age of ten at our local art museum, in a mid-size city in the United States, resulted in a thorough knowledge of the museum acquired by wandering through the galleries every week. A Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at university, followed by a career as a graphic designer/art director, has meant continued regular museum visits across North America and Europe. But the vast majority of these museums were of the traditionally large type as I had no real recognition that small specialist museums, much less small craft related museums, existed. This could be due, in part, to having spent the majority of my life in the US where craft related museums would appear to be rare. For instance, the list of 'Craft Museums in the United States' on the American Craft Council's website is predominately a list of art museums (American Craft

Council, 2015). In Britain, the few people I have met that are aware of small craft related museums tend to be residents in the museum's local community, but who also tend to be unaware of similar museums outside their own local orientation.

A notable exception in the US would be Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia; a museum accredited through the American Alliance of Museums (Colonial Williamsburg, 2019a; American Alliance of Museums, 2019). For those readers unfamiliar with Williamsburg it is an immersive eighteenth century city/living museum claiming to be 'the world's largest living history museum' (Colonial Williamsburg, 2019a). Covering more than three hundred acres it offers a recreation of life during the eighteenth century and the formation of the American colonies. The Historic Area includes eighty-eight original eighteenth century buildings (while not unusual in the UK, a rarity in the majority of the US), with hundreds of others reconstructed on their original foundations (Colonial Williamsburg, 2019b).

Although clearly not a small craft specific museum like those highlighted in this thesis, eighteen different heritage crafts are represented here with practicing craftspeople using the traditional methods and tools of the eighteenth century, working in full public view in craft-specific workshops throughout Williamsburg's Historic Area (Colonial Williamsburg, 2019b). Some of these crafts support the daily infrastructure of Colonial Williamsburg and many create objects that are sold to the general public to support The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the ongoing daily operation of Colonial Williamsburg. These live in situ heritage craft demonstrations include among others a working blacksmith's forge, a printer and book binder, shoemaker, carpenter and joiner, wheelwright, silversmith and weaver (Colonial Williamsburg, 2019b).

My family chose to visit Williamsburg for a few different family holidays and, as a child growing up in the pre-internet 1960's and '70s, I found these demonstrations mesmerizing. Art and craft was a regular part of my formal education at school but these demonstrations helped to put the origins of

everyday objects into context and instill an appreciation for the craftsmanship of the handmade.

However the primary reason fueling my desire to further investigate these museums was their contribution to Britain's cultural heritage. All of the museums included in the research for this paper represented what were, prior to the Industrial Revolution, 'professional' handcrafts in the UK; in other words, handcrafts that offered a viable means of earning a living. Today, while there continues to be craftspeople practicing at a professional level throughout the UK, the heritage craft sector is similar to the small independent museum sector, with ninety six percent of professional craftspeople working for organisations with ten or less employees (Creative and Cultural Skills, 2012, p. 8) and seventy eight percent of that figure being self-employed/ the only 'employee' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 14; Creative and Cultural Skills, 2012, p. 8). Revenue generating heritage craft businesses engage in one or more of the following key heritage craft practices:

- 'Making/reproducing things: where a new object or structure is created'
- 'Repairing/maintaining things: ...fixing an item in order to make it functional again...'
- 'Restoring things: ...returning something to a functional state...'
- 'Conserving things: ...maintaining something to secure its survival...'

(Creative and Cultural Skills, 2012, p. 9)

However, the challenges associated with earning a viable living as a self-employed craftsman can be manifold, including the necessity of possessing both business skills and craft skills, resulting in many heritage craft skills at risk of dying out (Heritage Craft Association, 2017, p. 14; p. 12; p. 6). For those handcrafts with fewer professionals maintaining a craft practice it has fallen to 'amateurs' to perpetuate these crafts, a situation I will discuss in greater detail in later chapters. As such, each one of these small museums is valuable for its focus on a heritage craft that can be considered 'intangible cultural heritage'. 'Intangible cultural heritage, also known as "living heritage" refers to the

practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills transmitted by communities from generation to generation' (UNESCO, 2014).

Of course there are large museums within the museum sector that have a similar perspective such as the Design Museum and the Victoria and Albert (V&A), both of which were established to celebrate the craft and expertise of various professional trades (Design Museum, 2006; Victoria and Albert, 2016). But, while equally as valuable, their primary focus is on material culture therefore this type of large museum offers an overview of a wide range of skills rather than that of a concentrated, single specific craft, frame of reference.

This study provides evidence of some of the ways in which small craft museums contribute to intangible cultural heritage, such as offering learning opportunities, the details of which will be discussed in greater depth later in this study. Some offer live demonstrations of their specific craft as part of the visitor experience as well as organised education classes for people with a keener interest in acquiring the skill or furthering an existing skill. This study will argue that activities such as these are crucial for the support of intangible cultural heritage because, as the HCA states,

...there are crafts that form part of our cultural heritage which are in real danger of dying out. The skills and techniques required are known by only a few, in some cases only one, as craftspeople become older and retire from their work, and there is no-one coming into the craft to take their place. (2015)

### **Museums and Craft:**

John Cotton Dana once argued that, 'It is pointless to devote a museum entirely to the display of objects that have no connection to the lives of most of its potential visitors' (Weil, 2002, p. 190). This thesis argues that the objects displayed in small craft-related museums facilitate just such a connection for craft practitioners, specialists and enthusiasts. As stated above, crafts are practiced by both professionals and amateurs, and museums that celebrate their specific craft activities by exhibiting related objects have the potential to engage practitioners regardless of skill level. Aileen O. Webb, founder of what is now the American Craft Council, cited the 'incalculable' influences of

‘museum exhibitions on craftsmen and public alike in raising standards of design, execution, and appreciation’ (Webb, 1962, p. 314), and believes that the high level of skill shown by American craftsmen has been facilitated by museums.

The museums of this country have helped tremendously in this achievement in the last fifty years. Their leadership and their interest in this vital area of the arts are continually needed until the spirit of the Renaissance, when the craftsman was an artist and the artist was a craftsman, will permeate our entire concept of the crafts. (Webb, 1962, p. 321)

However, the number of objects on display in large museums has diminished to the point where the objects have become a component of exhibitions rather than the focus (Conn, 2010, pp. 22-26; Hein, 2007, pp. 78-79; Hein, 2000, pp. 65-68; L. Roberts, 1997b, p. 155), and temporary exhibitions related to some specific subjects can be sporadic at best; a situation that serves to reinforce the importance of the subject-specific focus of small single subject museums.

To explain, the following are two significant examples of craft specific exhibitions in a large museum that demonstrate the differences that exist between large museums and small craft museums when presenting craft to the public. Craft related exhibitions in large museums can, and sometimes do, celebrate both the craft/skill and the object, as in the 2010 temporary exhibition *Quilts: 1700 – 2010* at the V&A (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016), and the 1998 temporary exhibition *Grinling Gibbons and the Art of Carving*, also at the V&A (Esterly, 1998) which, in both cases, celebrated the objects and the intangible cultural heritage that created them. Sue Prichard, then Curator, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion at the V&A and curator of the *Quilts: 1700 – 2010* exhibition, wrote at the time, that ‘[this] major exhibition ... will showcase over 300 years of British patchwork and quilting. For the first time the museum’s collection of extraordinary quilts and coverlets will be displayed together with examples from some of the country’s finest regional museums’ (2009a).

There are three important points to note regarding this exhibition. The first is that the V&A's collection of patchwork, defined as 'a form of needlework that involves sewing together pieces of fabric to form a flat design' (Prichard, 2010a, p. 236), 'was initially formed because of the significance of the component fragments of textiles... Thus the collection reflects the great diversity of fabrics available during three centuries of textile trade and production' (Prichard, 2010b, p. 11; p. 14). This is significant because it means that, while one of the aims of the V&A's exhibition was 'to inspire a new generation of artists and practitioners' (Jones, 2010, p. 7), the value of its own collection has been based primarily on the relative value of the historical textiles used rather than on historical standards of craftsmanship. However, The Quilters' Guild's Collection of historical and contemporary pieces, as displayed at the Quilt Museum and Gallery case study museum, was formed as a reference resource for quilters, in keeping with a Quilters' Guild objective 'to encourage and maintain the highest standards of workmanship and design' (The Quilters' Guild, 2016d, p. 4; The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2014, no pagination; The Quilters' Guild, 1979a, no pagination). Hence the Quilters' Guild Collection places more emphasis on the intangible cultural heritage of quilt making as craft while the V&A's collection has historically emphasised quilt-making materials, primarily textiles.

The second important point of note is that this museum had been open, at the time of the 2010 quilt exhibition, for one hundred and ten years. And yet, according to Prichard, the exhibition's curator, this exhibition was the first time these quilts had been displayed together. This means that, for quilt practitioners, specialists and enthusiasts, access to these quilts happens once in one hundred years or only once in three generations (Soanes, 2006, p. 314). The V&A's exhibition included priceless objects, as well as a program of lectures and scholarly catalogues. However, regardless of whether or not The Quilters' Guild's Collection is as exceptional as the V&A's, unlike the V&A, the Quilt Museum and Gallery acted as an important consistent connection to the craft by offering its practitioners, specialists and enthusiasts regular access to the collection through its revolving temporary exhibitions, as well as

ongoing practitioner support through its Guild and practitioner volunteer networks.

The third important point of note is that, like the Quilt Museum and Gallery, the V&A's exhibition was focused specifically on British quilt and patchwork handcraft and, as such, both have collections that are important in terms of this country's intangible cultural heritage. But while the V&A keeps its collection in storage as a record for future generations, and with extremely limited public access, the Quilt Museum and Gallery regularly shared this heritage with its Guild members and the public with the intent of keeping the craft's practice alive for future generations.

The Grinling Gibbons exhibition, mentioned earlier, was 'the first exhibition devoted to Grinling Gibbons' (Esterly, 1998, p. 7), considered to be Britain's greatest decorative wood carver (The Glorious Grinling Gibbons, 2013; Esterly, 1998, p. 7; Thurley, 1998). This exhibition was important for two reasons. First, because it celebrated the craftsman, the craft process and resulting objects but secondly, and of equal import, was the fact that the exhibition was curated by a practicing craftsman. Dr. Alan Borg, then Director at the V&A, stated that the Gibbons exhibition was 'unusual for [the V&A]' because,

Rather than representing the collaborative views of a group of art-historians, academics and curators, it is an exhibition envisaged by a single discerning eye ... that of David Esterly, who first proposed the idea of an exhibition and has been responsible for shaping its structure, selecting the pieces to be exhibited and writing the accompanying book. (Esterly, 1998, p. 7)

In this instance the V&A allowed an external craft practitioner to control the exhibition. Esterly is a professional woodcarver who was hired to recarve a Gibbons drop at Hampton Court that was lost in the fire of 1986 (Esterly, 2015; Esterly, 1998, p. 7). What is so telling about this example is the admission that this act is a rare occurrence for this large museum, even more

so because the V&A considers itself to be 'the world's leading museum of art and design' (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016). And yet it can be deduced from Borg's statement that, for those exhibitions related to a specific craft or skill, craft practitioners are not part of the exhibition process, from conception to installation, but rather these activities are left to 'a group of art-historians, academics and curators' (Esterly, 1998, p. 7).

According to Simon Thurley, then Director at the Museum of London, Esterly believed that presenting Gibbons 'from the craftsman's perspective would be attractive to the general visitor who is unlikely to respond well to what [Esterly] calls "artspeak" (1998), with which Thurley agrees. 'He is probably right, and his approach, which is certainly not fashionably art-historical, relies more on connoisseurship' (1998). This circumstance, that exhibitions in a large museum dedicated to the history of craft will be curated by academics and museum professionals, because practicing craftspeople do not often work in museums, highlights an important distinction. This has particular ramifications for exhibitions that are specifically craft-related, as a craftsperson on the team has the potential to offer invaluable insights about their specific craft process, especially for other craft practitioner visitors. As Borg states, '...David Esterly prompts us to see [Gibbons' works] afresh as unrivalled displays of craftsmanship...seen as virtuoso woodcarving with a resonance for contemporary practitioners' (Esterly, 1998, p. 7). Within small craft-related museums, like those in this thesis that are related to a craft guild, practitioners are engaged in the exhibition process; an important factor that has the ability to differentiate these small craft museums from their larger cousins. As craft practitioners, they are in a unique position to make connections and comparisons that may otherwise go unnoticed or unappreciated. 'The particular appeal of handmade objects lies in the human dimension embedded within them: the skill, time and care taken; the tactile, as well as the kinetic association' (Lee, 2015, p. 76). Or, as Richard Sennett describes it, 'craftwork establishes a realm of skill and knowledge perhaps beyond human verbal capacities to explain' (Sennett, 2008, p. 95).



## **Research Methods:**

It needs to be stated from the outset that I found the process of conducting research into small independent museums presented a special challenge because the small museum category of the sector defies traditional forms of analysis. Small single subject museums are, by definition, unique, hence there is a tension inherent in comparing these different small museums under the same umbrella that makes attempts at comparison from any perspective other than that of broad generalities, problematic. Author Fiona Candlin also found this to be true during the course of research for her book on small museums, or what she terms 'micromuseums' (2016), stating, '...it slowly became clear that this research required a method that differed from those offered by mainstream museum studies and that was responsive to the specific characteristics of micromuseums' (2016, p. 15).

I found that the lack of sector literature pertaining to small museums, and the unique characteristics of the individual craft museums, led to sourcing information from sources that may be considered atypical within the context of museum studies. For example, The Lace Guild and its Museum are run entirely by volunteers from around the country who only travel to The Hollies (their headquarters building and Museum location) when required for a meeting or exhibition changeover, and making it necessary for me to attend the Guild's quarterly Museum Committee meetings to get a sense of the challenges facing this volunteer run Museum. I became a Guild member of both The Lace Guild and The Quilters' Guild so that I would receive their Guild publications 'Lace' (The Lace Guild, 2017a), 'The Quilter' (The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, 2016a) and 'Our Patch' (The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, 2016b) as well as attend Guild related activities, in an effort to understand the position of their individual museums within their practitioner communities.

## **Fieldwork -**

Due to the nature of this thesis, its focus on small craft related museums in the UK and the use of a case study format for highlighting various aspects of

the specific museums, my research has entailed extensive fieldwork in addition to a review of the available sector literature. My case study research method has been consistent in each museum in keeping with my intent to present my findings in a corresponding manner. As a result, the relevant fieldwork required for this study included visits to a number of small single subject museums around the country to ascertain the suitability of the various museum candidates for inclusion. I visited eleven museums in total with each initial visit spread over the course of two consecutive days to ensure that I recorded factual information relevant to each museum.

Subsequent visits to the case study museums included interviews with the curator (if one exists), any available members of paid staff (if any exist) and volunteer staff members, gathering relevant preliminary information such as the museum's history, mission, visitor numbers, collection size, staff size and visitor programs to gain a better understanding of this small museum category. Due to the necessity of regular contact and ongoing repeat visits to the case study organisations throughout the course of my research, there were occasions when my conventionally assumed role of detached outsider shifted, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the individual museum, as for instance with my regular inclusion in Museum Committee meetings at the Lace Guild Museum. I was an embedded researcher in so far as I did attend meetings and was treated like a trusted insider in some of these museums, but I did not collaborate with or participate in any operational or managerial aspects of any of the museums.

It should also be noted that, due to the individual nature of each small museum, while my research method for gathering information was consistent with each organisation, there were inherent challenges that meant the amount of available data I was able to gather was less than consistent. The existence of detailed information varied from museum to museum, including the absence or very partial nature of audience data, and is reflected in the varied detailed information provided in the case studies. For instance, historical details were readily available for the Clockmakers' Museum, and to a lesser degree for the Fan and Lace Museums, but were nearly non-existent for the Quilt and Stained

Glass Museums. Visitor numbers, while available for the Clockmakers' in their original location, are no longer currently accessible in their Science Museum location and the Quilt Museum no longer exists as a viable static location. Volunteer numbers were so fluid in each museum that none could give me a definitive figure.

In addition to the necessary relevant factual information acquired I also observed and recorded qualitative data unique to each museum for the purposes of comparative analysis, inclusive of photographic documentation where permitted. This data included information such as observations of the physical location of the museum, visitor access, the physical structure of the building including its exhibition and storage space, how the specific collections are displayed, as well as informal interactions with volunteers and staff that provided insights into the influence of craft in their daily lives and any other information that was uniquely pertinent to the individual museum. However, any attempts to acquire audience data to provide a user focus in the individual locations would have been inconsistent at best due to the nature of these small museums. For instance, with the possible exception of the Clockmakers' location in the Science Museum, it was not unusual for me to be the only person in the museum on many occasions, so conducting a series of interviews in any type of meaningful way would have been problematic and less than conclusive.

Another ongoing challenge with research into these small organisations was the constantly shifting nature of pertinent information that made continual updates and reassessment problematic; not only for the need to stay in regular contact with all of the museums but for the time required in visiting each location for observation and acquisition of the relevant details. The Quilt Museum closed but tried to remain viable, the Clockmakers' Museum moved, temporary exhibitions in three of the museums were constantly changing, museum hours and access to collections changed, the Quilt Museum's curator was switched from full-time to part-time and back again to full-time. The Stained Glass Museum acquired an Education officer who then left on maternity leave and a replacement was hired. To facilitate urgent repairs to the

roof of Ely Cathedral above the Stained Glass Museum, the Museum had to close for a minimum of thirty days on two occasions while scaffolding was erected throughout the Museum, and subsequently removed months later, which had a definitive impact on the Museum's visitor experience during the months the scaffolding was in place.

As stated earlier, the unique characteristics of these individual small museums makes detailed comparative analysis problematic. As a result, and in response to the constantly shifting nature of even the factual information I gathered, the research methods cited above were employed to accommodate the need to consider and reframe the implications of the ongoing changes in the circumstances of these small organisations; changes that were small but significant and others that were seismic, all of which affected practitioner and public engagement. In addition, the heritage craft specific 'raison d'être' of these museums, particularly those with a direct craft guild connection, required a research approach that gave equal consideration to the impact of the inherent interdependency between the museum, the heritage craft it represents, its collection, its communities of practitioners and enthusiasts, its volunteer communities and the perpetuation of craft skills; the nature and extent of which cannot be underestimated, and that differs from other museums without a craft specific remit.

Furthermore, these research methods allowed me to be sensitive to the individual personalities of these organisations in acquiring information; personalities that varied from formal and guarded, like The Fan Museum, to welcoming and inclusive, like The Lace Guild Museum. This observation is not intended to be disparaging in any way but rather to demonstrate the challenges inherent in researching small organisations that are used to operating as lone, independent entities in a an unstable sector environment that marginalises them.

### **Sector Literature -**

My review of the available museum sector literature has been more problematic, the details of which will be discussed in more depth in the Literature Review chapter that follows. During the course of researching my

MA dissertation I found a discernible lack of information pertaining specifically to the small single subject museum category, and this continued to be the case throughout my research for this thesis. The literature review process proved to be both labour and time intensive for this study, but was hugely informative for its lack of representation of not only the small single subject museum category but also the small museum sector as a whole. When mentioned at all, regardless of the type of publication, small museums were generally included as asides in discussions of large traditional museums or in the very broad context of museums in general.

My examination of the work of the sector's leading authors found that they continue to all but ignore small museums, with one exception. As cited earlier, in November of 2015 the first book that focuses seriously and specifically on small museums was published. Entitled *Micromuseology: An Analysis of Small Independent Museums* by Dr. Fiona Candlin (2016), the book 'discusses some sixty museums' located in the UK. While Candlin's book covers a different subset of small single subject museums than those considered in this thesis, and which will be discussed in more detail in the Literature Review chapter, it was useful in my research if for no other reason than its affirmation of the diversity of small independent museums and the subsequent challenges associated with studying them. For instance, the museums that Candlin discusses are 'scattered across the UK and address subjects ranging from Freemasonry to diesel engines, and from lifeboats to cuckoo clocks' (2016, p. 12). Candlin also cites the challenges associated with finding small museums, including the travel and funding required, as well as the 'most difficult challenge in studying micromuseums [which] involves the range of methods that can be employed. Without any authoritative data on the subject, it is impossible to conduct any kind of quantitative analysis or to make any broad claims on the subject' (2016, p. 13). While Candlin's research was intended to be an overarching survey of the small museum category, the small museums in this thesis have a far more narrow focus than diesel engines and lifeboats, but are nonetheless diverse; not only in their physical locations, organisational

structures and individual collection types, but also in the craft related skill sets, materials and methodologies they represent.

Research for this thesis included a detailed and extensive exploration of journals and periodicals, covering many years, to see how small museums have been represented and in what context they are referenced, which will be discussed in greater detail in the Literature Review chapter of this thesis. The occasional article about small museums can be found in publications such as the *Curator: The Museum Journal*, *Museums Journal* and the *AIM Bulletin* but, of these publications, the *AIM Bulletin* is the only one that comes close to offering any kind of comprehensive look at this category. As a consequence of the effort involved in trying to find any relevant museum sector literature for this study, I argue that the paucity of sector literature pertaining to small independent museums of any kind is indicative of a general malaise with which small museums are regarded within the museum sector as a whole.

Due to the craft specific nature of the small museums that are the focus of this thesis, it was also necessary to do a review of relevant craft sector literature. While in some disciplines it is possible to find examples of 'cross pollination' that informs the literature across more than one sector, that is not the case here. I was unable to find evidence of references to small museums within craft sector literature aside from journal sections dedicated to notices and reviews of exhibitions and events in various museums and galleries (Crafts Council, 2015, pp. 93-100); prompting my research to take a more diverse, and sometimes 'unconventional', path that may be common to other disciplines but considered atypical within the context of craft studies. As such, in addition to 'conventional' academic and scholarly literature sources, as well as craft industry journals and other professional sector publications, I have paid attention to popular media sources such as free publications, including *The Evening Standard* newspaper (Godwin, 2015; Chandler, 2013), *TimeOut's* London edition (Barber, 2017; Arnott, 2014) and the *Waitrose Weekend* paper (Waitrose Weekend, 2016; 2015a), all of which have included articles related to the recent rise in handcraft activities, such as knitting, among individuals and groups in contemporary culture. These articles coincide with similar

articles in the *Telegraph* (Blanchard, 2014; Dove, 2014) and *Times* (Bannerman, 2017) newspapers and serve to help me understand where craft and my case study museums sit within the context of the craft practitioner community.

Other research methods employed for this study, associated with the museum and craft sectors, have included attending public engagement events. Examples include the annual Glaziers Art Fair in London (The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass, 2016; 2015) where The Stained Glass Museum is a participant, and The Heritage Craft Association Conference where The Fan Museum's curator gave a presentation (The Heritage Craft Association, 2018; 2017c; 2016). Events such as these were important for a better understanding of the interdependencies of the crafts and craft practices represented by the case study museums. For instance, fans can be made of or incorporate lace, lace can incorporate glass beads, quilting can incorporate lace and glass beads, clocks can incorporate enamelling, engraving and crafted wood cases, and so on.

Craft subject related exhibitions, such as *What is Luxury?* at the V&A, were another important research source (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2015). This particular exhibition was relevant for its exploration of how the concepts of 'handmade' and 'hand-crafted' have defined perceptions of luxury both pre- and post- Industrial Revolution, circumstances that correlate to the handcrafts represented by the case study museums in this thesis. In addition, a special interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed academic journal entitled *Luxury: History, Culture, Consumption* and special exhibition-associated editions of *Craft* magazine were made available in conjunction with the exhibition. This combination of sources offered a valuable overview of the craft sector and provided important sources for further research.

Ultimately I found that this diversity of research methods, including 'conventional' fieldwork and literature reviews, as well as the reviews of more 'unconventional' literature sources, events and exhibitions, gave me a more comprehensive view of my subject matter than the available conventional methods alone had to offer.

**Thesis structure:**

This thesis seeks to consider how small craft museums contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK. It does so by focusing on five small independent craft museums that are part of a larger, but generally ignored segment of the museum sector. This absence of representation across both academic and popular media sources has resulted in the exclusion of this majority museum category from the sector discourse.

This lack of recognition is also mirrored in the heritage sector where the intangible skills associated with the UK's heritage crafts have yet to receive the same respect and support from governmental agencies as this country's tangible heritage.

Due to the perceived unimportance of both the small museum and its heritage craft subject to their individual sectors, it became apparent during the course of my research that these small museums exist in relative obscurity to all but their respective craft guilds, practitioners and enthusiasts. As a result, the material presented in this thesis can be understood to provide an original contribution to an otherwise limited discourse.

The remaining chapters of this thesis are designed to accord a better understanding of the characteristics and contributions these small organisations make to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK. Chapter two offers a survey of the existing literature pertaining to small museums and craft, with its associated challenges, as well as a review of the literature conveying the importance of handcraft to human development and the current state of heritage crafts in the UK. Chapter three provides a brief overview of both the small museums considered for this thesis as well as those chosen for inclusion as case studies. I have chosen to include both sets based on the assumption that, due to the near invisibility of small museums to the wider public, it is entirely possible that the reader may have little or no experience of these types of museums. Thus including the shortlist, as well as the final five case study museums, will help to put the category of craft museums into context for the uninitiated. Chapters four, five and six are thematic chapters, covering Collections, Exhibitions and Learning respectively, and examining the



similarities and differences between the case study museums in greater detail. 'Collections' addresses the characteristics of each collection as a repository of intangible cultural heritage. 'Exhibitions' analyses the ways in which the individual museums present their specific crafts to their communities of practitioners and the wider public. 'Learning' focuses on the activities each museum undertakes, either directly or indirectly, to support its practitioners and perpetuate its craft. The final chapter, 'Conclusions', summarises the research findings in answer to the research questions.

## **Chapter 1: Literature Review and Research Context**

As stated in the previous chapter, small independent museums account for more than half the museums in the UK's museum sector (Association of Independent Museums, 2016; Association of Independent Museums, 2015, April p. 5; 2014, April p. 2) and this study focuses on four aspects of five small heritage craft-specific museums in the sector;

- 1) how small craft museums support their communities of practitioners and enthusiasts
- 2) how small craft museums engage the wider public with their craft
- 3) how small museums are represented in the literature
- 4) what challenges small craft museums face in realising their craft related objectives.

However, despite the fact that independent/small museums represent a majority of the UK's museum sector, there is scant information available on this museum segment, much less craft related museums. As a result, studying small craft museums is a less than straightforward task, presenting its own set of unique challenges, much like the individual crafts represented in the museums themselves.

### **The Lack of Information -**

This thesis has its roots in my MA that, as previously discussed, also focused on small single subject craft related museums with connections to a related craft guild. While there was enough information available to satisfactorily cover the subject for a dissertation length study, it became evident during that research process that there was a lack of comprehensive written material on the subject. The initial proposal for this PhD thesis aimed to broaden the scope of the earlier MA research in hopes of finding more available information, however ultimately found that, regardless of a broader perspective, there continues to be a dearth of relevant information available.

Moreover, it is not only small UK museums that are being overlooked. Even on a global scale this museum category is largely ignored. In part because of their size, small independent museums tend to concentrate on a single subject, resulting in details that are unique to each location and, as such, information about them is no more forthcoming from a general perspective than from a focused one. As a result of the omission of small museums from the scholarly discourse throughout museum studies literature, as mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the approach to creating this survey has entailed not only relying on the scant academic literature sources that do exist, such as *Curator: The Museum Journal* magazine, but also sourcing material from, what some may consider to be, unusual or 'unconventional' non-academic sources, meaning sources that would be considered atypical within the context of museums studies. Examples of these include antique clock and watch dealer shops (Carter Marsh and Company, 2016a), craft fairs (The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass, 2016; 2015), 'local newspapers' (Waitrose Weekend, 2016, pp. 34-35; 2015a, p. 39) and the quarterly craft guild publications associated with the museums in this thesis (The Lace Guild, 2017e; The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, 2017b; 2017c; The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2014; Hurrion, 2012).

Any mention of small museums in published texts tend to be as asides, or brief referential examples to the information presented regarding traditionally large museums, including references in publications by leading authors in the sector. Some were helpful for their perspectives on the evolution of museums and visitor experience within the context of large museums, which included the occasional reference to small museums (Black, 2005; Anderson, 2004; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; 1992). Stephen Weil offered a variety of thought-provoking perspectives on the museums sector, albeit using primarily American museums as examples (1999). Weil also included a few brief examples from small museums that seemed more applicable to this paper's case study museums than those offered in other museum studies literature. However, it is important to note that while key sector authors (Fritsch, 2011; Conn, 2010; Dudley, 2010; McClellan, 2008;

Black, 2005; Anderson, 2004; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 2000; Weil, 1999; Roberts, L. C., 1997a; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Pearce, 1993) offered useful perspectives on a wide range of topics, their persistent choice to all but ignore small museums in the discourse has been as 'informative' to this research as the brief references they did choose to make.

The general lack of discourse on this topic, and subsequent lack of relevant information in published texts, has meant that magazines and journals are a primary, and thus particularly important, source of relevant information. But even after an extensive and painstaking trawl through these periodical sources, including every issue in the fifty-five year history of *Curator: The Museum Journal*, these too proved to have limitations in that they do not discuss these small organisations in any particular depth but more as brief overviews.

*Curator: The Museum Journal*, the *Museums Journal* and *AIM Bulletin* are all museum sector related periodicals but differ in their content. *Curator* (as it was originally titled) is a United States publication that was established by the American Museum of Natural History in 1958. From its inception until the early part of this century it focused primarily on the US museum sector. This still holds true, however since 2002 its editors have chosen to expand the remit of the journal by 'soliciting interdisciplinary articles from around the world. ... *Curator* now explores the realms of art and science, history and culture' (Doering, 2007, p. 6). *Curator: The Museum Journal* is helpful in discerning the challenges and perspectives the US and UK museum sectors may have in common but is not informative regarding small independent museums, much less those specifically located in the UK.

The *Museums Journal* is published by the UK's Museums Association. Established in 1901, it was the first publication dedicated to the sector and focuses primarily on UK museums, covering issues associated with the museum sector. However, any articles pertaining to small independent museums are either generalised editorials/commentaries on economic and policy challenges across both the large and small museum categories or brief profiles or reviews of a specific museum. The small museum profiles are generally a single page, such as that of the 'Framework Knitters Museum,

Nottingham' (Gray, 2015, p. 39) or reviews of 'small' museums that are preparing for a refurbishment such as 'Wedgewood Museum to receive £34m makeover' (Steel, 2013, p.11) or have recently reopened after a refurbishment, as seen in 'The Lion Salt Works, Cheshire' (Suggitt, 2015, pp. 44-47). What this shows is that, while the Museums Association's 'core purpose' is 'to represent the interests of museums of all types, independent of government' (Kendall, 2014, May, p. 23), the Museums Association Journal chooses to be more selective in the types of museums it features regularly in the magazine and limits its coverage of small single subject museums. It is unclear, and not stated within the publication's 'Editorial Values and Submissions' information (Museums Association, 2016), whether the museums covered in the journal are Museums Association members or even accredited-only organisations. As a consequence of the reasons cited above, the *Museums Journal* cannot be considered to be a comprehensive reflection of the sector.

The *AIM Bulletin* is published in the UK by the Association of Independent Museums and covers the entire UK independent museum sector. All three of the publications listed informed the research for this study to varying degrees but the *AIM Bulletin* has proven to be the most informative of the three on the topic of small museums. That being said, the *Bulletin* covers the small independent museums category in general, including updates on government policy, AIM initiatives, HLF support and any other news that would affect the general independent museum membership. As such, there is little focus on the individual museums themselves. This approach gives an overview of the challenges faced by this museum category but does little to facilitate a better understanding of the unique character of its one-off member museums.

November of 2015 saw publication of the first book focused seriously and specifically on small museums. *Micromuseology: An Analysis of Small Independent Museums* by Dr. Fiona Candlin is an attempt to address the absence of available literature on the subject. Candlin, herself a leading author in museum studies, 'discusses some sixty museums located [in the UK]' and states that the book is 'an experiment to see whether the study of micromuseums can revolutionize "museum philosophy" and, if so, how'

(Candlin, 2016, p. 5 and p. 2, italics in original). *Micromuseology*, is a welcome and very helpful addition to the sector's literature sources, but covers a different subset of small single subject museums than those considered in this study. While this thesis is focused specifically on craft related museums, Candlin took a more generalised approach, choosing not to include 'local history museums ... micromuseums run by corporations ... professional museums ... or guild museums' in her research (Candlin, 2016, p. 13). As the small museums in this thesis are also associated with guilds, Candlin's criteria excludes many of the museums presented in this study, but does refer in passing to two museums included in this paper; The Straw Museum, that Candlin refers to as The Museum of Straw Crafts and Basketwork (2016, pp. 4, 33), which was shortlisted but ultimately excluded from this study; and The Clockmakers' Museum, which has had a change of circumstances since Candlin did her research.

*Micromuseology* echoed this researcher's findings regarding the challenges associated with studying this museum category, and the dearth of existing literature. As elucidated in the preceding paragraphs, this researcher was unable to find anything in the literature that reflects a thorough exploration of small museums either as a general category or as individual organisations, a situation mirrored throughout *Micromuseology* (Candlin, 2016). In addition, due to the unique nature of small independent museums and the lack of information about them in general, there is a lack of useful data one would normally use for analysis and comparison (Candlin, 2016, p. 13). In most cases, the availability of detailed historical documentation for small museums is lacking, including information pertaining to objects in their collections, as many collections originated as the private collection of an individual or group of enthusiasts. The availability of information pertaining to exhibitions in these museums is also limited as they receive little or no attention outside their local communities or members' newsletters. (Candlin, 2016, p. 13). Candlin articulated many of the same challenges experienced by this researcher during the course of this thesis when she wrote,

Having written on various aspects of museums for over two decades and having used various forms of analysis, I did not expect to be stymied by the issue of how to study micromuseums. This did prove to be the case, however, and it slowly became clear that this research required a method that differed from those offered by mainstream museum studies and that was responsive to the specific characteristics of micromuseums.' (2016, p. 15)

### **Museums and Craft -**

As with the literature resources covering small single subject museums generally, there are even fewer resources pertaining to small craft-related museums. An extensive body of literature exists that is concerned with aspects of craft from theory to practice. From Stephen Knott's *Amateur Craft: History and Theory* (Knott, 2015) to Glenn Adamson's theory based *Thinking Through Craft* (2007), to Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008) and Peter Korn's *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: the Education of a Craftsman* (2013) there is a comprehensive list of available literature. But this comprehensive body of literature, while informative on the broader subjects of craft and craft practice, offers various frames of reference that may or may not be applicable in every case study in this thesis due to the individual characteristics of the different crafts represented by each museum. For example, a woodworker's perspective will be different to a lacemaker's by virtue of the material used, training required, making processes utilised, and so on. Nor does this body of literature include the specific subject of craft related museums, hence when museums are mentioned it is within the context of craft related exhibitions and collections at institutions such as the V&A, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, rather than craft museums as a distinct sector category (Knott, 2015, p. 121; Korn, 2013, p. 153; Adamson, 2007, p. 47).

Echoing the content of available craft related text resources are journal resources that address a wide range of craft, both here in the UK and elsewhere. However, while articles pertaining to crafts can be found in a

variety of periodicals, and craft in museums is given more attention in periodicals than in texts, the information provided is no more informative regarding the associated small museums. Information continues to be in the form of details related to exhibitions and exhibition reviews. *Crafts* magazine is published bi-monthly by the Crafts Council. The magazine covers a wide range of crafts and crafts practice. Museums are mentioned but in the form of a 'Craft Guide' section which is a comprehensive calendar listing of events and exhibitions in various museums and galleries (Crafts Council, 2015, pp. 93-100), and a 'Reviews' section for, among other things, reviews of museums, galleries and associated exhibitions (Crichton-Miller, 2015, p. 85). The American Craft Council publishes its own bi-monthly magazine entitled *American Craft*. It is similar in content to *Craft* but with a focus on craft in the US. As such, this journal does not contribute any information about the heritage craft museums in this study.

The *AIM Bulletin* occasionally highlights a craft museum as part of its normal coverage of independent museums. Examples include brief articles such as 'UK's rich quilting heritage supported by HLF' (*AIM Bulletin*, 2014, April, p. 15) and 'Framework Knitters museum wins awards for collaborative school project' (*AIM Bulletin*, 2015, August, p. 9). There is also a 'Museum Profile' section at the back of the bulletin where museums may submit their own written profile, as in 'The Fan Museum, London' written by the museum's curator (Moss, 2015, p. 18). The *Museums Journal* rarely mentions small craft related museums. Exceptions include when one appears on their 'The Museum of...' page that gives an overview of a particular museum in a 'who, what, when, where, why' style format; such as 'Framework Knitters Museum, Nottingham' (Gray, 2015, p. 39).

### **The Importance of Craft Skills -**

As this thesis considers small museums that celebrate specific heritage crafts, an important aspect of the relevant research comes from various articles and reports, including those from Joyce Lovelace, Stephen Knott and The Creative and Cultural Skills organisation (Lovelace, 2014; Knott, 2015;



Creative and Cultural Skills, 2012), that maintain the view that craft skills make a positive contribution to both individual and societal growth on a variety of levels. One key attribute of handcraft's positive contribution, as cited in the literature, is research showing that craft skills create other skills that are applicable elsewhere. Julia Bennett, head of research and policy at the Crafts Council, states her concerns regarding craft education opportunities in the UK and its ramification in her article for *Craft* magazine entitled 'Education and the Nation: the Graduates' (2015, p. 73). 'The acquisition of haptic skills by young people seems to receive a lower priority. The use of hands in creativity and material appreciation and understanding is fundamental to later skill development' (2015, p. 73). Bennett goes on to state that, 'Our evidence on the transfer of craft skills into other sectors shows that medicine, manufacturing, film and many other industries rely on the haptic skills of making' (2015, p. 73).

Bennett cites research conducted by Robert Root-Bernstein and Rex LaMore that substantiates this assertion (2015, p. 73; Lovelace, 2014). Root-Bernstein and LaMore's research on university graduates with STEM field degrees, and inspired by previous research conducted by Root-Bernstein on the correlation between Nobel Laureates and their craft hobbies, explored 'whether arts exposure and arts practice play any role in nurturing the innovative thinking of science/technology entrepreneurs... in relation to the patents and businesses they went on to generate in their careers' (Lovelace, 2014, p. 86). Author Joyce Lovelace states that, 'The results [of their research], published in 2013, revealed that these high-achieving individuals were far more likely to have extensive art and craft skills than the average American is' (2014, p. 86). Furthermore, the research subjects cited their art and craft activities as factors that contributed to development of their innovations by facilitating their ability to make prototypes. Root-Bernstein states that, 'It was handwork that was the highest correlate with becoming an inventor or an entrepreneur, with your own business. If you're going to invent something, you're going to have to work with your hands to make a prototype' (Lovelace, 2014, p. 87).

However the 'deindustrialisation' of contemporary culture that has been exacerbated by the digital revolution, combined with continued cuts to creative subjects in the national curriculum, would appear to be producing a generation lacking 'a basic understanding of the physical world' (Weaver, 2018) and with limited practical haptic skills. As a result, medical students and trainee surgeons 'lack vital practical skills necessary to conduct life-saving operations' (Weaver, 2018), necessitating further instruction in skills such as sewing (All Party Parliamentary Group for Craft, 2018). Consider for a moment the fact that Fleur Oakes, a needle lace maker and embroiderer, is currently the Artist in Residence in the Vascular Surgery Department at Imperial College (All Party Parliamentary Group for Craft, 2018).

Yet regardless of the overwhelming research demonstrating the importance of haptic skills in human development, handcraft continues to be marginalised in formal education and across contemporary culture within the UK. Heritage craft's status in particular would seem to have been relegated to that of 'amateur hobby'; a perspective that seems to forget that contemporary craft and many formal professions and occupations have a heritage craft as the basis for their current skills that continues to inform their daily practice. Take for instance, the craft link between techniques used by stonemasons, wood carvers and orthopaedic surgeons (All Party Parliamentary Group for Craft, 2018a), or those sewing techniques used in vascular surgery. In the late nineteenth century Alexis Carrel, experimenting with needles and thread from a local haberdashery, developed a method for suturing blood vessels that he attributed to lessons from a local embroideress/lacemaker; a method still used by vascular surgeons today (Crafts Council, 2019; Sade, 2005, p. 2415).

The 'hobby' label also disrespects the many heritage craft practitioners whose skills support other aspects of the UK's heritage. Skills such as those utilised in the conservation and restoration of English Heritage and National Trust sites (English Heritage, 2019; National Trust, 2019). Or the Beamish heritage site, which is using heritage craft practitioners to create new experiences as part of its current £18 million 'Remaking Beamish' project (with the help of a £10.9 million grant from the HLF); with the most recent addition

being that of a quilter's cottage that included the active participation of the Quilters' Guild during its creation (Beamish, 2019). Or for objects such as the lace jabot and cuffs created by contemporary UK lacemaker Pat Perryman for the parliamentary Speaker Bernard Weatherill's State Ceremonial Dress, each of which took five hundred hours to create, and were worn by subsequent Speakers (Perryman, 2019). This lack of acknowledgement and respect can be illustrated by the recent efforts of the Lace Guild Museum to get designated status for their collection of over eighteen thousand objects through Arts Council England. The Museum's application was rejected by ACE because the panel 'felt that lace-making as a hobby is difficult to interpret as a subject of national importance...and [the panel] did not feel that a convincing case could be made in the future' (Brikci, 2017).

While the craft sector is typically understood to comprise both amateur and professional craft practitioners, there are those that propose that amateur practitioners make a vital contribution to craft heritage. Stephen Knott is a lecturer at Liverpool Hope University, Managing Editor of the *Journal of Modern Craft*, and author of *Amateur Craft: History and Theory*. '... in a post-industrial world, where the economic rationale for many craft processes and traditional models of apprenticeship have been fundamentally changed by technological innovation and outsourced production, the continuation of many craft practices actually depends on amateur making' (Knott, 2015b, p. 51). Knott goes on to say that, 'We should question the simplistic dichotomy that divides the amateur from professional, and focus on the interconnections' (2015b, p. 51).

Research has shown that training in the Heritage Craft sector is focused primarily on amateurs and that informal opportunities for practitioners to network with their peers, like those offered by the five small museums in this thesis, is incredibly important. A study conducted by The Creative & Cultural Skills organisation in 2012, and sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, resulted in the publication of 'Mapping Heritage Craft: the Economic Contribution of the Heritage Craft Sector in England' (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2012). The study found that amateur training for members of

the public was the main focus of training opportunities offered by Heritage Craft guilds and associations; with the intent to teach 'the basic skills and knowledge of a particular craft, in order to develop as an amateur' (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2012, p. 11). Mapping Heritage Craft also found that,

Informal learning and development opportunities - such as exhibitions and lectures, which do not have specific learning objectives but provide the opportunity to keep up to date and network with peers - are a common feature of the landscape. These experiences can be more intangible in terms of measuring their contribution to skills and knowledge. However, as seen in the in-depth information provided by interviewees, this access to the peer network is extremely valuable. (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2012, p. 80)

Rosy Greenlees, executive director of the Crafts Council, cites various ways in which the Council 'supports and nourishes' 'craft's democratic processes' in the UK (2015a, p. 89). One of Greenlees's examples is a collaborative exhibition, in association with Norfolk Museums Service, which included both amateurs and professionals. '...There are also the shows that tour the country bringing craft to new audiences. Build Your Own: Tools for Sharing, a collaboration with Liverpool's FACT in association with Norfolk Museums Service, is our latest and it examines craft's relationship with technology but importantly also aims to promote collaboration and introduce those taking part, both amateur and professional, to new skills' (Greenlees, 2015a, p. 89).

The perpetuation of heritage craft skills is vital to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK. There are various handcrafts currently being practiced in the UK that are at risk of extinction and the small single subject museums that celebrate these crafts help to facilitate awareness of, and in some cases perpetuation of, their specific handcraft (The Heritage Craft Association, 2107a, p. 6). Previous BBC articles have highlighted the plight of traditional craftsmen in the UK and cited examples of crafts that were at risk (Scott, 2014; Babbage, 2010). One craft practitioner, Robin Wood, was the last professional lathe bowl turner in the UK. The last UK professional bowl turner, prior to Wood, 'died in 1958 without passing on his trade' (Babbage, 2010). As a

result, Wood had to research the techniques of the dead craft and make the necessary tools himself 'as none existed outside of a museum' (Wood, 2016, Babbage, 2010). Wood wanted to perpetuate the intangible skills of his previously dead craft and by 2014 had taught the skills to 'a number of people' both here in the UK and globally (Scott, 2014; Babbage, 2010). Wood subsequently became the founding Chairman of The Heritage Craft Association (HCA) in 2009; an organisation that will be discussed in greater detail shortly.

Julia Bennett from the Crafts Council has voiced her concerns regarding continued governmental cuts to education that look to impact the future of makers in the UK.

There is a growing clamour of protest about the state of learning for the next generation of makers. Alongside the Crafts Council, advocacy groups such as the Cultural Learning Alliance and the All Parliamentary Group (*sic*) for Art, Craft and Design Education are making their voices heard about course closures and the declining opportunities for creativity in schools. ... Overall, the provision and participation figures for craft in higher education sit uneasily alongside each other. While provision has been cut across the board, this sector remains popular, in particular for the rising numbers of international students coming to the UK to study craft at higher education level. Our findings suggest that the student body will increasingly be drawn from overseas. The increase in overseas students in higher education may be masking an underlying issue of decreasing participation in the pathways leading to it, a possible risk to the future pipeline of makers in the UK. (2015, p. 72)

Craftsman Sean Sutcliffe, co-founder of English furniture maker Benchmark (Benchmark, 2018), voiced similar concerns about declining craft education in *Craft* magazine. Sutcliffe states that, 'In the last three years, 47 per cent of the workshop-based activities in education have closed, which seems strange at a time when craftsmanship has never been more in the zeitgeist. When we take on apprentices at Benchmark, they often do something they are proud of for the first time. That's my real sadness about the decline of making in education' (Treggiden, 2015, p. 90). This information, coupled with the fact that the five

museums in this study engage in activities to perpetuate their heritage craft that include teaching their craft skills to others, is an important factor in this study's argument regarding the value of these museums within the UK.

### **Craft and Heritage in the UK -**

An Arts Council England commissioned enquiry, used to inform its 'Now and the future: a review of formal learning in museums' report (Arts Council England, 2016b), found that creating effective partnerships between regional museums and schools is vital for heritage learning. "Arts Council officers are clear that heritage learning is at risk in the economic climate and, despite the attrition of our GEM [Group for Education in Museums] membership in the past year, it is heartening that this focus has not been lost,' said GEM Chairman Nick Winterbotham" (Stephens, Oct. 2013, p. 7).

While the majority of the small heritage craft museums in this thesis offer practical skills learning opportunities to both children and adults, which will be discussed in more detail in the Learning chapter, determining an overarching definition of 'heritage craft' that encompasses the wide-ranging characteristics of heritage craft practice, is less than straightforward. 2012's Mapping Heritage Craft study, cited earlier, found that 'The phrase Heritage Craft means so many different things to different people and organisations, depending on perspective, that arriving at an agreed definition of what constitutes Heritage Craft was arguably the most difficult aspect of this research' (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2012, p. 6). As a result, 'this research defines Heritage Craft as: "Practices which employ manual dexterity and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, designs and techniques in order to make, repair, restore or conserve buildings, other structures, modes of transport, or more general, portable objects" (2012, p. 6).

The Heritage Craft Association, mentioned earlier, was established in 2009 as the advocacy body for traditional crafts in response to the challenges facing the heritage crafts sector in the UK. The organisation's 'aim is to support and promote heritage crafts as a fundamental part of our living heritage' (Heritage Crafts Association, 2015). The HCA defines 'heritage craft' as 'a practice which

employs manual dexterity and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, design and techniques, and which has been practiced for two or more successive generations' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 3).

In addition, The HCA 'supports the 2003 UNESCO Convention and its goal of safeguarding traditional craftsmanship by supporting the continuing transmission of knowledge and skills associated with traditional artisanry - to help ensure that crafts continue to be practiced within their communities, providing livelihoods to their makers and reflecting creativity and adaptation' (Heritage Crafts Association, 2015). UNESCO states that "'Intangible cultural heritage", also known as "living heritage", refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills transmitted by communities from generation to generation' (UNESCO, 2014, quotes in the original). However, as I write this, the UK is one of seventeen countries out of one hundred and ninety five that has not signed the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage which, in so doing, would 'necessitate significant government funding' (All Party Parliamentary Group for Craft, 2018b; Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 5).

In May of 2017 The HCA published The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a). The Red List report states that,

Heritage crafts currently fall in the gap between the Government agencies for arts and heritage, which focus respectively on contemporary crafts and tangible heritage (historic buildings, monuments and museum collections). Heritage craft is an important example of intangible heritage, the tacit knowledge, skills and practices that are an equally important part of our culture, and that require continued practice in order to survive.  
p. 4

It is important to note here that, as heritage crafts in the UK lie in this gap between contemporary arts (which receive government support through Arts Council England) and the tangible heritage sector, and because the UK has not signed the UNESCO Convention, heritage crafts in the UK do not receive public funding (Heritage Craft Association, 2017b, p. 3). Even more importantly, the ramifications of this funding disparity mean that it is left to the

communities of heritage craft practitioners, both professional and amateur, to keep their particular intangible heritage craft skill practices alive without access to the same avenues of funding support available to contemporary craft practitioners and the tangible heritage sector.

The Radcliffe Red List report states that its primary aim 'was to assess the current viability of traditional heritage crafts in the UK and identify those crafts which are most at risk of disappearing (i.e. no longer practiced)' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 3, brackets in the original). For the purposes of conducting the research for the report the researchers chose to further refine The HCA's definition, cited above, by stating that 'this research focuses on craft practices which are taking place in the UK at the present time, including those crafts which have originated outside the UK. Over 165 crafts are covered by this research' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 3).

The report divides these crafts into four 'categories of risk' that are classified as 'extinct', 'critically endangered', 'endangered' and 'currently viable'. All five of the heritage crafts represented by museums highlighted in this thesis can be found in The Radcliffe Red List report:

- fan making, as represented by The Fan Museum, is 'critically endangered'
- clock and watch making, as represented by The Clockmakers' Museum is 'endangered'
- lace making, patchwork and quilting, and stained glass and glass painting, as represented by The Lace Guild Museum, The Quilt Museum and The Stained Glass Museum respectively, are 'currently viable' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

This means that fan making, as 'critically endangered', is seriously at risk of becoming 'extinct' as a practice in the UK. As an 'endangered' craft, clock and watch making is considered by The Red List criteria to 'have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation, but ... there are serious concerns about [its] ongoing viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6). While lace making, patchwork and quilting, and stained glass and glass painting are classified as 'currently viable', meaning they are 'in a healthy state and have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation', the report also states that this classification 'does not mean



that [these] crafts [are] risk-free or without issues affecting [their] future sustainability/viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

Examples of both contemporary craft and heritage craft can be found in museums across the sector, as evidenced by the exhibition guide pages of periodicals, such as *Craft* magazine's 'Craft Guide' section (Crafts Council, 2015a, pp. 80-87; 2015b, pp. 73-79; 2015c, pp. 93-100). However, small craft specific museums tend to be independent organisations that exist for the sole purpose of promoting their chosen craft and supporting their community of practitioners. John Orna-Ornstein, then director of museums at Arts Council England, writing in the *Museums Journal* states,

One way of categorising museums is 'top-down' or 'bottom-up'. Many of our historic museums were established or supported top down by an authority of some sort: national museums by national government, local authority museums by the civic leadership of towns and cities, and military museums by regiments. ... Then there's bottom-up. Many museums have been established not by authorities, but by individuals or groups passionate about a specific thing - a place, a type of object, a person. In the UK, bottom-up museums blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s, with the development of independent institutions. Groups of like-minded enthusiasts became united, often by a pressing need to save an industrial or other heritage in danger of being lost. And today, the majority of museums in the UK are independent rather than run by an authority. (2015, p. 14)

### **Small Museums - By Virtue of Being Small -**

There are no clearly defined parameters that define museums according to 'size'. However, museums are generally regarded as 'small' based on a variety of undefined criteria that are used as reference points throughout the literature. These criteria would include but are not limited to: physical size, staff size, number of paid versus volunteer staff, budget, collection size, visitor numbers and sustainability. But even each of these criterions lack a quantifiable consensus within the sector (Candlin, 2016, pp. 6-13), which leads to a rather vague understanding of the members of this museum sector category.

Museum sector literature is based on traditionally large museums, with the exception of publications such as the *AIM Bulletin*. This means that, while

small museums may occasionally be mentioned in the sector literature, their presence is usually used as either a referential aside, an example of an anomaly to the stated subject or as part of a study. The same holds true within popular media, with the additional uses of small museums as 'quirky' 'entertainment'. The significance of this situation is that small museums, regardless of the fact that this category comprises the majority of the sector, continue to be perceived as inconsequential members of the museum family with little to offer visitors except a possibly amusing way to spend an hour.

When used as an anomaly to the large museum subject under discussion small museums are very rarely ever discussed at length. Examples where small museums receive a brief mention in sector literature include references in Black (2005), Hein (2000), Hooper-Greenhill (1994), Hudson (1998) and McClellan (2008), to name a few. For instance, on the subject of budget and/or sustainability:

To their devotees, museums still represent a personal commitment that approaches a sacred calling. And despite their descent from elite circles to the denser public sphere, single-issue museums with small budgets and miniscule staffing continue to have a loyal following of lobbyists and specialists to maintain them. In the late 1960s, museums were given a decisively populist spin. Many of them had effectively turned into community activity centres, informally providing innovative education without benefit of the tax concessions available to formal educational organisations. (Hein, 2000, p. 143)

This is interesting because Hein touches on a number of specifics that are true but chooses not to explore or even expand on her single sentence remark. For instance, there is no information as to why single subject museums continued to have a 'loyal following' despite their 'descent' to the 'public sphere' and its associated financial challenges. Nor is Hein clear as to whether the museums-turned-community centres were small 'single-issue' museums or she is referring to the museum sector as a whole. Assuming Hein is continuing to refer to small museums, she also does not address the impact of the 'innovative education' they provided within their communities without tax

concessions. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill is equally ambiguous and unforthcoming in her single sentence reference pertaining to British museums:

In many museums the need to move away from the so-called 'culture of dependency' has been greeted with dismay at both a pragmatic and a moral level. For many smaller museums, opportunities to attract non-governmental funds are limited, especially in comparison with some of the larger national museums and art galleries, which have the benefit of many attractive features such as central major city locations, prestigious collections, hospitality potential and wealthy patrons. Many museum staff in Britain, especially those in the public sector, are passionately committed to free entry to museums, and feel that well-supported museums are one index of a healthy and civilised society. There is some evidence that the public share this view, but research on this is by no means clear-cut. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, p. 24)

Funding and sustainability is a trope throughout museum sector literature and the popular press but very few sources address it in any kind of depth within the context of small museums. Most authors chose to treat small museums as Hooper-Greenhill has done here where she makes a very brief mention but then shifts her perspective to that of the larger museums. Hooper-Greenhill chooses not to address factors such as the possibility at the time of her writing that small museums, the vast majority of which are located outside of London, also receive a disproportionately low amount of government funding relative to those in London, much less non-governmental funding (Kendall, 2013f). Hooper-Greenhill goes on to imply that the primary reasons larger national museums attract outside funding is 'the benefits of many attractive features' she considers as important enough to list such as location and 'hospitality potential'. She does not reflect on other reasons why small museums have 'limited opportunities to attract non-governmental funding'; primarily the fact that large national museums have paid staff, with budgetary funds at their disposal, whose sole job it is to seek philanthropic support. Small museums are generally fortunate to have any paid staff whatsoever, even within curatorial roles, and are generally run by volunteers with budgets barely

sufficient to keep the doors open. As such, staff members and volunteers have neither the time nor financial wherewithal to find, much less cultivate, relationships with potential donors. Philanthropists are also reluctant to invest where government support appears to be lacking because they 'do not want to see their investments balanced out by reductions in public funding' (Smith, 2014, p. 14).

Examples used in discussions related to physical size and visitor experience are equally as limited and vague as the financial references cited above. Kenneth Hudson, founder of the European Museums Forum, cites the following:

There is plenty of evidence to show that visitors like small museums, museums that one can look round satisfactorily in a couple of hours or less, especially if they are concerned with a single subject or single person. Most people have experienced the psychological condition known as museum hopelessness, the feeling that is almost normal in a very large museum, where the complexity and sheer size of the place present a series of impossible and discouraging challenges. The proliferation of small, single-subject museums is due partly to the lower financial investment and risk that is involved, but also to a realization that many interesting types of collection were previously not represented in museums at all. (1998, p. 49)

Hudson makes two different points in this paragraph. First he implies that the 'small' aspect of small museums, and the resultant lack of 'museum hopelessness', is the only reason visitors 'like' these museums. Then he references the 'many interesting types of collection' represented in these museums. Hudson treats both points as mutually exclusive rather than exploring the possibility that they could be mutually beneficial characteristics of the visitor experience offered in small museums. This is typical of the way most visitor experience references to small museums are handled in museum studies literature. Within this context, it is interesting to note that the authors of the following examples would appear to have actually experienced the examples they are citing as beneficial yet, again, chose not to elaborate on or even explore, the specifics of these cited benefits.

Demonstrators are used where it is appropriate, and generally enhance the friendly atmosphere of the museum [in museums in general]. At Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, for example, the textile machines are demonstrated by older people who are familiar with how they would have worked. In the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh, Northern Ireland demonstrators bake bread, spin and weave, thatch roofs, make candles and so on. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, p. 98)

Even the size of a museum affects visitor behavior. In general, visitors allocate almost as much time to a small museum visit as they do to a large museum visit. The result is that visitors to smaller museums generally spend more time looking at exhibitions than do visitors to large museums. There are clearly fewer distractions and things other than exhibitions to look at in a small museum; one is more confined; one can see almost everything; and one can find one's way more easily to see things of interest. Consistent with the findings above, independent of the type of museum or the design and content of exhibitions, most visitors to museums follow a basic visit pattern. A key set of studies reviewing this pattern were conducted by us at two natural history museums; the research revealed strikingly consistent behavior among nearly all the 130 families observed. (Falk and Dierking, 2013, p. 133)

Additionally, one should note that while Falk and Dierking state their findings are 'consistent' regardless of museum 'type, design or exhibition content' their study is based on two natural history museums. Natural history museums are typically substantially larger than small single subject museums thus making their findings related to visitors' 'basic visit pattern' arguable within the context of small museums.

Author Stephen Weil refers to small museums when he writes on 'the scales of aesthetic purity and commodity value' and 'the hierarchy reflected in the different amounts and kinds of gallery space, acquisitions budget, staff salaries, and even prestige generally associated with each such category', stating that:

At the bottom of this new hierarchy - sometimes confined to separate and usually smaller museums of their own, sometimes segregated in small departments within a larger museum - are

categories of objects that suffer from a double disability, such as decorative arts. Instead of being useless - which would place them at the top of the scale of aesthetic purity – they are useful. Instead of being unique-which would place them at the top of the scale of commodity value - they can exist in unlimited copies...

At the intermediate level of this hierarchy are two otherwise very different classes of objects that are only singly disabled: craft objects may be highly regarded on the grounds that they are unique and created entirely by a particular artisan's hand. They are nonetheless barred from the topmost rank because, by definition, they suffer from the flaw of usefulness. (Weil, 1999, p. 167)

Weil's references to museum size, object value, and craft objects in particular are important for the purposes of this study. Weil offers no further discourse related to the various ramifications of being a small museum collection located on any level of his stated hierarchy, only those ramifications related to object hierarchy in gallery spaces in large museums; a situation that will be elaborated upon in the Collections chapter of this thesis.

Quantitative data is available in those instances where small museums have been included as part of the sector in sponsored studies and surveys such as *Renaissance in the Regions: a new vision for England's museums* (Evans et al., 2001) and *New Visions for Independent Museums in the UK* (Middleton, 1990). But these are sector reports based on commissioned studies for government policy use, are out of print and were, in general, not helpful resources for this thesis. Furthermore, studies of this kind may, or may not, include a general overview of small independent museums as a sector category. In this context, when information pertaining to small museums is cited, it is from a broad classification perspective that does little to account for the unique aspects of the individual museums themselves. The findings from other studies, surveys and reports are also reported in publications such as *Museums Journal* and *AIM Bulletin*.

[The regional museum sector] is a very fragmented sector with little encouragement for the constituent parts to work together to maximise the benefits of resources which are available to them

separately. There is no national strategy for museums, regional strategies are in their infancy and there is an unclear focus to much of what is done in the sector. There is a lack of sectoral leadership in the regions. (Evans et al., 2001, p. 10)

More than half of [the 124 museums surveyed who reported] a decrease in income were local authority museums - a soft target for councils looking to save money. But more than a quarter of respondents that had suffered a fall in income this year were independent museums. (Kendall, 2013b)

Small museums are also used as 'entertainment' in popular literature such as Hunter Davie's book *Behind the Scenes at the Museum of Baked Beans: My Search for Britain's Maddest Museums* (2010). Davies, a freelance writer and himself a collector of various types of objects at various times in his life, visited eighteen small specialist museums in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek attempt to ascertain what would be involved in opening his own museum for his personal collection(s). He toured each museum and spoke to the curator who, in the vast majority of cases, was the person whose collection was the basis for the museum. The book is an entertaining read but Davies's 'mad' label for these organisations is not helpful, informative or useful in its implication, however unintended, and contributes to the perspective that small museums are an unimportant category of the museum sector.

I am fascinated by all the people who have created their own museums, turning their daft dreams into reality. How did they do it and why? Was it just to share their passion or are they driven by other complicated motives that I can't yet imagine? So I decided to set off round Great Britain in search of Mad Museums. I use the term 'mad' because that is so often how others see such people, as eccentric, obsessive, weird, and their collections as potty, pathetic, pointless - viewpoints I would never express and attitudes I certainly don't share, for I understand too well the strange compulsion to collect. ... By Mad Museum, I mean something specific - a museum devoted to just one subject, one single topic. That is the vital distinction. Otherwise it's a gallery of assorted items, a collection of collections, which is how most museums have traditionally been organised. There are loads and loads of them, all over the world, in every little town. A Mad Museum must be more or less

unique. OK, I know a thing is either unique or it's not - most of the museums I plan to visit most definitely are.' (Davies, 2010, pp. 5-6)

### **In Closing -**

I have presented evidence in this chapter that the museum sector's small museum category is dramatically underrepresented in museum sector literature. This is a surprising reality when it is understood that small independent museums make up the majority of the sector. The ramifications of this reality are particularly disconcerting for those involved in museum studies. My survey of the existing sector literature has ultimately resulted in questioning the comprehensiveness of the current sector discourse, as well as the role of museum studies literature that all but ignores an entire museum category, in informing an understanding of these small organisations and their contribution to the sector. The fact that the most helpful and enlightening sources for this study have not been scholarly texts, thus necessitating the use of alternative sources of information throughout the research for this study, is both striking and disturbing.

In addition, I have presented evidence from craft sector literature that the haptic skills of craft are fundamental to the development of skills required in various occupations and professions, yet the UK continues to see a decline in craft related making in education; a situation that could potentially prove problematic for creativity and production across a broad range of sectors in the UK. Furthermore, there appears to be a persistent lack of respect that views handcraft related activities as only hobbies of no importance in contemporary culture; a perspective that is compounded by the fact that successive governments have chosen not to recognise heritage craft skills as important heritage assets while continuing to support other aspects of the UK's heritage.

The absence of recognition of the small museums' contribution within the sector, coupled with the fact that the five small museums in this study represent heritage craft skills that are themselves undervalued for their contribution to the UK's heritage and productivity, demonstrates a parochial



perspective that lacks vision and reinforces the value of this thesis for its contribution to any future discourse.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **The Case Study Museums**

This thesis focuses on five specific small, single subject, craft related museums. However, upon application for this PhD, the five case study museums had yet to be established and it was necessary to undertake field research to determine the suitability of candidates for inclusion. This chapter begins with a brief explanation of the criteria used for selecting the small craft museums chosen as case studies, followed by a brief overview of those museums that were on the shortlist for inclusion but ultimately excluded from this thesis. I have chosen to include the additional shortlisted museums for the purposes of contextualising the five case study museums. Due to the paucity of information available regarding small museums, much less small craft museums, it is entirely possible that some who read this paper may not have previously experienced, or be familiar with, these types of small organisations to the same extent that they may have experienced, or be familiar with, large museums. As such, a brief overview of the small museums I visited is important for putting the case study museums, and their attributes, into context relative to others in the sector. The remainder of the chapter is then devoted to introducing the five case study museums ultimately chosen for this study.

#### **The Criteria:**

With over sixteen hundred independent museums in the UK, two-thirds of which are devoted to specialist subjects (Association of Independent Museums, 2018), the small single subject museum category can be understood to include a wide range of museum type and subject matter. However accessing a comprehensive list of these museums is problematic. A dearth of information in the sector literature and the fact that many small museums do not seek accreditation or choose not to include themselves on sector lists are contributing factors. During the course of my research I was unable to access a comprehensive list of small museums in the UK; a challenge echoed by Middleton in his report for the AIM in 1990 (p. 14) and more recently by Fiona

Candlin, one of the sector's only authors who has chosen to focus specifically on small museums (2016, p. 3). As a consequence, I spent an extensive period of time researching craft related small museums on the internet, which was minimally useful as these small organisations, regardless of subject matter, do not necessarily have a dedicated website but may instead appear on locally or regionally orientated tourism websites, as well as using research sources such as tourist publications, word of mouth and so on. It became apparent that, for practical reasons, the broad topic of craft related small museums would need to be further refined to facilitate the search, and later research, process. For instance, the Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum in Northumberland held appeal but the time, travel and economic aspects required for the purposes of repeat research visits, in addition to the same required with the other case study museums, would have been problematic. As such, for those museums located outside of London, I wanted museums within a two to two and half hour travel radius of London by train, to facilitate day trips rather than necessitating an overnight stay.

This study has its roots in my MA dissertation, as cited in the Introduction chapter. As a result, and upon reflection, I determined that The Clockmakers' Museum, as the museum that originally inspired this topic of research in my MA, continued to exemplify the criteria I was most interested in. These criteria were comprised of four aspects readily apparent in The Clockmakers'. Firstly, it was quite literally a 'single subject' with little or no variations on the theme. Secondly, clock making is a specialised craft or skill that contributes to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK. 'Intangible cultural heritage, also known as "living heritage" refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills transmitted by communities from generation to generation' (UNESCO, 2014). Thirdly, while the specialised craft/skill of clock making itself is 'intangible', it produces tangible results i.e. a clock or watch. Lastly, The Clockmakers' is associated with a craft guild that, in the case of The Clockmakers', is a medieval craft guild rather than a contemporary guild. It should also be stated here that, due to the nature of small museums in the sector, my interest specifically in heritage craft, and the fact that formal

museum accreditation has no bearing on the perpetuation of craft skills, formal accreditation was not a subject of interest and hence not a criterion point for selection. For these reasons, I chose *The Clockmakers'* as the benchmark for narrowing the search criteria for possible candidates; for example, *The Clockmakers'* link with the medieval craft guild system in London, as a point of interest, proved useful for identifying possible museums for inclusion.

Using the initial rail travel criterion, I was able to define a shortlist of eleven museums then, based on the four points listed above, culled the remaining candidates to the five case study museums that are the focus of this thesis. For example, an initial candidate such as the Bank of England Museum in London would be eliminated because, while it met the criteria of being a single subject, banking can be considered an 'intangible skill' and the museum is London based, the skills inherent in the banking industry do not produce the type of tangible results seen in other museums. It is also debateable that banking is a craft/skill in the same sense as that of a clock maker (aside from the act of printing bank notes or minting coins). In addition, this museum was not associated with a guild. As such, this elimination process resulted in a list of craft museums representing a wide variety of craft expertise and viability. Along with *The Clockmakers' Museum*, the three other museums included in my MA dissertation (*The Fan Museum*, *The Lace Guild Museum* and *The Stained Glass Museum*) continued to be included here because, after reviewing the eleven candidates including the *Broadfield House Glass Museum* in Kingswinford, the *Bate Collection* (musical instruments) in Oxford and the *Silk Mill* in Derby, all three of the initial MA museums also met the criterion of guild association and rail travel radius. While all of the small museums I visited were interesting in their own right, the seven were eliminated for various reasons that I will briefly explain in the following overviews, presented in alphabetical order.

It should be noted here that due to the subject of this thesis, the word 'museum' is used constantly throughout this paper. As a result, in order to differentiate between a specific museum reference and a more general

reference, I have capitalised the word Museum when it pertains to the specific museum under discussion.

## **The Shortlist**

### **The Bate Collection -**

The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments (museum) is in the Faculty of Music at Oxford University.

**The Collection:** The collection is comprised of over two thousand historical period instruments ‘from the Western orchestral music traditions’ (Bate Collection, 2016) and dating from the Renaissance to the contemporary. More than half of the collection is on display, representing ‘all the most important makers and from pre-eminent collectors’ (Bate Collection, 2016).

**Exhibition display:** With over one thousand instruments on permanent display in this small Museum, this object-based display was an example of the ‘storage’ style to be discussed in the Collections chapter (Parr, 1959, p. 275). But while the displays could be visually overwhelming, there were many intriguing aspects of this Museum. For instance, the Museum is both hands-on and interactive, as visitors are encouraged to play instruments throughout the Museum. For those visitors who are not inclined to play an instrument, or are unfamiliar with a specific instrument, a free audio tour offers the opportunity to listen to a recording of any displayed instrument with a corresponding pink display label.

In addition, and similar to The Lace Guild Museum, the Bate Collection lends the instruments to musicians for performances, study and practice, as stipulated in Bate’s bequest. This is, in and of itself, unusual, due to the historical nature of the period instruments in the collection, and the fact that the Museum requires only a £100 deposit and £25 administrative fee for lent instruments. However, the practice would also appear to be problematic as, according to the Museum’s invigilator, one instrument had been out on loan for a year. In this sense the Bate Collection is the epitome of ‘a living

museum', meaning that 'things were taken out, used, and put back' (Candlin, 2016, p. 181). All of these features are important because they create direct engagement with the Museum and its collection regardless of musical skill level.

**Interpretation materials:** Objects in this Museum are labelled with varying degrees of information, including some with just a number. Labels were generally written in specialist language that was used to describe the instrument. There was no guidebook at the time of my visit, but the Museum has since made a 'souvenir' guidebook available that 'is aimed at general visitors' (Bate Collection, 2016) from which it could be deduced that the Museum has recognised the need for materials that engage its non-specialist visitors. The object-based narrative of this collection entailed so little written information that it was a challenge to discern any other kind of overarching narrative aside from a sense that the instruments were intended to do the 'talking' by virtue of being played, particularly as there were a couple of visitors playing instruments during my visit. Personally, as a visitor who does not play an instrument, this left me at somewhat of a disadvantage but I was accompanied to the museum by a friend who is a professional musician and composer and subsequently fascinated by the breadth of the Museum.

This Museum is dedicated to the art of musicianship rather than the handcraft of instrument production. There was one display that showed the materials from a bow maker's workshop but no explanation of the production process itself. And while the collection has recently acquired over seven hundred items from the workshop of a famous family of violin makers (Bate Collection, 2016), based on the floor to ceiling display style and number of instruments already on display, I would argue that the Museum has no place to display these items and, as such, it is debatable whether the items will be available for regular public viewing. The Museum does sell technical diagrams of instruments for use outside the Museum but, again, the process of production is not addressed within the Museum.

**Exclusion:** The Bate Collection did not meet the four point criteria used for determining the case study museums for this thesis. The Museum is a small

single subject museum, but its subject of musical instruments is very broad rather than that of a single type of instrument. While the handcraft of instrument making is intangible, with many of these skills either endangered or critically endangered in the UK (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6), and creates a tangible object, the overall collection here is focused on the intangible art of musicianship, which is not a handcraft in the sense that it produces a tangible object.

**Guild association:** The Worshipful Company of Musicians is a medieval London City Guild but there is no mention of this guild at The Bate Collection, or references to guilds of any kind.

### **Broadfield House Glass Museum -**

The Broadfield House Glass Museum opened in a residential neighborhood of Kingswinford in 1980. The original building was a two-storey eighteenth century farmhouse. A three-storey Regency house was then built onto the back of the farmhouse in the early 1800s and the entire building is now a Grade II listed building.

Broadfield had been slated for closure since 2009 as part of local authority cost saving measures, with the stipulation that it would not be closed 'until a new home had been found for the glass collection' (The Broadfield House Glass Museum, 2017). As such, Broadfield closed in September of 2015 with the expectation that it would be opening as the White House Cone Museum by December 2016. However, this new museum is now slated to open in the summer of 2018 pending a response from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) regarding funding (The Broadfield House Glass Museum, 2017).

**The Collection:** The neighboring town of Stourbridge was the leading glass producer in the world at the end of the nineteenth century and the collection consists of ten thousand objects representing 'every major period of glass production in the country' (The British Glass Foundation, 2017). The glass collection is currently in storage but 'represent[s] one of the finest holdings of 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century glass in the world' (The British Glass Foundation, 2017).

**Exhibition display:** Twenty to twenty-five percent of the ten thousand objects in the collection were on display in the Museum, equating to two thousand to twenty-five hundred objects on permanent display, with the remainder of the collection stored offsite. There were ten display galleries spread over the three floors of the building. One gallery was dedicated to temporary exhibitions and two were closed for 'redisplay'. The object-based narrative of this Museum was evident in the way the gallery displays were segregated. Each gallery was dedicated to a specific type/function of glass; for instance, Studio Glass, Collectables and Curiosities, and Paperweight Corner. Objects were displayed in wall-mounted and free-standing glass cases. A threshing barn, attached to the house, was used as a hot glass studio with artist in residence, Allistair Malcolm, giving live glassblowing demonstrations, which was useful for visitor engagement and putting the skills of the craft into context.

**Interpretation Materials:** This Museum was the largest of all that I visited and, as such, was the only museum that had a map for visitors. There was a huge amount of the glass on display with multiple display cases in each room. As mentioned earlier, the galleries were segregated by type/function with further object segregation in some galleries. For instance, the eleven display cases in the Eat, Drink and Be Merry gallery were further divided by subjects such as 'Commemoratives', 'By Royal Appointment', 'Cocktails' and 'Sweet Tooth' which served to put the numerous objects into context, particularly for non-specialists.

Sources of interpretive information were inconsistent in this Museum. Regardless of the specific gallery's subject, the vast majority of the objects in this Museum had virtually no object-specific interpretation labels, however some objects were numbered to correspond with laminated A4-size information sheets available next to each display case. Information conveyed might include history of the glass style presented, i.e. Victorian wine service; identification of various numbered objects in the case with contextual information; or only the name of the object, style of glass, date and production method, which was least informative for the non-specialist. The information



sheets used specialist terminology, particularly when describing production methods.

The portability of the laminated information sheets was useful when faced with large display cases containing multiple pieces of glass, but also problematic as visitors did not always return them to their original location, resulting in some display cases with no available information sheets.

**Exclusion:** This Museum is similar to the Bate in that, while it is a single subject, there are multiple versions of the subject that require different production methods, such as studio glass and specialist technical glass. Glass is the common denominator to all methods but the methods and resulting objects vary widely from laboratory beakers to glass sculptures. Glass production is an intangible handcraft that produces tangible results, but like the Bate, this collection was not sufficiently narrow enough in its focus to make it comparable to the other craft-related museums.

**Guild Association:** There are two medieval London City Guilds associated with glass: the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass (associated primarily with stained glass) and The Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers of London (associated with most aspects of glass in general) but there is no mention of either guild at Broadfield. A contemporary guild, The Guild of Glass Engravers, is listed as a supporter of the British Glass Foundation, which is the organisation behind the reopening of the 'new' glass museum intended for 2018 (The British Glass Foundation, 2017).

### **Museum of Carpet -**

The Museum of Carpet, in Kidderminster, is 'the only museum in the UK dedicated to carpet and carpet making' (Museum of Carpet, 2016). Oddly, this Museum shares an entrance with a large Morrison's supermarket. However it sits on the original site of the Stour Vale carpet mill that is now a Grade II listed building that has been refurbished to a modern standard (The Museum of Carpet, 2018).

**The Collection:** The Museum tells the story, as well as the process, of making carpet from the period of hand looms in the attic as a cottage industry, to the

steam driven looms of the Industrial Revolution, and on to the latter half of the twentieth century. The carpet industry was a principal employer in Kidderminster for over a century and the Carpet Museum Trust was founded in 1981 with the aim of establishing a public museum dedicated to the subject. Over time, the Trust collected 'machinery, artefacts, archives and libraries', as well as 'a collection of around 3000 carpet designs' (Museum of Carpet, 2016).

In 2004 the Trust received an HLF grant 'to develop the Carpet Archives Centre to catalogue and make accessible the thousands of items' held by the Trust (Museum of Carpet, 2016). A second grant of £1.7 million from the HLF in 2008 resulted in the current Museum of Carpet, which opened in 2012.

The Collections and Archive Manager at this Museum had no formal museum training so this Museum, like The Lace Guild Museum, had been assigned a Museum Development Officer by the West Midlands conurbation. **Exhibition display:** This Museum spans two floors. The Museum's library and the collection and archives are located on the first floor. The ground floor is divided into two sections; one, essentially a manufacturing space with two huge steam-driven mechanical looms; the other, a gallery display space that is very long and narrow due to this building's original function as a carpet mill. The wall that separates the gallery space from the manufacturing space has intermittent openings that allow access to both spaces simultaneously.

Although this Museum's display is primarily a concept-based didactic narrative, a huge contextual display in the Museum's entrance, comprised of stuffed sheep, spools of wool, a spinning wheel and rolled carpets, with no interpretive information except the name of the Museum, serves to visually illustrate the material origins of wool carpet. Surprisingly, there are no other carpets displayed in this Museum aside from some small sample squares on the floor in the manufacturing space.

The gallery section of the Museum started with two working handlooms, spinning wheels and other equipment associated with hand weaving, with volunteers demonstrating the working handlooms during both my visits. The

remainder of this section of the Museum was an extremely text heavy narrative of the history of the carpet industry in Kidderminster.

The manufacturing section was dedicated to the two huge mechanical steam-driven looms with volunteers demonstrating these looms two days per week. The mechanical loom demonstrations were limited to two days a week because both sourcing the wool to supply the machines and finding skilled weavers to demonstrate the machines were ongoing challenges. Learning the intangible skill of running the machines requires a five-year apprenticeship and local weavers are not interested in participating. This challenge of non-participation is due to the complex socioeconomic factors inherent in the historical nature of Kidderminster's identity as a carpet making centre. The industry that had dominated the city for over a century began its decline in the 1980's, with the subsequent loss of livelihoods, and barely exists in Kidderminster today; resulting in heightened emotions about the industry amongst those in the generation of skilled weavers hardest hit by the industry's demise. The resulting lack of participation in the Museum by local skilled weavers, while understandable from a human perspective, clearly has an impact on the perpetuation of skills for the heritage sector.

When in operation, the mechanical looms are very loud and, because the two different sections of the Museum are linked, it gets quite loud in other areas of the Museum during the operational demonstrations. While this acts to reinforce an understanding of the working conditions in mills where multiple machines were constantly running simultaneously, it also has the potential to make conversation in the Museum problematic. It should also be noted that the position of the handloom display space, as visually adjacent to these huge mechanical looms, is an effective informational juxtaposition on a variety of levels.

**Interpretation materials:** As this Museum's overarching narrative is the history and evolution of the carpet production process, including Kidderminster's historical production role, the Museum's display is laid out in chronological order. In addition to the information imparted by the volunteers involved with the handloom and steam-driven mechanical loom demonstrations, the vast

majority of information in this Museum is presented in the form of large wall panels with explanatory text and associated photos. All was written in accessible language with the exception of the occasional specialist term, but there was no hierarchy of information to allow the visitor to control the amount of information they were able to absorb during their visit. As a result, the sheer volume of text in this Museum became progressively overwhelming. There were no object display cases except for those associated with a small temporary exhibition. There were also a number of informative videos on various carpet related topics, as well as hands-on and interactive displays relating to subjects such as designing, weaving and dyeing carpet.

**Exclusion:** This Museum's subject fit the criteria of a single subject and carpet weaving on a handloom is an intangible handcraft with a tangible product. However, in this instance, there were no carpets on display and the production of carpet from the perspective of handcraft, while briefly represented within the historical context of carpet making, seemed overwhelmed by the mechanical production perspectives, both literally and figuratively, with very minimal references to the handcraft in a contemporary context. This emphasis on industrial carpet making over handcraft production was not applicable within the context of my research criteria.

**Guild Association:** The Worshipful Company of Weavers is a medieval London City Guild but there was no mention of this guild at the Museum of Carpet aside from the Guild's crest woven on one of the small carpet sample squares on the floor of the manufacturing space.

### **Royal College of Music Museum of Musical Instruments -**

This Museum, not to be confused with the Royal Academy of Music Museum, is located in the Royal College of Music behind Royal Albert Hall on Prince Consort Road. The Museum opened in 2001 but closed in December 2015 and will remain closed while the Royal College of Music (RCM) redevelops its building to include the 'new' larger museum. The Museum is intended to reopen in 2019 (Royal College of Music Museum, 2017). The Museum will be conducting a number of outreach activities during this period,

as well as curating temporary and pop-up exhibitions. The new Museum will include two new members of staff in the form of a Conservator and a Research Assistant (Royal College of Music Museum, 2017).

**The Collection:** The collection, consisting of over twenty five thousand objects, including approximately fifteen hundred instruments dating from the late fifteenth century to the present, has been moved to an offsite storage space and is not accessible to the public during the redevelopment period. Over 500 objects in the collection will be undergoing extensive conservation while in storage and the Museum is in the process of digitising the majority of the collection for online access (Royal College of Music Museum, 2017).

**Exhibition display:** As this Museum is located inside the Royal College of Music it was necessary for visitors to navigate their way through the college building to the Museum's location. Like The Bate, this collection was displayed as an object-based narrative. It was displayed over two floors in an open style with the display space above overlooking the display space below. At the time of my visit the Museum was in the process of refurbishing its displays, which had resembled those in The Bate Collection for its storage display style. Curator Jenny Nex stated that their old storage display style Museum had far fewer visitor hours and was felt to be 'inaccessible' (2013). Nex also felt that the storage display style was more informative for a specialist audience.

Nex stated that the majority of the collection had been donated and that they do not accept donor stipulations; but if the instrument is in playable condition they will sometimes allow it to be played. The Bate policy of access makes her 'cringe' (Nex, 2013). This is interesting because this Museum is located in a college of music, similar to The Bate, and yet at The Bate, access to the instruments is both its remit and encouraged as an important factor in visitor engagement, while the RCM limits both the objects on display and direct access to instruments. The contrast in these factors combine to give the impression that visitor engagement is equally limited. In addition, the refurbishment process that was then underway would see objects removed from display, i.e. extra flutes now stored under the display cases (although

pianos, by virtue of their size, seemed to be the one instrument that had been made relatively accessible), and would include themes as part of the new display. For instance, one theme already in place was entitled 'London Calling' with various types of musical scores on display that were intended to 'highlight some aspects of London's musical life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century'. The scores were divided into categories that were delineated by subject titles that were printed to look like London street signs, including 'Establishment', 'Town', 'Country' and 'Radicals'.

**Interpretation Materials:** The majority of the written narrative in this Museum was provided on A4 size sheets placed in the display cases. In most cases, these sheets were completely full of text in very small type. There were no wall panels but the occasional A3 size text panel, also located inside the display cases, was similarly filled with text of the same point size. While all were written primarily in accessible language, with the occasional specialist term used when describing the specific features of an instrument, the amount and size of type was problematic for engaging with the displays. Specific object labels were limited and many objects were simply tagged with an identification label, as in 'tuning fork RCM 795'.

The Museum offered concerts in the display space given by the students and, during my visit, a singer was practicing whilst accompanied by someone on one of the Museum's pianos. Curator Nex stated that 'visitors say they like hearing music in the space' (Nex, 2013); a statement made all the more interesting based on the limited access to the Museum's collection for the purposes of playing the instruments.

**Excluded:** I chose to exclude this Museum for essentially the same reasons as those related to The Bate Collection; that of the broad musical instrument perspective rather than that of a single type of instrument, and no examples of the craft process associated with instrument making.

**Guild Association:** Also, as with the Bate Collection, The Worshipful Company of Musicians is a medieval London City Guild but I did not see any mention of this guild at the Royal College of Music.

## **The Silk Mill –**

This Museum opened in Derby in 2013. Described as being a ‘museum of making’ on its website at the time (The Silk Mill, 2015), but offering very few details as to what that entailed, the reality of the ‘Museum’ experience was not what I was expecting. The building itself ‘sits on the site of the world’s first factory and is the gateway to the UNESCO World Heritage Site’ (The Silk Mill, 2015). In reality, it was a large empty factory space that, at that time, was being utilised as a community workshop of ‘making’ to ‘design and build’ the Museum’s environment, such as ‘furniture and fittings for the ground floor from scratch’ (The Silk Mill, 2015). In this sense, the term ‘museum’ could be considered to be a misnomer. The Museum’s current website states that it is ‘undergoing a process of significant development to reinvent the Silk Mill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the creation of Derby Silk Mill - Museum of Making’. The site goes on to state that ‘the new museum will display fascinating items from Derby’s rich industrial history, celebrating the makers of the past; and will be designed to empower makers of the future’ (The Silk Mill, 2017). This new facility is slated to open in 2019/20.

At the time of my visit in 2015 the Museum was already in the process of conversion/refurbishment. Only the ground floor was open, as the remaining floors were being stripped of asbestos. There were approximately 40 paid members of staff; an unsustainably huge number relative to those of the case study museums in this thesis. Volunteers helped in the ‘making’ workshops. Community engagement occurred through various methods such as the ‘Making Members Group’ and the ‘Kids Making Area’. At the time of my visit there was a general sense of anxiety amongst the staff that I spoke with, as the Museum was awaiting word on an Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding grant application and had already been turned down once by the HLF. The current ‘significant development’ program is ‘supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Derby City Council and Arts Council England’ (The Silk Mill, 2017).

### **Straw Museum –**

This was an unaccredited Museum dedicated to straw as a material and the handcraft techniques used to create various straw objects. It was located on a single lane road in a rural area of the Norfolk countryside near Cromer. The Museum was a combination of a series of four large wooden sheds/cabins located in owner Ella Carstairs' back garden, as well as a few rooms in the back of her home. The Museum's limited hours were listed as being from 11:00-4:00, Wednesdays and Saturdays, May to October 31 but Carstairs regularly opened for people on odd days and throughout the year. At the time of my visit in 2015 Carstairs was 88 years old. Phone conversations to organise my visit were a challenge as Carstairs' memory seemed less than comprehensive.

This Museum had no dedicated website during the early stages of my research. Information regarding this museum was offered on the 'Museums Norfolk' website (Museums Norfolk, 2017) where it also clearly stated that the Museum did not have a website. However, during my visit, Carstairs shared a recent handwritten letter from a friend which stated that the friend had the Museum's website up and running, was checking Carstairs' emails everyday, was looking forward to promoting the Museum more in the coming year, had 'lots' of magazine articles lined up, and was distributing leaflets at tourist points across Norfolk. At 88, Carstairs look slightly terrified at this news. A Google search for the Straw Museum in 2016 offered a number of options, including the 'Museums Norfolk' site, but also a website for this Museum that cited the Museum's name as the Norfolk Museum of Straw Works (Norfolk Museum of Straw Works, 2016). It is unclear whether Carstairs was aware of this different name for her Museum. Ella Carstairs passed away in June of 2017 and the Museum is now closed (Museums Norfolk, 2018).

**The Collection:** Carstairs had no information regarding the number of objects in the collection.

**Exhibition display:** Carstairs controlled access to her Museum by assuming the role of personal guide. She took the visitor through her home to the Museum-related rooms at the back of the house to start the tour. The largest of the



Museum rooms in her home was a workshop space with display cases and Carstairs' craft workbench. The overarching narrative of this Museum was straw as a material with the garden shed displays loosely categorised by type of straw object, i.e. one shed displays baskets, boxes and hats while another shed displays straw stars and a particular type of framed art. Displays represented a variety of different types of straw, as well as straw work from other countries and various time periods. In most instances the displays were neatly arranged and/or framed, in others, such as the hat, basket and box shed, the objects were in piles. A much larger fifth garden building acted as a meeting and classroom space, including a small kitchen, catering supplies and various amenities for dealing with large groups of people.

**Interpretation Materials:** The challenge in this Museum was the fact that there were virtually no interpretation materials or labels presented, aside from one or two small labels naming an object or giving general information about a specific country of origin. Carstairs, as a personal tour guide, was the only source of information. While this type of interpersonal communication is beneficial for facilitating a customised display narrative, it has the potential to be somewhat problematic, requiring a certain level of patience on the part of the visitor.

**Exclusion:** This was a single subject craft museum whose handcraft is an intangible, diminishing field of expertise that results in a tangible object. While this Museum met all of my criteria, I chose not to include it due to the lack of accessible, consistent, verifiable information associated with the Museum and its collection.

**Guild Association:** There is a contemporary craft guild called The Guild of Straw Craftsmen, from which Carstairs had received certificates of recognition including the 'Craftsman Award' and 'recognition of her contribution to the craft of straw work', an honour now 'recorded on the Guild's Roll of Honour'. Carstairs claimed to have been the Guild's founder but no further evidence is available to affirm this assertion and contacting the Guild proved problematic.

## The Chosen Five

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, small museums that represent a specific craft or skill in the UK are wide ranging in their numbers and subject matter, resulting in the need for a set of criteria to narrow the candidates for inclusion as case studies in this thesis. To reiterate before moving forward, these criteria were comprised of four characteristics: a 'single subject' with little or no variations on the theme; a specialised craft or skill that contributes to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK; the intangible specialised craft/skill produces a tangible object; and the craft/skill is associated with either a medieval or contemporary craft guild. The previous section addressed the six small museums that were ultimately excluded from this study and this section will now offer a brief overview of the five chosen case study museums, in alphabetical order, by providing details that will help to facilitate a better understanding of their origins. It should be said here, however, that within each of these small museums, their history and the craft/skill they represent are so entwined that separating them for the purposes of an historical account and thematic exploration has proven to be problematic. As a reflection of this challenge, various aspects of the characteristics of these museums will be found repeated throughout this thesis within the changing contexts of the thematic structure.

### **The Clockmakers' Museum:**

The Clockmakers' Museum is an extension of The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers and offers a detailed historical view of the expert craftsmanship associated with this medieval Guild's history and membership from the unique perspective of the Company's members (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2017). As such, the Museum was originally located in a single closed room in the City of London's Guildhall, by invitation of the City of London, from 1874 until its move in 2015 to its new home inside London's Science Museum.

## 1. The Clockmakers' Museum - Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London



Exterior of The Clockmakers' Museum: Photographer: Jack Hubbard

## 2. The Clockmakers' Museum – Science Museum, London



Exterior of the Science Museum/The Clockmakers' Museum: Available from:  
[https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g186338-d189025-i215331008-Science\\_Museum-London\\_England.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g186338-d189025-i215331008-Science_Museum-London_England.html) [Accessed 29 April 2018].

The Clockmakers' new home, in a gallery space on the second floor of the Science Museum, is completely different from its original location. However, the various static attributes of this Museum make it an interesting and valuable contrast to the other four case study craft museums. The Museum's relocation occurred in the middle of this thesis and yet, while this small Museum is in many ways now radically different from the other case study museums, and its new location could 'disqualify' it as a 'small' museum, I chose to continue to include it in this thesis for three reasons. First and foremost is that, like the other four, it still exists to celebrate a specific heritage craft or skill and is associated with a craft guild. Second, as a result of its unique agreement with the Science Museum, it has retained its independent status, original appearance, design elements and character to become 'a museum within a museum', with a separate identity that is readily acknowledged by the Science Museum in its internal signage and visitor materials. Third, The Clockmakers' provides an important example, like that of the Quilt Museum and Gallery to be discussed later in this section, of the challenges facing small museums in the sector in keeping their doors open. And while The Clockmakers' offers a success story, many others do not.

**The Collection:** The collection consists of over seven hundred and twenty five objects, and is owned by The Clockmakers' Charity. As such, the charity is responsible for the collection's operating funds, as well as any funds required for acquisitions or new projects (Nye, 2017a).

**History:** From its inception as a library in 1813, to its emergence as a 'formal' museum in 1874 in London's Guildhall, The Clockmakers' has the longest history of the five heritage craft museums in this thesis and its display style has been the most characteristic of a static gallery in a large museum.

The Clockmakers' Museum focuses on England's contribution to the science of accurate timekeeping to dispel the commonly held misconception that, historically, central Europe was the only place producing timepieces and that Switzerland has always been the home of superior craftsmanship. The collection's road to its own museum was filled with challenges, which will be discussed in more detail in the Collections themed chapter of this thesis.

The science of precise timekeeping did not begin to take hold in England until the sixteenth century. This shift was precipitated by the critical need for an accurate nautical timekeeper to facilitate increasing maritime trade with the New World and the Far East (White, 1998, pp. 3-4). The timepieces created within the European craft guilds system were setting the standard for quality and design but religious persecution on the continent drove many immigrant craftsmen to England, along with their skills for producing domestic timepieces. Access to local markets in London was contingent on guild membership and the 'threat' to the local clock making trade, created by the influx of immigrant clockmakers, led to the creation of The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers' craft guild by royal charter in 1631 as a means of controlling local production and trade in London (White, 1998, pp. 4-9). The combination of The Clockmakers' Company, with the medieval craft guilds' inherent organisational imperative for superior quality craftsmanship from its members, and the increasing numbers of skilled immigrant craftsmen to the Guild's ranks, resulted in London's dominance as the clock and watch-making centre of the world from 1660 to 1900 (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2011).

The Clockmakers' Company never found a consistent means of Company revenue like, for instance, the Goldsmith's Company's right to 'hallmark' that provides the Goldsmith's with 'an assured income for many centuries' (White, 1998, p.35), and consequently has never been able to afford its own Hall. As a result, all of the Company's property was stored in its 'great Chest' that lived in the residence of each successive Company Master (White, 1998, p. 35). Eventually the Company was able to rent a suite of rooms in a series of three hotels over the course of more than eighty-five years. In 1813, during their 'residence' in the second hotel, a Company Library was proposed, leading to the formation of the Library Committee and the birth of what would eventually become The Clockmakers' Museum. Committee member B. L. Vulliamy's shop served as the storage site for the early Library and Collection until 1817 when Vulliamy purchased a proper piece of furniture to house the growing collection of antiquarian horological books and items, and which was subsequently installed in the Company's then current 'hotel headquarters'.

Vulliamy died in 1854 and in 1856 the Patents Office, later to become part of London's Science Museum, asked to borrow the complete Library and Collection to add to its own. The request was flatly refused. (White, 1998, pp. 37-39)

It was not until 1871 that the last surviving Committee member proposed 'proper public access' to both the Library and Collection by offering them for display in, what was soon to be, the City's new Guildhall Library then under construction (White, 1998, p. 39). The Clockmakers' Museum opened in its new Guildhall premises in 1874 where the entirety of its collection remained on display until 2015; at which time the Company's entire collection consisted of over six hundred watches, thirty clocks and fifteen marine timekeepers (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2015). The Museum received Full Registration status in 2004 and full Museum Accreditation from the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in 2007 (The Clockmaker, 2007). The Company continues to have no guildhall or headquarters of its own, but rather 'retains an office in the City at The Carpenters' Hall' (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2015).

In 2012, the Company's newsletter, *The Clockmaker*, stated that the Museum had been located in the Guildhall for nearly 140 years 'by invitation of the City of London Corporation' and had been paying 'a service charge [for the previous three years], representing the City's assessment of our share of the services we receive by being in Guildhall' (Hurrion, p. 3). Hurrion goes on to say that as of 2015 the City intended to charge the Museum £50,000 rent per year 'and will no doubt want to review that rent in the future. This is an annual sum the Trust cannot afford to pay out of its present income and would have to expend capital – on which we rely for most of our income – to meet it' (Hurrion, 2012, p. 3). While the Trustees and the Company entered negotiations with the City in 2013 in hopes of agreeing a more financially viable solution, they were simultaneously searching for new premises as a means of avoiding outright closure (Hurrion, 2012, p. 3).

Ultimately however, 'the trustees were unable to reach an agreement on the rent [for the Museum space]' (Fowler, 2015), and the Museum was forced to find another location or close altogether. 'Ian Blatchford, Director of the Science Museum [in London], happened to hear that the Clockmakers' Museum was on the point of closing' and 'immediately and without hesitation offered a space to [The Clockmakers'] as an independent museum within the Science Museum ... something that has never happened before' (Fowler, 2015). The Clockmakers' Museum reopened in its new location in 2015, again with the entirety of its now over seven hundred and twenty five objects on display, and is now accessible for viewing in the Science Museum for at least the next thirty years (Fowler, 2015). According to James Nye, the Chairman of the Company's Collection Committee, The Clockmakers' will retain its separate identity for the course of the thirty-year agreement, which 'was the Science Museum's express wish and our [The Clockmakers'] requirement', and readily acknowledges that 'it is a generous arrangement, since we benefit from security, insurance, heat, light, cleaning and so forth' (Nye, 2017a). Nye mentions 'security' and it should be noted that this is the only small museum in this thesis that has no Museum or Guild-related personnel of its own (staff, volunteer or otherwise) located in or near its museum space; nor was there anyone in its previous Guildhall location. This means that there is no visitor support of any kind directly related to The Clockmakers' Museum and results in any questions having to be directed to Sir George White, the collection's Keeper, via email.

While The Clockmakers' moved to the Science Museum in 2015, The Clockmakers' accreditation in its Guildhall location was not due for renewal until mid 2017. However, the range of activities required to settle-in to its Science Museum location, as well as the necessity for The Clockmakers' to work in tandem with the Science Museum on various modifications to The Clockmakers' documentation to take into account changes, such as adherence to the Science Museum's emergency plan and so forth, The Clockmakers' advised the Arts Council in late 2016 that they would not be ready to submit a complete, updated, application by the required deadline (Nye, 2018b). As a

result of discussions with the Arts Council, The Clockmakers' accreditation was 'suspended', becoming instead 'provisionally accredited', until January of 2018 at which time The Clockmakers' Museum submitted its updated documentation pack, and for which The Clockmakers' is currently awaiting approval (Nye, 2018b).

It is interesting to note that the Patents Office/ Science Museum sought to 'borrow' the Clockmakers' collection in 1856 to add to its own collection, and was refused, but one hundred and fifty years later came to the rescue and now houses The Clockmakers' collection nonetheless.

### **The Fan Museum:**

The Fan Museum is dedicated to 'celebrating the history of fans and the art of fan making' (The Fan Museum, 2016) and is situated inside two Grade II listed town houses, built in 1721 that sit on a shaded residential side street bordering Greenwich Park in Greenwich, London.

**The Collection:** The Museum's collection, comprised of over six thousand fans and fan related objects, is divided between two distinct collections; The Hélène Alexander Collection (HA Collection) and The Fan Museum Collection (TFM Collection), details of which will be discussed further in the Collections themed chapter of this thesis (The Fan Museum, 2016; The Fan Museum, 2012). However it was Alexander's personal collection that was the impetus for the Museum's existence, and while Alexander is the Museum's founder she is also its Director (The Fan Museum, 2012; Alexander, 2001, p. 6).

**History:** While a volunteer for many years at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Hélène Alexander reached the conclusion that an institution should be established 'solely for the display and study of fans' and, to this end, decided to gift her personal collection to the nation (Alexander, 2001, p. 8). However, Alexander was unable to find an existing museum in Britain that met her stipulations for the collection, leading Alexander to create her own museum. In 1984, The Fan Museum Trust was established to administer the new museum, followed by acquired status as a charitable organisation and the search for a suitable location for the new museum (Alexander, 2001, p. 8).



**3. The Fan Museum - 12 Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London**



**4. The Lace Guild Museum - The Hollies, 53 Audnam, Stourbridge, West Midlands**



According to Alexander, Greenwich was chosen as the site for the Museum because the area was felt to have 'a suitably rich cultural heritage' (Alexander, 2001, p. 9). While she does not elaborate further on this comment in her book it is interesting to note that in 1997, six years after the opening of the museum, UNESCO named a section of Greenwich the 'Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site' and The Fan Museum's location places it within this heritage site (UNESCO, 2013). The two Grade II listed town houses that are the current location of the Museum were purchased in 1985. Fundraising efforts began with the goal of raising the approximately £1.5 million that, according to Alexander, was needed for 'the cost of the buildings' and for the extensive refurbishment necessary to convert these abandoned but 'outstanding examples of early Georgian architecture' into a viable space for a museum (2001, p. 9).

Restoration and refurbishment began in September 1987 and continued 'as and when the funds rolled in from private individuals, businesses, charitable trusts and public bodies' (Alexander, 2001, p. 10). The Fan Museum was completed at the end of 1990 and opened its doors to the public in May 1991 as the first museum in the world devoted to fans (Alexander, 2001, p. 8).

The Fan Museum's collection is stored at the Museum but for conservation reasons, like those at the Lace Guild Museum and Quilt Museum and Gallery, cannot be put on permanent display. The Museum addresses this challenge by offering a series of small thematic temporary exhibitions that change every four months, thus allowing regular access to its collection of over six thousand objects.

**Guild Association:** The Museum and its collection are loosely associated with The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, a medieval London guild with an active contemporary membership. Alexander is a Freeman and Honorary Liveryman of The Fan Makers' Company, and The Fan Makers' Company is a Patron of Alexander's Fan Circle organisation, a membership organisation of enthusiasts and specialists (The Fan Circle, 2017).

### **The Lace Guild Museum:**

The Lace Guild Museum is located in The Lace Guild's headquarters building, called 'The Hollies', in Stourbridge in the West Midlands. The Hollies is a two-storey Edwardian house and houses all official aspects of the Guild including the Museum, its lace collection and the Guild's comprehensive library. Although lace making in the UK dates back to the sixteenth century, The Lace Guild, 'the largest organisation for lacemakers in the British Isles' (The Lace Guild, 2017), is a contemporary craft guild and registered educational charity founded in 1976. The Museum is an extension of the Guild's operations and activities and is run by the Guild's Museum Committee, all of who are volunteers living in various parts of the country, and there are no museum professionals amongst the Guild's volunteers or staff.

The Museum acts as an exhibition space that allows the Guild to display various pieces of lace from its collection as well as the work of its members and, as such, is one of the tools the Guild uses to support its community of heritage craft practitioners, as well as to educate the public about the craft of lace making. It does this in a variety of ways including Museum exhibitions, demonstrations, lace making classes and workshops, videos, the Guild's library and the Guild's quarterly membership publication.

**The Collection:** The Guild's collection consists of over eighteen thousand pieces, spanning over four hundred years, and is displayed in a series of rotating temporary exhibitions for conservation reasons.

**History:** At its inception, the Guild worked out of a member's back bedroom until it had the funds to purchase the modest residential house that is its current headquarters (Roberts, G., 2013). According to Gilian Dye, the Guild was founded 'by enthusiasts for a craft that had been in existence for more than four hundred years' (2001, p. 1). The origins of lace are unclear, as is a definitive date for its discovery, but lace, as we know it, began to appear in the early sixteenth century with Venice being the first city to be associated with the craft. Prior to the Industrial Revolution all lace was handmade with bobbin (multiple threads) and needle (single thread) laces being the two most common types. 'By 1600 high quality lace was being made in many centres across

Europe including Flanders, Spain, France and England' (The Lace Guild, 2017a). Bobbin lacemaking was well established in England by 1600, with 'the main lacemaking centres [located] in the East Midlands (Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire) ... and around Honiton in Devon' (The Lace Guild, 2017a). Lace schools were established in both areas 'where children as young as five or six learned to make lace' (Dye, 2001, p. 1).

By the end of the eighteenth century the Industrial Revolution in Britain had resulted in the first machine made lace and radical change to the lives of lacemakers. Technological advancements were so effective that 'by 1870 virtually every type of hand-made [*sic*] lace had its machine made copy' and by 1900 'most of the handmade lace industry [in England] had disappeared' (The Lace Guild, 2017a). A few organisations continued to operate by making such things as patterns and training available, as well as regular employment for those still making handmade lace, but even these organisations had collapsed by the 1920's. Lacemaking increasingly became a 'hobby' rather than a viable source of income and, as such, 'it had been left to individuals to preserve lacemaking skills' (The Lace Guild, 2017a). As a result, handmade lacemaking in England was kept alive well into the twentieth century through the efforts of several active lacemaking teachers in the Midlands, the Women's Institute and local authority evening classes. The County Council in Devon retained classes in schools but eventually made them available only as adult classes (The Lace Guild, 2017a; Dye, 2001, p. 3).

What started as casual renewed interest in the 1950's became a lacemaking renaissance by the 1970's with lacemaking hobby enthusiasts taking advantage of new classes springing up across the country. In 1973 Eunice Arnold, a lacemaking teacher, brought students together from her three classes for a well advertised 'Lace-in' that 'snowballed, attracting interest from all over the country' (Dye, 2001, p. 4). A second 'Lace-in' in 1975 resulted in the formation of the Guild in 1976 with nearly 600 people applying for membership within the first six months (Dye, 2001, pp. 4-5). In the 1980's and early nineties the membership had grown to ten thousand but has since

dwindled to about three thousand, mostly older members, many from overseas (Cordes, 2013).

The Lace Guild's constitution stipulates a lace museum as one of its objectives,

Continue to develop and maintain a reference and lending library, a museum of lace, lacemaking tools and materials, and other items of lacemaking interest, archives relating to the Lace Guild and the history of lacemaking [as well as] to make this material available to members of The Lace Guild and the wider public. (Roberts, S., 2012, insert p. 3)

The Guild's collection became a Registered Museum in 2001 and was granted full Accredited Museum status by the MLA in 2009. Like the Clockmakers' Museum discussed earlier, the Art Council's guidelines for museum accreditation require that a professional curator be appointed in a supervisory role. (White, 2013a; Roberts, G., 2013) While Jonathan Betts was already a member of The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers and happened to be qualified for the Arts Council's approval through his work at the Royal Observatory, The Lace Guild has no such person. For this reason, upon receiving its museum accreditation, the conurbation assigned a Museum Development Officer to advise/supervise the activities of The Lace Guild Museum's curators. A conurbation is 'a large urban area consisting of several towns merging with the suburbs of a city' (Soanes, 2006, p. 159). The closest large city to Stourbridge is Birmingham and, as Birmingham is the heart of the West Midlands conurbation, the Lace Guild is considered to be a member of that conurbation. It is interesting to note that Birmingham, the city at the heart of the Industrial Revolution in Britain that precipitated the eventual demise of handmade lace as a livelihood, would also be the centre of the conurbation that provides a mentor for a guild museum dedicated to its renewal.

Like the Quilters' Guild to be discussed shortly, The Lace Guild's membership is divided into regional membership groups that are scattered around the country and overseas.

Funding is a challenge for many museums in the sector, regardless of size, but is a particular challenge for small museums that do not receive any outside funding. A discussion of grants and funding is typically on the agenda of this Guild's Museum Committee meetings (The Lace Guild Museum Committee, 2013b; 2013c; 2013d; 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; 2017d; 2017e; 2017g). When I started this thesis in 2014 The Hollies was in legitimate need of repairs to insure the conservation of the collection. However, the situation was what Gwynedd Roberts, the Honorary Curator, referred to in 2013 as 'the chicken and egg problem'. She stated, 'we need more funds to make changes to bring in more members but we need more members to bring in the funding'. During the April 2013 meeting it was felt that the options were 'to do nothing; to refurbish; to knock down part of the building and rebuild or to knock down the whole of the building and rebuild' (The Lace Guild Museum Committee, 2013b). By the May 2013 meeting the building repairs discussion had become what course of action 'made more sense'; try to refurbish the building or move somewhere else. Moving somewhere else would entail getting a valuation on the house and the land (Cordes, 2013).

Regarding grants, at the May 2013 meeting the committee members were absolutely ecstatic at the news they had received a £200 grant from a previous application. This prompted a discussion as to possible future grants and courses of action for the funds. Ideas included upgrading 'ungreen' lighting to LEDs in the archive and Museum areas, outreach to the community in the form of class offerings, or the filming of 'knowledge transfer activities' (Cordes, 2013).

The Guild continues to be headquartered in The Hollies and in 2017 the Museum obtained an Arts Council England (ACE) grant of £18,000, what the Lace Guild Museum Committee refers to as the 'Ready to Borrow Grant' (2017a; 2017d), which the Museum used to refurbish various aspects of The Hollies such as replacing the windows. The grant was launched by West Midlands Museum Development on behalf of ACE to offer funding to smaller accredited museums for capital projects 'to improve their infrastructure in order to meet the collections care standards and security requirements of

lenders' (Support Staffordshire, 2017). Honorary Curator Gwenedd Roberts explained to the Guild's membership in the July 2017 newsletter that most museums 'display a fraction of the items they hold, most of it being stored. The Arts Council has been putting pressure on some of the major museums around the country, encouraging them to loan items to smaller museums' (Roberts, G., 2017). The Ready to Borrow Grant is intended to help small museums offset the costs of upgrading their facilities that would, in turn, allow them to borrow items from major museums for display in their own facilities. The Lace Guild Museum Committee has set its sights on lace held in the Victoria & Albert's reserve collection and has planned its refurbishment programme accordingly. Roberts states, 'at the top of our list is the V&A. We know we will have to comply with each individual museum's "house rules", and by starting with them, we expect those rules to be stringent' (Roberts, G., 2017).

### **The Quilt Museum:**

The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles opened The Quilt Museum and Gallery in a medieval guildhall in York in June of 2008 as 'Britain's first museum dedicated to quilt-making and textile arts' (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016).

At the start of this thesis in January of 2014 The Quilt Museum and Gallery in York was an open and viable small museum with two museum professionals on staff, in the form of a curator and museum director, and a cadre of volunteers. And like The Lace Guild Museum, it was an extension of the operations and activities of The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles. However, in November of 2015 the museum closed its doors, citing its inability to achieve income targets 'from visitors and business ventures' (The Quilter's Guild, 2015). I have chosen to continue to include The Quilt Museum and Gallery in this thesis as it is yet another example of the vulnerable nature of the small independent museums in the sector, and one that was unable to overcome the threat of closure, unlike The Clockmakers'. While the Museum was open, its activities and resources were similar to that of The Lace Guild and yet, like many other small museums in the sector that have succumbed to the current

economic and cultural climate in the UK, the Museum found that it was no longer in a sustainable position to keep its doors open (BBC News, 2015; The Quilters' Guild, 2015). In this context, it serves as an example of the fragility of these small museums that would seem to be 'doing everything right' for the purposes of supporting their practitioners and perpetuating their heritage craft, yet ultimately prove not to be, to use the words of the Heritage Craft Association, 'risk-free or without issues affecting its future sustainability/viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

**The Collection:** The Collection consists of over eight hundred objects, with quilts and patchwork made exclusively in the UK. It should also be noted that with the closure of the Museum, the Guild now formally refers to its collection as the QGBI Collection; 'the term is a collective name for the items previously registered as the Museum Collection' (The Quilters' Guild, 2016d, pp. 4-5). As such, I will continue to capitalise the word 'Collection' to refer to this Guild's collection throughout this paper, as the Guild has done throughout all of its documentation.

**History:** The Quilters' Guild, as it was known at its inception, is a contemporary guild but there is scarce information available about its history. It was established by 'a group' of quilters in 1979 with the intent of creating an organisation that would facilitate contact between quilters from around the country, hone the skill levels of its members and 'promote the Art of Quilting in this country' (The Quilters' Guild, 1979a, caps in the original). It is interesting to note that this Guild, like The Lace Guild, was created during the 1970's boom years of small independent museums creation in the UK (Middleton, 1990, p. 9), and for essentially the same purpose of perpetuating their specific heritage craft. However, while The Quilters' Guild's founders did not specifically stipulate the creation of a museum in their constitution like The Lace Guild founders, The Quilters' founders did intend The Quilters' Guild to be 'an organization which would be recognized by The Arts Council, The Crafts Advisory Committee and The British Crafts Centre with the benefit of grants, exhibition facilities and other advantages' (The Quilters' Guild, 1979a). The Guild had a founding membership of three hundred quilters and



**5. The Quilt Museum and Gallery – St Anthony’s Hall,  
Peasholme Green, York**



**6. The Stained Glass Museum - Ely Cathedral, Ely, Cambridgeshire**



became a registered educational charity in 1983 as a means of facilitating its educationally orientated objectives. In 1990 the Guild initiated its UK-wide British Heritage Quilt Project to document 'domestic items of patchwork and quilting' that were created before 1960; a three-year project culminating in the Guild's 1995 book entitled *Quilt Treasures: The Quilters' Guild Heritage Search* (The Quilters' Guild, 2016; The Quilters' Guild Shop, 2016).

The Quilters' Guild officially changed its name to The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles in 1998 when it became a company limited by guarantee. The title also reflects the Guilds' remit and the composition of its collection, which is that of quilts made exclusively in the UK. Due to its growing collection of heritage quilts the Guild chose to open a Resource Centre and library in 2001 and were awarded full museum status for their collection later that year (Bowden, 2016; The Quilters' Guild, 2016).

In March of 2008 the Guild moved its headquarters from its location at Dean Clough in Halifax to St Anthony's Hall in York (The Quilters' Guild, 2016); a two-storey building that is one of four surviving medieval guildhalls in the City of York (York Conservation Trust, 2011). Like the other small museums in this thesis, its building was not purpose built like those of many major museums and, in this case, the Hall had served various purposes between 1569 and 1946 including 'a knitting school for poor children' (York Conservation Trust, 2011), a prison and a location for the Blue Coat charity. York Civic Trust took over the management of the guildhall in 1953 until York Conservation Trust, a restoration and conservation entity specialising in medieval properties, bought the building in 2006 and undertook a major refurbishment, followed by The Quilters' Guild's relocation and the Museum's opening there in 2008 (York Conservation Trust, 2011). In addition to the Guild's administrative offices and the Museum, the 'new' guildhall housed other Guild facilities including its library, gift shop, education room and the quilt collection store (The Quilters' Guild, 2016).

Upon the opening of the Museum and Gallery, the Museum received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for £193,500 in support of its 'development of education and volunteer programmes' (Lewis, 2008). In 2009 the Museum was

awarded full Accredited Museum status from the MLA, the same year as The Lace Guild Museum. During the years it was open the Museum received various forms of public recognition including selection as a finalist for Best Small Visitor Attraction in the Welcome to Yorkshire White Rose Tourism Awards in 2011, and as a finalist for the National Lottery Awards for Best Heritage Project in 2012 (The National Lottery, 2014; Butler, 2016). In 2014 The Guild received a second grant for over £89,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a three-year oral history project entitled, *Talking quilts: saving quilters' stories*. This was an important heritage project for the Guild and the Museum because 'while there is excellent information about the textile history there is no archive capturing the memories and stories of everyday quilters' (AIM, 2014b, p.15).

By the time the Museum closed in November of 2015 it had held over sixty temporary exhibitions, received nearly 100,000 visitors and had 8,500 participants in their workshops and classes, all with the help of 24,000 hours by volunteers (The Quilter's Guild Collection, 2016). In addition, The Quilters' Guild had expanded to include member groups in seventeen regions across the UK (and an eighteenth international 'region') with 'over 6,300 adult members ... over 400 Young Quilters and over 400 Affiliated Groups [sic]' (The Quilter's Guild, 2016).

In 2018 The Quilters' Guild remains an active contemporary craft guild and educational charity with one museum professional still on staff, in the position of curator, and eight paid members of staff. With the closure of the Museum, subsequent closure of its education room and gift shop, and the relocation of the majority of its library to The University of Bolton, all that remains in St Anthony's Hall, are the Guild's administrative offices and store of The QGBI Collection which is still owned by The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016).

Although the Guild retains The Collection, the closure of the Museum has meant a change in the Guild's museum status from 'Accredited Museum' to 'Working Towards Accreditation'. The Quilt Museum's curator, Heather Audin, explains that,

Our current status is listed as 'Working Towards Accreditation'. This is a new status that has been created that reflects the current (and unfortunate) climate of funding difficulties and closures and allows museums like ours a kind of recognition that we are still fulfilling most of the same standards and practices but just can't fulfill every single aspect that is required for full accreditation. So in our case, providing regular access is an issue now that the galleries have closed, but we are obviously still maintaining the same standards of collections care. It means you don't have to start from the beginning again in our case, although there will be museums who have never had accredited status who are working towards it for the first time. (2016b)

In addition, when queried in 2016 as to how the Guild/Museum hoped to move forward, Audin stated,

We are currently deciding our strategy and forward plan in terms of the whole Quilters Guild as a membership organisation and also for the collection as well. It will all fit together as part of a new business plan which concentrates on our members and our commitment to preserving and providing access to our historic collection. Our ultimate goal would be to have a sustainable museum in the future but it is not currently certain if and how that would work. In the short term, we intend to try and resolve our access issues and come up with a plan to get our collections out there and seen through exhibitions with other museums, touring exhibitions, virtual exhibitions/web based access and our travelling handling collection. (2016b)

The Museum's future status remains much the same in 2018 and plans for a static museum space are on hold for the immediate future. In addition, the Guild's plans to resubmit a previously denied application for designated status, which will be discussed in the Collection chapter of the thesis, are also on hold until the Guild's accreditation status is resolved (Audin, 2018b). As a means of regaining its full accreditation, the Guild has recently created a fee-paying membership scheme, separate from Guild membership, called 'Friends of the Collection' (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2018c). Membership includes entry during the year to four, five-day-long, separate temporary quilt exhibitions to be held at St. Anthony's Hall. According to curator Audin, these

exhibitions allow the Guild's 'Museum' to meet the full accreditation criterion of offering access to the collection 'a minimum of twenty days per year' 'in your permanent residence site' (Arts Council England, 2018; Audin, 2018a). As a result, the Guild intends to apply for reinstated full accreditation in the summer of 2018, followed by the probable application for designated status in 2019 (Audin, 2018b).

In addition to the Friends membership scheme cited above, The Guild continues to explore ways to offer public access to The Quilters' Guild Collection, including the use of external locations for mounting exhibitions, until such time as they are able to open another museum space. However, the Guild has found that, through a combination of loaning objects from The Collection to various external temporary exhibitions and mounting their own external traveling exhibitions, they have managed to reach more 'visitors' than when The Collection/Museum was displayed in a static location. Hence, while the Guild is still looking for opportunities to reopen the Museum, it is not currently the priority that it was initially (Audin, 2017b, The Quilters' Guild, 2016d, p. 29).

### **The Stained Glass Museum:**

The Stained Glass Museum, located in the south triforium of Ely Cathedral in Ely, England, is the only museum in the UK that is specifically dedicated to stained glass.

**The Collection:** The majority of the Museum's collection has been sourced from religious and secular buildings in the UK and currently consists of over 1000 panels, numerous fragments, stained glass-related artefacts and books, which the Museum uses to illustrate the history and evolution of the craft from the thirteenth to the twenty-first centuries (Allen, 2017b; 2017c; The Stained Glass Museum, 2017a; Mills, 2004, p. 1). While the Fan, Lace and Quilt Museums all have rotating temporary exhibitions for conservation reasons, the display in this Museum is a permanent exhibition in the same sense as that of The Clockmakers'.

**History:** The Stained Glass Museum, yet another museum originating in the boom years of the 1970's, was founded in 1972, as a trust that was established 'to rescue stained glass windows under threat from destruction' (Allen, 2013b; The Stained Glass Museum, 2017a); with many having been 'originally installed in Anglican churches which had been closed and made redundant' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017a). The trust opened the collection as a museum in Ely Cathedral in 1979, originally in the north triforium, 'to draw public attention to this fragile heritage' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017a) and 'encourage greater appreciation of the art and craft of stained glass' (Mills, 2004, p. 1). The Museum received full Accredited Museum status from the MLA in 1990, and a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Appeal raised enough funds to move the Museum to its current home in the south triforium where it reopened in 2000 (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017a).

While its location in the south triforium of Ely Cathedral could be considered an unconventional, if not unlikely, place for a museum, few could argue its relevance in this case. Man has been making glass since the third millennium BC. However it was the Christian church that first exploited the properties of transparent coloured glass for religious purposes (Harries, 1968, p. 7). Religious orientated buildings have stood on the site of the current Ely Cathedral since Etheldreda founded a monastery there in 673. Construction of a monastic church began in 1081, which then became a Cathedral in 1108 or 1109. Henry VIII dissolved the Ely monastery in 1539 and nearly all of the Cathedral's medieval glass was destroyed during the Reformation. The few remaining remnants have since been installed as part of windows in the Cathedral's Lady Chapel. The Cathedral was re-founded in 1541.

The first of three major restorations occurred in the eighteenth century. The second restoration was begun in 1845 and continued to the end of the century. The period from 1986 to 2000 saw the third and most extensive restoration. The cost of the £8,000,000 restoration was funded by donations from benefactors and trusts as well as a grant from English Heritage. It currently costs £1.4 million a year to keep the Cathedral open and running and 'a guaranteed income of £500,000 is needed each year from voluntary

contributions if the future of the cathedral is to be secured' (Pugh, 2002; Ely Cathedral, 2017; Eastern Cathedrals, 2017; Pownall, no date). Like the Clockmakers' Museum that has never had its own museum building, the Stained Glass Museum's location in one of the Cathedral's triforiums and hence accessible only from inside the Cathedral, means the viability of the Cathedral is crucial to the Museum's continued existence there. Regardless of its age, Ely Cathedral remains open to the public as a working Cathedral all day, seven days a week, with religious services conducted three to four times a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year. Besides being a regular place of worship the Cathedral is also a tourist destination, receiving 250,000 visitors per year (Ely Cathedral, 2017), and, as such, is a valuable resource for the Museum's own visitor base, having had 26,000 visitors in 2016 (Allen, 2017b). However the Museum's entrance, located in an area just inside the Cathedral's front entrance, is convenient for those Museum visitors whose specific agenda is the Museum rather than the Cathedral.

**Guild Association:** The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass, the medieval London craft guild representing the craft of making stained glass, still has an active contemporary membership (The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painter of Glass, 2017). However, the Stained Glass Museum is similar to The Fan Museum in that its relationship to the Guild is more informal than the others. The Glaziers Company has two charitable trusts: The Glazier's Trust and the London Stained Glass Repository. The Stained Glass Museum is a beneficiary of the Glazier's Trust, and the Stained Glass Museum's curator, Dr. Jasmine Allen, acts as an advisor at the Company's Repository committee meetings. According to Allen, the Museum and the Company are in 'close contact' and her activities as an advisor at Repository meetings results in 'regular communication with parts of the Guild as well as the BSMGP [British Society of Master Glass Painters]' (Allen, 2017b; Allen, 2013). It is also understood that the trust that created the Museum is, for all intents and purposes, The Stained Glass Museum and they are viewed as one and the same entity, rather than the Museum being an extension of the trust (Allen, 2017b).



## **In Closing -**

Due to the independent nature of small museums, and the subsequent lack of a definitive associated list, even category specific small museums can require a protracted research process, utilising a variety of sources, which differs from the normally straightforward process for locating large museums. This chapter has articulated some of these challenges associated with ascertaining the existence of a variety of small craft related museums from which to create a viable shortlist of candidates for research, and the ensuing list of appropriate case study museums.

The evidence provided in this chapter is indicative of the fragile changeable nature of the small museum sector. Of the eleven museums initially researched for this thesis, one, The Silk Mill Museum, has a static exhibition space but no collection and is trying to reinvent itself, while The Quilt Museum has a collection but no static exhibition space, and four museums are currently closed for various reasons. Even amongst the five museums chosen as case studies, all of which were viable at the start of this research project, two have had a dramatic change of circumstances during the course of my research that resulted in the relocation of The Clockmakers' Museum and the permanent closure of The Quilt Museum for the foreseeable future. However, regardless of the ongoing changes that occur amongst these small museums, the five case study museums share the common bond of heritage craft, which is itself in a fragile state within the UK ((Heritage Craft Association, 2017a).

The threat of closure aside, some of the attributes that make small museums interesting and unique are simultaneously strengths and weaknesses that contribute to their vulnerability. A partial list would include:

- Reliance on volunteers for various aspects of the daily running of the museum including exhibition installation and changeover, the requisite paperwork for accreditation and grant applications, and implementation of classes and workshops.
- The physical location of the museum and whether or not they own it, such as The Clockmakers' Museum and The Stained Glass Museum, that sees



them dependent on their host organisation for everything from utilities to opening hours.

- A rural location that potentially lowers their operating costs and gives regional practitioners easier access but is problematic for raising its profile elsewhere.
- Reliance on security measures, as these small museums typically have their entire collections onsite in a single location, the threat of fire, flood or theft could destroy the entire collection.

As stated in the Introduction chapter, attempts to compare these individual small museums, from anything other than a broad perspective, is problematic. As a result, while the three themes that link these museums are nearly universal to the sector, I will examine the similarities and differences in greater detail in the three thematic chapters that follow, and present evidence of how the various elements of these themes are proffered differently by each organisation. These themes include; Collections, in the sense that each collection is a repository of intangible cultural heritage and offers access to multiple examples of its specific craft to its practitioners and the wider public on a regular basis; Exhibitions, in the sense that, while all five museums represent a specific hand craft/skill, each relays the details of its craft differently and in a way that reflects its individuality; and Learning, in the sense each museum either directly or indirectly tries to support and perpetuate its craft. As such, I will start with a discussion of the Collections in these museums.

### Chapter 3: Collections

Large mainstream museums have traditionally been identified and defined by their collections. Categories such as art, science, history and children's museums are common typologies found in the museum sector (Falk and Dierking, 2013, p. 25; Hein, 2000, pp. 19-35). To this end, their collections have been 'labelled' to fit into these types of generic, broadly defined categories of inclusion. The identities of some individual museums can be immediately identifiable and easily understood simply by the name the institution has chosen for itself; The Science Museum, The Natural History Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art to name but a few. Other institutional monikers are far more ambiguous, Tate Modern and the V&A for example, but their collections are no less categorised by type, with these two examples being modern art and art and design respectively (Tate Modern, 2018; Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016).

However, the subject specific nature of many small single-subject museums results in museum typologies that are not typically included in mainstream 'sector lists', nor in the displays of large museums; such as witchcraft, knots and ropework, lawnmowers and pencils (Derwent Pencil Museum, 2018; the Museum of Knots and Sailors' Ropework; 2017; Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, 2017; Candlin, 2016, pp. 58-64; p. 145; pp. 175-177; British Lawnmower Museum, 2011; Davies, 2010, pp. 87-104; pp. 131-141). But while the objects in the collections in these examples are arguably unconventional for permanent 'mainstream' displays, the case of craft collections is more of a conundrum. Craft, defined as 'an activity involving skill in making things by hand' (Soanes, 2006, p. 169), covers a broad range of techniques and materials, such as glass, ceramics, metalwork and textiles. To refine this definition even further The Heritage Craft Association (HCA), 'the advocacy body for traditional heritage crafts' in the UK (Heritage Crafts Association, 2015), defines heritage craft as 'a practice which employs manual dexterity and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, design and

techniques: and which has been practised for two or more successive generations' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 3). Yet, while handcraft and heritage craft skills are a form of artistry, as a typology, these skills are not typically represented by large formal buildings dedicated to their display in the same way that the multitudes of art museums around the globe are dedicated to the artistic skills of painting and sculpture; the V&A being a notable exception (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016). As a result, the same objects that are the focus of small craft-specific museums, such as glass, quilts and clocks, may also have their representative examples, although usually historic rather than contemporary examples, in the collections of other types of museums, and are, in some cases, referred to as decorative arts (The Wallace Collection, 2018; The British Museum, 2017; The Courtauld Gallery, 2017). An important distinction should be noted here though, and that is, that regardless of the fact that other types of museums may have these objects in their collections, these objects may not necessarily have been collected for the craftsmanship and technique displayed in their creation, like those in small craft-specific museums, but rather to inform a particular narrative within the specific museum; for example the V&A collecting patchwork quilts specifically for the historical significance of the individual textiles used within the quilt (Victoria and Albert, 2010, pp. 11-14).

However, in the absence of dedicated decorative art museums in many cities, art museums would seem to be the logical museum type for displays of craft, but display of representative examples can be rare, for reasons other than conservation. For example, as cited in the earlier Literature Review chapter, Stephen Weil proposes that this display disparity is the result of a hierarchy of value that exists within art museums (2002, p. 159). Weil's hierarchy is based on three criteria for judgement; that of aesthetic purity, commodity value and usefulness (2002, p. 167). As such, Weil states that decorative arts objects are at the bottom of the hierarchy, and 'sometimes confined to separate and usually smaller museums of their own' because they are both 'useful' and 'can exist in unlimited copies' (2002, p. 167). At the top of the hierarchy are those objects that are original, signed, unique and handmade, all of which result in

the assignment of a higher monetary value for the object, but that these objects are also 'understood' to be 'useless'. Craft objects, which are the subject of the collections in the five small museums represented in this thesis, are situated between these two poles. 'Craft objects may be highly regarded on the grounds that they are unique and created entirely by a particular artisan's hand. They are nonetheless barred from the topmost rank because, by definition, they suffer from the flaw of usefulness' (2002, p. 167). It can be inferred from this hierarchy, and the limited number of craft objects on display in art museums, that the heritage craft collections represented by the small museums in this thesis are relegated to a lower rung on the value scale of mainstream art museums, thus making access to these handcrafted objects as unified collections in small museums that much more unusual, particularly when these objects have been collected as examples of specific types of craftsmanship within the context of intangible cultural heritage.

The relative value of heritage craft as intangible cultural heritage would also appear to be the victim of yet another type of value hierarchy here in the UK. The HCA believes that intangible heritage craft is equally as important to the UK's heritage as its tangible heritage. However, 'in the UK traditional crafts are not recognised as either arts nor [*sic*] heritage so fall outside the remit of all current support and promotion bodies' (Heritage Crafts Association, 2015). As part of its report entitled *The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts*, the HCA 'recommend[s] that the Government clarify the role of the DCMS [Department for Culture Media and Sport] in supporting heritage crafts and other areas of intangible heritage' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 4) because, the HCA states, 'heritage crafts currently fall in the gap between the Government agencies for arts and heritage, which focus respectively on contemporary crafts and tangible heritage (historic buildings, monuments and museum collections)' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 4, brackets in the original). This is an important point because here the HCA is highlighting the disparity of importance placed on the tangible objects of the UK's heritage versus the heritage craft skills that created them, in spite of their importance in helping to maintain this country's historic tangible heritage. For example, metal thread

making, currently on The Radcliffe Red List's critically endangered list, for metal embroidery threads 'commonly used in historical costumes, theatre costumes and for insignia' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017b, p. 21) and David Esterly's previously mentioned wood carvings that replaced Grinling Gibbons' lost work at Hampton Court.

Dismissal of small specialist collections, regardless of the subject, can be found in the sector literature as well. While the lack of discourse on this subject was highlighted in the Literature Review chapter of this thesis, it is also important to point out that, of the few references to specialist collections that exist in the literature, there are references that can be understood to be disparaging. For instance, Hilde Hein, in her book *The Museum in Transition*, states that,

Highly specialised collections persist, of course, and continue to proliferate to the applause of their devotees, but to a great extent these are perceived as the stronghold of eccentricity. They usually have a short lifespan and are staffed by a single generation of enthusiastic volunteers. Frequently they are open by appointment only, and the location is unknown even to adjacent neighbours. (2000, p. 18)

Hein footnotes her remarks about small specialist museums by citing examples. Along with a Shoe Museum and one with pink lawn flamingoes, Hein includes a new museum founded by veterans of a well known World War II battalion, with objects and memorabilia donated by members of the battalion's veterans' group (2000, p.158, no. 4). Hein's remarks are disturbing, as she is considered an authority in the field and would appear to be less than respectful regarding collections that fill a gap for various types of groups, be they specialist, enthusiast or special interest group such as the war veterans, but that are not 'officially sanctioned' by display in large museums. Steven Conn, often cited in recent sector literature for, among other things, making a case for greater accessibility to collections in large mainstream museums, does not consider small museum collections as alternatives or worthy of consideration because they, like their larger institutional cousins, 'aspire

exactly to encyclopaedic collection, organisation, and display of their particular category of “knowledge” (Conn, 2010, p. 22, quotes in the original). Again this dismissal is disturbing because, if these two museum types, both large and small, do indeed have the same aspirations for access to their collections, Conn’s dismissal fails to recognise what makes them different. That difference is the ability of small museums to successfully offer greater access to specific types of collections, and the ‘knowledge’ associated with them, like the heritage craft collections made available by the small case study museums, than their larger cousins.

Independent museums account for over half the museums in the UK sector. However, AIM uses a different set of taxonomies from those on Hein’s list for ‘identifying’ these museums, including historic houses and heritage organisations, and states that ‘independent museums are guardians of some of the UK’s most important heritage assets’ (Association of Independent Museums, 2017). The five small independent museums highlighted in this thesis have collections that, when viewed from the perspective of craft, can be understood to be heritage organisations. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, yet another authority in the field, in referring to museums in the twenty-first century, posits that the post-museum (as opposed to the traditionally understood modernist museum form) ‘will hold and care for objects, but will concentrate more on their use rather than on further accumulation’ and ‘will be equally interested in intangible heritage’ (2000, p. 152). Hooper-Greenhill states that, ‘the post-museum will retain some of the characteristics of its parent, but it will re-shape them to its own ends... In the post-museum, the exhibition will become one among many other forms of communication’ (2000, p. 152). In this context, the ‘living museum’, where items are ‘taken out, used and put back’ (Candlin, 2015, p. 181), is a useful example. For instance, the toy miniatures used by gamers then returned to the museum, or the military vehicles used as film set props or in re-enactments before being returned to the museum (Candlin, 2015, p. 181). While allowing the objects, such as the toy miniatures, to be used outside of the traditional modernist context ‘inevitably leaves them open to wear from handling grease, sweat, and abrasion... the gamers think it more

important to see the figures in action than to preserve them in perpetuity. The miniatures are not kept suspended in time but are used in a linked community' (Candlin, 2015, p. 181). But, while Hooper-Greenhill acknowledges possible alternative forms to traditional museums, she makes no mention of small museum collections and their contribution to this new focus on use and intangible heritage. As such, the remit of small craft museums, their collections and the activities they engage in to perpetuate their heritage craft have the potential to fit neatly into Hooper-Greenhill's new paradigm.

I have stated from the outset of this thesis that these small specialist craft collections are valuable repositories of intangible cultural heritage and that to ignore these types of collections is a disservice to the collections, the heritage craft skills they represent and the museum sector as a whole. Fiona Candlin states, 'if one bears in mind that the majority of new Independent museums are small venues, often run on a low income by enthusiasts, groups, or private collectors, the academic bias towards national and larger organisations means that potential areas of enquiry are ignored' (2012, p. 37). In addition, this continued sector-wide behaviour that chooses not to acknowledge these types of collections does not allow for a comprehensive discourse regarding the transitional nature of museum collections in the twenty-first century.

As discussed earlier, while the objects represented by the five small museums in this study are also collected by major museums, these craft objects are not typically made accessible in the same way that these small museums allow. This is particularly true in the case of those collections that require a higher level of conservation by virtue of their material characteristics, as in fans, lace and quilt collections. These types of craft objects are typically displayed in large mainstream museums as a single or handful of representative objects, if they are displayed at all. However, a single craft object placed on display with other disparate objects that, while usually intended to contribute to a larger 'clear educational narrative' (Candlin, 2016, p. 177), does not offer the visitor the same opportunity for comparative interrogation regarding the specific single craft object than if it were displayed with a variety of examples of the same object. But inaccessible collections

kept in store do not serve an educative function for the public, and temporary subject-specific exhibitions offered once in one hundred years (as referenced in the introduction to this thesis) cannot take the place of daily accessibility, reinforcing the argument for the contribution of small specialist museums.

Force stated in 1975 that, within the context of large mainstream museums,

A primary aspect of a functional philosophy about collections is that they serve a positive purpose only when used. If the objects in them are to yield information, contribute to knowledge, or provide stimuli for aesthetic responses, they must be made available for study or viewing. More people are requesting the opportunity to do so and this is where difficulties arise. (p. 250)

It is important to note that this statement, and its reference to the challenges of making collections more accessible to a wider public, was made during the same period of time that small museums were proliferating across the UK (Middleton, 1990, p. 7). While the crux of Force's statement is still valid forty years later, for the purposes of intangible cultural heritage and perpetuating a heritage craft through its practitioners, objects in craft collections have historical heritage significance and, as such, should be more comprehensively accessible to practitioners and the wider public. The small specialist craft museums in this thesis are able to offer daily access to displays of multiple objects in their collections, which will be discussed later in the Exhibition themed chapter of this thesis. This is particularly important for craft practitioners who can use these collections as a means of honing their skills. 'An artifact - a made object, whether you call it art or not - is an historical event, something that happened in the past. But unlike other historical events, it continues to exist in the present and can be reexperienced and studied as primary and authentic evidence surviving from the past' (Prown, 1995, p. 2). In the case of the craft objects found in the small case study museums, the vast majority are handmade and therefore unique for all the reasons implied by the act of handmade. 'Whether handmade or machine-produced, objects can possess the power to move, entrance and evoke fear in us. Yet the particular appeal of handmade objects lies in the human dimension embedded within



them: the skill, time and care taken; the tactile, as well as the kinetic association' (Lee, 2015, p. 76).

### **Case Studies:**

#### **The Clockmakers' Museum –**

The Museum and its collection were originally housed in the City of London's Guildhall for one hundred and forty five years but recently moved to a gallery on the second floor of London's Science Museum where it will continue to be on public display until at least 2035 (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 6). As stated in the Case Study Chapter of this thesis, the Museum's collection belongs to The Clockmakers' Charity within The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers and is overseen by the Company's Collection Committee.

The Clockmakers' collection of over seven hundred and twenty five objects is a historically important record of horological craftsmanship and innovation specific to England. 'Horology' is defined as both 'the study and measurement of time' as well as 'the art of making clocks and watches' (Soanes, 2006, p. 363). At over two hundred years old, The Clockmakers' is by far the oldest collection represented in these case studies and the heritage craft it represents is listed as 'endangered' on the Heritage Craft Association's Radcliffe Red List (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

This Clockmakers' collection is 'the oldest, and considered by many to be one of the finest, collections of clocks, watches and sundials in the world' (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2013). The collection is focused on both the historical supremacy of London and its clockmakers from 'the early modern period to the beginning of the nineteenth century' (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 3), as well as the continued contributions of London makers up to the present, and subsequently contains pieces from the most prominent clockmakers both historical and contemporary (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 3). Among these is John Harrison's H5 dated 1770, the fifth and last marine timekeeper by Harrison and the only one of the five outside the Royal

Museums Greenwich (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 2; White, 1998, p. 40), as well as objects created by George Daniels, a Guild member cited as 'the greatest watchmaker of the twentieth century' who passed away in 2011 (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p.3; The Clockmakers' Museum, 2017).

According to Sir George White, the collection's Keeper (curator), 'the unique importance of the collection ... is perhaps that so much of it was made or written or given (or both) [*sic*] over two centuries by the clock and watchmakers themselves. The majority of makers were also members of the Clockmakers' Company, whose collection it is... so the whole thing is very personal' (2013a). It is important to note here that this collection, along with the collections of the Lace Guild Museum and The Quilt Museum, both of which are extensions of a contemporary craft guild, are comparable in that objects in the respective collections reflect the work, not only of practitioners outside of the associated guild that have been collected or donated by member practitioners, but also that of the member practitioners themselves. As a result, these collections are a reflection of active engagement with the respective guild by its membership, as well as collections that have inherent value for the associated craft by virtue of said active engagement and the craft practitioner discernment that implies – both of which have important implications for the perpetuation of the intangible cultural heritage of the respective craft skills found therein.

### **Historical context -**

Public clocks, as opposed to domestic clocks and watches, began to appear in the late thirteenth century, arriving in England in the late fourteenth century. Improvements in timekeeping itself were slow until the middle of the sixteenth century when the search for technical solutions for accurate navigation at sea became imperative and propelled 'horology as a subject... towards the forefront of scientific experiment and debate' (White, 1998, p. 3).

In England, domestic timepieces were produced primarily by the immigrant craftsman that were fleeing religious persecution on the continent through the end of the sixteenth century, with many drawn to London's thriving markets. Rising competition in London led to the creation of the Worshipful Company

of Clockmakers' in 1631. The London Clockmakers' Company by-laws, while comparable to other Guilds for their insistence on superior quality craftsmanship from their members, allowed its apprentices greater freedoms than their European counterparts, which meant 'the young London makers could apply themselves to learning new technology, whenever it became available' (White, 1998, pp. 7-12). This important difference had ramifications throughout the clock making industry, as the London Company's graduating apprentices became 'Free Clockmakers' with more technically advanced skills than their European counterparts, and helping to make London the dominant clock and watch-making centre of the world from 1660 to 1900 (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2011; White, 1998, pp. 4-12).

During the seventeenth century, setbacks for the Company included plagues, civil war and the Great Fire, with a resulting loss of lives, skilled craftsmen and horological objects that would have later had historical significance (White, 1998, pp. 13-18). However, regardless of these setbacks, Company members were at the forefront of significant advancements in horological technology; the two most important being the invention of mechanisms that are still in regular use today, one of which led ultimately to the invention of the much sought after 'marine timekeeper' (White, 1998, pp. 13-28). According to White, 'many of the most significant [horological] inventions were either made or brought to perfection in England, in particular London' (1998, p. 3). These were 'spectacular advances...which enabled the British to explore the globe...conquer foreign lands and in due course, acquire an empire' (White, 1998, p. 3).

The Company was granted Livery status in 1766 and The Clockmakers' Museum and collection traces its inception to this time period. As previously stated in the Case Study chapter, unlike some other medieval London guilds, The Company has never been able to afford its own Hall or headquarters space, resulting in the initial use of a 'great Chest' for storing the Company's property (White, 1998, p. 35). In 1813 the formation of the Company Library and subsequent Library Committee led to the advent of the Company's 'formal' collecting process and, ultimately, the Museum itself. One committee member

in particular, B. L. Vulliamy, was Royal Clockmaker to George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria and, as such, a passionate horologist (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 2; White, 1998, p. 36). It was Vuillamy who was instrumental in assembling not only the Company's world-class horological library, but also the 'objects that form the basis of the collection' – with the first objects having been acquired from 'the sale of the effects of the celebrated maker Alexander Cumming' (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 2; White, 1998, p. 36; p. 38). The early Company library, as well as the items in the Company's collection, were subsequently stored in Vulliamy's shop. Vulliamy died in 1854, and in 1871 the last surviving committee member proposed allowing public access to both the library and collection (White, 1998, p. 39). The collection opened to the public in 1873 in London's Guildhall and the entirety of the collection – currently at over seven hundred and twenty five objects including watches, clocks and marine timekeepers - continued to be on public display there until its recent move to the Science Museum (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 3; p. 6; Nye, 2017a; Fowler, 2015; The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2015).

### **Collection development -**

The Museum's collection has continued to grow not only through purchases made on its own behalf but also thanks to gifts and bequests from Company members and horological enthusiasts through the years (White, 1998, pp. 30-43). Sir George White states,

Members of the Company can be very generous if an object appears on the market which is exceptionally suited to the museum, but of course they cannot be asked too often to contribute, or exhaustion quickly sets in. Many of the members are still active in the clock and watchmaking trade and therefore tend not to be especially wealthy. The collection is therefore constantly expanding, by gift, bequest and purchase. The process is very slow however - and indeed must be, or it would simply not be possible to house what we had collected. I am very careful indeed about what I accept. (2013a)

There are two important points to make here regarding White's statement. First is that White was, and still is, not a professional curator so, in order to meet standards set out by the Arts Council for museum accreditation, it is necessary for a professional curator to advise/supervise him. White's advisor was, and still is, Jonathan Betts who was then a senior member of staff at the Royal Observatory, is now Curator Emeritus at the Observatory, and who had the full approval of the Arts Council (White, 2013a).

A second important point of note is in reference to White's care in accepting objects into the collection. Storage is a challenge for museums of all sizes, prompting curatorial choices in addition to those on display in the public galleries of the museum (Sharp, 2018, p. 9). Regardless of its lengthy history, the Museum only received full museum accreditation as recently as 2007 (The Clockmaker, 2007), and as a contemporary formally accredited museum, The Clockmakers' is now obligated to follow ethical policy requirements for disposal of unwanted or unnecessary objects, as are the other accredited museums in these case studies (Arts Council England, 2016; Museums Association, 2015). While White has chosen to put the entire collection on display for the reasons discussed in the Exhibitions chapter of this thesis, there were practical considerations for this decision as well. As mentioned in the Case Study chapter of this thesis The Clockmakers' Guild still does not have its own guildhall or headquarters building but retains an office in The Carpenters' Hall (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2015). As a result, the storage facilities for the Museum's original location 'consist[ed] of no more than a windowless room the size of a broom cupboard, which also double[d] as [White's] office' (White, 2013a). In addition, as this collection is over two hundred years old, clearly there were curatorial choices made long before White's tenure. These issues, combined with a lack of available additional gallery space for temporary exhibitions, meant White needed to be particularly discerning in what he chose to accept for the collection; a point evidenced by his comment (2013a).

As mentioned in the Case Study chapter of this thesis, The Clockmakers' Museum accreditation was changed to 'provisionally accredited' during the

course of its move from the Guildhall Hall to the Science Museum, requiring submission of an updated accreditation application. As such, an updated Clockmakers' Museum Collection Policy was submitted to the Arts Council as part of the Museum's documentation pack in January of 2018, both of which are currently awaiting approval (Nye, 2018b). According to James Nye, the Chairman of the Company's Collection Committee, 'we collect very much to display' and 'we simply won't dispose of items' (Nye, 2018c; The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 4; p. 6). The Museum's Collection Development Policy states, 'there are no items in the Collection that are either not (i) relevant to the Museum's purpose, or (ii) part of the paraphernalia accumulated over nearly two centuries of the Collection and which frequently prove to be of research value or other utility (e.g. keys which later prove to match a Collection object)' (2018, p. 4, brackets and Roman numerals in the original). This is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, is that, as this Museum's entire collection is on permanent display - and is displayed chronologically to emphasise the evolution of the craft's technological advancements over the last two hundred years - the intent to collect only what they intend to display is indicative of a very thorough, disciplined approach to the collecting process and could be said to be reflective of the precision craft of clock making itself. This approach also informs the disposals policy in that nothing is acquired that is not relevant to 'the Museum's purpose' and thus a possible candidate for future disposal. Second, the 'no disposals' policy ensures not only a strict adherence to the acquisitions policy and an historically broad range of objects that document the associated craft skills but also, due to the 'personal' nature of the collection to the membership, eliminates any future potential conflicts related to donations and/or gifts by the membership or their family members (Nye, 2018c).

#### **Supplemental information -**

One of the 'benefits' of The Clockmakers' new home is that it has been given a storage space in the Science Museum that is larger than its previous broom cupboard in Guildhall, approximately 3 x 15 metres, and comes complete with shelving and cupboards (Nye, 2018d). Nye states that this

additional space will allow The Clockmakers' to set up 'a very modest conservation workshop and photo stand' that will, in turn, allow them to 'maintain our collection in good condition' (Nye, 2018d).

It comes down to us keeping things stable, clean, perhaps serviceable and working where relevant. For the portion of the collection that we have running that means a programme of gradual servicing, cleaning (just rinsing probably, certainly no polishing), lubrication etc. We won't 'restore' anything. (Nye, 2018d, brackets and quotes in the original).

Nye's statement here raises a very important distinction between this museum and the other case study museums in this thesis. Unlike the objects in the other case study museums, the objects that are the focus of this Museum are meant to be functioning mechanical objects, some of which still work. As a result, this collection needs to be monitored and serviced in way that the other case study collections do not. In addition, it is important to note that functioning items in this collection offer a unique, yet fundamental, contribution to the intangible cultural heritage of this craft by virtue of the additional craft-related information garnered from seeing the 'history in action' aspect of a working historical mechanism; or as Prown stated earlier, as an historical event that 'continues to exist in the present and can be reexperienced and studied as primary and authentic evidence surviving from the past' (Prown, 1995, p. 2).

The significance of the Clockmakers' collection, and its contribution to its intangible cultural heritage, can be found in the narrative it tells of the evolution of the craft through the achievements of the Company's members, using objects of Company significance and told by the Company itself rather than a third party.

### **The Fan Museum –**

The Fan Museum, located in two refurbished Grade II listed Georgian town houses in Greenwich, London, is comprised of two distinct collections; The Hélène Alexander Collection (HA Collection) and The Fan Museum Collection (TFM Collection) (The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination). The HA Collection is the personal collection of Mrs. Hélène Alexander, the Museum's founder

and current Director, and which Alexander will bequeath to The Fan Museum (The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination; Alexander, 2001, inside front cover), while the TFM Collection is owned by The Fan Museum Trust. As a result of these distinctions, this is the only museum in this thesis with a collection that belongs, in part, to an individual private collector.

Alexander's 'decorative arts' collection is a perfect example of a collection that falls on the bottom most rung of Stephen Weil's 'value hierarchy' in large art museums and is thus situated in a 'smaller museum of [its] own' (Weil, 2002, p. 167). It was Alexander's personal collection that formed the basis of The Fan Museum when it opened in 1991 as the first in the world devoted entirely to fans. The Museum now houses the two distinct collections that together total over six thousand objects from around the world. These objects consist primarily of antique fans going back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century as well as 'rare books and fan related artifacts' (The Fan Museum, 2016; Alexander, 2001, pp. 5-6). However, fan making is currently listed as 'critically endangered' on The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

### **Historical context -**

Hélène Alexander, now 'a leading authority on the art and craft of fan-making' (Alexander, 2001, p. 5), began collecting fans during the 1950's while at university. Her father 'was a notable collector and connoisseur of antiquities' as well as a 'numismatist of world renown' (Alexander, 2001, p. 7) which had an influence on her aesthetic sensibilities. Her collecting activities evolved into a passion and in 1975 Alexander founded The Fan Circle International, a society of collectors and enthusiasts whose mission it is to 'promote interest in, and understanding of, all aspects of the many varieties of fan' (The Fan Circle, 2017).

It was during Alexander's many years of volunteering at the V&A that she decided to 'gift her historically important collection to the nation' for display and study (Alexander, 2001, p. 8). According to Alexander,



Most fans, for reasons of conservation, are kept in the reserves of so many of the larger museums. The idea of small, changing, thematic exhibitions, which would fulfil the criteria required by conservation, meant that fans could at last take their rightful place in the world of decorative arts. (2001, p. 8)

It is important to focus on what Alexander has just stated because here she is reiterating the primary focus of this thesis and the specific focus of this chapter. Collections of specific objects such as fans, lace and quilts, that for one reason or another are not commonly accessible or displayed in multiple numbers in large mainstream museums, are made accessible to practitioners, enthusiasts and the wider public on a regular basis in small specialists museums like those in this thesis. These types of collections serve as an important record of the intangible nature of craftsmanship that is particularly important for heritage crafts if they are going to survive.

As mentioned in the previous Case Study chapter, Alexander was unable to find an existing British museum that would meet her stipulations for conservation and display, leading her to create The Fan Museum (Alexander, 2001, p. 8). 'The museum is as committed to the future of fan making as it is to the past' (Alexander, 2001, p. 8), and as such, contributes to the intangible cultural heritage of the craft by offering regular access to the collection as well as fan making classes that will be discussed in the Learning chapter of this thesis. Awareness of, and regular access to, these types of intangible cultural heritage is crucial for their survival. In this case, as mentioned earlier, fan making is currently listed as 'critically endangered' on the HCA's Radcliffe Red List (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6), making continued access to the collections in this museum particularly important.

### **Collection development -**

As mentioned earlier, the HA Collection, a leading collection of 'international significance' (The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination), is Alexander's personal collection of fans and fan leaves, as well as fan-related artefacts, dating from the tenth century to the present. While the HA Collection, consisting of over three thousand objects, is strongest in English

and European fans from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, it also includes fans from 'the continents of Asia, Australasia, and South America' (Moss, 2018d; The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination). Mrs. Alexander continues to be actively responsible for acquisitioning objects for the HA Collection which she achieves through purchases at 'auctions, private sales and a well-cultivated network of specialist dealers' (The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination).

The TFM Collection is owned by The Fan Museum Trust and consists of over three thousand objects that have been amassed primarily through objects given as public donations. These have been augmented by 'numerous bequests, gifts and objects acquired as a result of grant assistance from awarding bodies such as the HLF' (Moss, 2018d; The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination). All TFM acquired objects are accessioned by the Museum and included in its permanent collection. According to The Fan Museum's Collection Policy, as a result of the 'organic' nature of TFM Collection's acquisition process, this part of the overall Museum collection differs from the HA Collection because it is 'particularly strong in certain areas whilst less representative in others (The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination).

In addition to the two collections cited above, the Museum maintains a 'small study and handling collection' (The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination) comprised of objects, mostly donated, that the Museum has felt are not suitable for accessioning. In these instances, the Museum informs the donors of their objects' intended use (The Fan Museum, 2012, no pagination).

In response to fan making's status on the Radcliffe Red List mentioned earlier, and in keeping with Hooper-Greenhill's post-museum paradigm, The Fan Museum undertook activities specifically aimed at raising the profile of fan making and encouraging its perpetuation as a heritage craft. As the result of a successful crowdfunding campaign the Museum launched a project called 'Street Fans: A Unique Liaison Between Street Art and Fan Making' in September of 2017 (Moss, 2018c; The Fan Museum, 2017f, p. 11). The project was a collaboration with various street artists working in both France and the UK, and French fan maker Sylvain Le Guen, 'arguably the most gifted of fan

makers active in Europe today' having been 'honoured by the French Ministry of Culture as a Maître d'Art' (The Fan Museum, 2017f, p. 10).

Following workshops in the Museum for the participating artists, as well as access to the Museum's collection of antique fans, each street artist returned to their own practice with fan papers, templates and written guidance to create their fan leaf/leaves (the crescent-shaped paper that is subsequently mounted on the fan ribs to form the fan and which can be either a single sheet for a one-sided fan or two sheets for a double-sided fan), sending the finished leaf/leaves to Le Guen for mounting (Moss, 2018c; The Fan Museum, 2017f, pp. 10-11). The result was the creation of fifty original folding hand fans, an exhibition in the Museum of these fans, as well as various activities both inside the Museum and in the community during the autumn and winter of 2017 (The Fan Museum, 2017g). Ultimately, of the fifty original new fans, five were accessioned into The Fan Museum's collection (Moss, 2018a). According to curator Jacob Moss, the criteria for determining fans to accession, 'was based on those I thought most successfully interpreted the arc-shape [as the appearance of the original art image is distorted once it is folded/pleated] and demonstrated artistic flair' (2018a). What is interesting about Moss's curatorial criteria is that neither has anything to do with street art practice and its subversive cultural implications. Rather than choosing to consider those that might best represent street art as an art form he has chosen 'artistic flair' to represent the project.

Regardless of an object's specific Collection designation within The Fan Museum's overarching collection (either HA or TFM), all items are made accessible to the public through a small permanent display and a series of theme-specific temporary exhibitions that change three times a year, both of which are covered in greater detail in the Exhibitions chapter of this thesis.

### **Supplemental information -**

I have not been given access to the storage or study areas of the Museum but, according to Hélène Alexander's book *The Fan Museum*, the study room 'houses the reserves, fans which are not on show, archival material, books and dictionaries...' (2001, p. 12). According to Jacob Moss, the Museum's curator,

the fans are stored in categories related to subjects such as date, country of origin or 'purpose'; for example nineteenth century, French, or advertising. As the Museum's revolving temporary exhibitions are thematic in nature this style of categorization is what seems to make the most sense (2017a). In addition to its use as a study room, storage space, meeting room and general workspace for activities such as planning and recording exhibitions, 'fans are brought in [to the study room] for identification or for conservation to be carried out by a fully trained specialized conservator' (2001, p. 12). The Museum's conservation activities extend beyond that of its own collection. 'Under the guidance of a fully trained specialist conservator we run a conservation unit where work is undertaken for other museums and members of the public' (The Fan Museum, 2016). In this instance, conservation can also be understood to mean restoration as the Museum also undertakes repairs (The Fan Museum, 2016). While the Clockmakers' will have a conservation workshop in its storage space at the Science Museum for maintaining its own collection, The Fan Museum is the only museum of the five case study museums to have its own conservation unit, and it is important to note the Museum's value in the sector as evidenced by the conservation and repair work it undertakes for other museums (The Fan Museum, 2016).

### **The Lace Guild Museum –**

The Lace Guild Museum opened in The Hollies, an Edwardian house in Stourbridge, in 2009. The Hollies is The Lace Guild's headquarters building, housing all official aspects of this contemporary craft guild. Both the Museum and its collection of lace and lace related artefacts are an extension of The Lace Guild, as stipulated in the Guild's constitution, and as such, are also located in The Hollies.

While The Lace Guild and the majority of its membership are based in the UK, the Museum's collection of over eighteen thousand objects reflects both the historical nature of the lacemaking centres in the UK as well as the international nature of the craft, with representative samples from around the

world. Lacemaking in the UK is listed as 'currently viable' on the Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

### **Historical context -**

The craft of lacemaking has been in existence for over four hundred years, with lacemaking well established in various centres around England, such as the East Midlands and Honiton, by 1600. However, the technological advancements wrought by the Industrial Revolution in Britain decimated the handmade lace industry in England by 1900 (The Lace Guild Museum, 2017a). Individual enthusiasts kept this heritage craft alive in England until its renaissance in the 1970's when the Lace Guild was established. The Lace Guild's constitution stipulates the maintenance of a library, lace and artefact collection, lace-related archive as well as the Museum; all of which that are to be made available to Guild members as well as the general public (Roberts, S., 2012, insert p. 3). In this way the collection and the Museum serve as a means to both encourage and support the Guild's practitioner membership, as well as offering viable mechanisms for this practitioner guild to engage the wider public with its heritage craft. This constitutional stipulation also illustrates an inherent dedication to perpetuating the intangible skills associated with this craft via its intent to maintain both a written and physical historical record of the craft that is available to any interested party, regardless of Guild membership. This stipulation is all the more important for the fact that the craft practice of handmade lace nearly disappeared from the UK during the first half of the twentieth century, only surviving through the efforts of the Women's Institute, local authorities and individual 'amateur' enthusiasts (The Lace Guild, 2017a; Dye, 2001, p. 3). As such, it is indicative of practitioner concern for the continued viability of their craft as far back as 1976, the year the Guild was founded, that this organisation chose to clearly state its intent to maintain a record of this heritage craft.

The Guild's collection became a registered museum in 2001 and was granted Accredited Museum status in 2009. There are no museum professionals amongst the Guild's volunteers or staff, hence the collection/Museum is 'overseen by The Lace Guild Museum Committee ...

consisting of the Honorary Curator, Assistant Honorary Curators and a member of the [Guild's] Executive Committee' (The Lace Guild Museum, 2012) all of whom are volunteers. As a result, this Museum is like the Clockmakers' in that, like Sir George White, the honorary curatorial team must be supervised by a trained professional approved by the Arts Council. In this case, the West Midlands conurbation assigned a Museum Development Officer to advise/supervise the activities of the Lace Guild Museum's curators. In addition to the conurbation's Museum Development Officer, what was then the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, and is now the Arts Council, found a volunteer with 'textiles knowledge' to act as a curatorial advisor to advise them regarding care of the collection (Daker, 2013). However, the advisor found that 'the ladies already do a really good job of taking care of the collection', so her role has become that of Museum Mentor, much like a Museum Development Officer, working with the Museum Committee and offering advice on a variety of issues (The Lace Guild Museum Committee, 2017h).

### **Collection development -**

In keeping with the Guild's constitution, the collection currently consists of over eighteen thousand items, spanning over four hundred years, which have either been donated by members or given as bequests, although no donations are accepted if stipulations are attached. The Museum's 'statement of purpose', as cited in its Collection Development Policy, includes 'making material available to members and the general public for the purposes of study and research, including the short term loan of items for study off-site' (The Lace Guild Museum, 2013a, no pagination). Aside from reinforcing the Museum's intent to adhere to its constitutional dictate for open accessibility to the collection, it is important to note here that, while making items in the collection available for home study is an education related objective that will be discussed in the Learning themed chapter of this thesis, this unique option for access to the collection that allows close scrutiny of pieces of lace regardless of location, also illustrates the Guild/Museum's intention to be a 'living museum', as cited earlier, meaning items are 'taken out, used and put

back' (Candlin, 2015, p. 181), for the purposes of perpetuating the intangible skills associated with the craft of handmade lacemaking.

The Lace Guild Museum's Collections Development Policy cites 'Themes and priorities for future collecting' which includes, among other things, the intent to 'acquire through purchase, bequest, gift or loan, a representative collection of all types and styles of lace, both handmade and machine-made' (The Lace Guild Museum, 2013a, no pagination), which is interesting for the fact that they are including machine-made lace in the collection as a counterpoint to handmade, allowing for a more informed interrogation. Also of interest in this section of 'themes and priorities', is the Museum's stated recognition of international items in the collection as reference points for the craft in Britain, when it states that,

Acquisitions will take account of the fact that lace is an international textile, and British lace can be better understood with reference to lace from other European countries, also that the Lace Guild has an international membership and is invited to international events where lace and other artefacts are acquired. Priority will be given to filling gaps in the museum's collection relating to lace made in the British Isles, including that made by contemporary lacemakers. (The Lace Guild Museum, 2013a, no pagination)

Another interesting aspect to this Museum's Collection Policy is a qualifying statement for disposal made under the heading 'Themes and priorities for rationalization and disposal'. The policy document was created in 2013, with renewal slated for May of 2018, meaning the Museum had only been open for five years, and as an entirely volunteer organisation, was still honing the direction of the collection. This particular section stipulates that,

When the Lace Guild started putting its collection together items were accepted for the collection of poor quality or low merit. In addition over the years duplication of design, and inclusion of items outside the remit of the collection have occurred. A long term project is under way for the review of the entire collection initially to identify such items. Once this is completed the size of the problem can be assessed and the most appropriate disposal

method discussed. (The Lace Guild Museum, 2013a, no pagination)

This section highlights one of the ongoing challenges faced by this Museum's curatorial team. Unlike the Clockmakers' Guild that is a medieval guild initiated by professional craftsmen - with specific quality standards in place to ensure the quality of their trade in the marketplace - professional lace makers in the UK did not form a medieval guild, resulting in the Lace Guild's status as a contemporary guild started by 'amateur' practitioners for the purposes of perpetuating their craft. As the Clockmakers' collection consists primarily of objects that were 'made or written or given (or both) [sic] ... by the clock and watchmakers themselves' (White, 2013a), this important distinction means that the objects in the Clockmakers' collection, particularly those made by Guild's professional members, would be understood to have an inherently high level of quality within the collection. However, as a contemporary craft guild, without the motivation of professional quality standards for marketplace competition inherent in the medieval craft guild structure, The Lace Guild started amassing its collection at its inception in 1976, over forty years before becoming fully accredited, with the subsequent acquisition policy 'standards' that implies (Arts Council England, 2016; Museums Association, 2015). As a result, unlike the Clockmakers', this new Museum finds itself with objects it would prefer to dispose of, necessitating a review process and future disposals strategy that allows it to hone its collection in keeping with its intended remit to 'further the educational aims of The Lace Guild' to perpetuate the craft, as well as 'stage exhibitions and displays of items from the collection' (The Lace Guild Museum, 2013a, no pagination). Additionally, according to the Policy, 'any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections (The Lace Guild Museum, 2013a, no pagination). This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions', however additional options may include monies spent on the cost of conservation, storage and display of the collection (Roberts, 2012, p. 4).



### **Supplemental information -**

Items in the Lace Guild's collection are stored in 'drawers, boxes and cupboards in the committee room at The Hollies' (The Lace Guild, 2013). All items are stored in 'conservation-quality transparent bags ... unless [the item] is too large, in which case [it is] rolled in acid-free tissue paper' (The Lace Guild, 2013). Small items are kept in drawers and categorised 'according to the type of lace' while the larger items are stored in boxes (The Lace Guild, 2013). Conservation measures also include regular monitoring of temperature and humidity in the committee room and UV-film on the windows in both the committee room and the exhibition space. That being said, while the Guild's constitution stipulates a general framework for the Museum's purpose, and the standards for museum accreditation require them to have various policies in place, as a 'new' museum its Museum Committee occasionally finds itself contemplating an issue that will set a precedent going forward. One such issue arose when a member was updating the Committee on her progress in cleaning a particularly dirty donation. The bits and pieces had been 'untangled' and the bobbin bags cleaned but she expressed her uncertainty as to whether or not she should clean the lace. The Honorary Curator's response was an open question to the committee, 'are we here to conserve or restore?' (Cordes, 2013).

### **The Quilt Museum -**

The Quilt Museum and Gallery was located in a medieval guildhall in York. Like The Lace Guild Museum, the Museum and its collection were an extension of the activities of yet another contemporary craft guild, that of The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles. While the Museum and Gallery only opened as recently as 2008, and 'was Britain's first museum dedicated to quilt-making and textile arts', it closed its doors in 2015 (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016). It should also be stated here that, as noted in the Case Study chapter, with the closure of the Museum, the Guild now formally refers to its collection as the QGBI Collection; 'the term is a collective name for the items previously registered as the Museum Collection' (The Quilters' Guild, 2016d,

pp. 4-5). As such, I have capitalised the word 'Collection' to refer to this Guild's collection throughout this paper, as the Guild has done throughout all of its documentation.

The Quilters' Guild, as it was known at its inception, was established in 1979 as an organisation that would perpetuate the craft and 'be recognised by The Arts Council, The Crafts Advisory Committee and The British Crafts Centre with the benefit of grants, exhibition facilities and other advantages' (The Quilters' Guild, 1979a). In 1998 The Quilters' Guild officially changed its name to The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, reflecting the primary characteristic of its collection of over eight hundred objects; that of quilts and patchwork made exclusively in the UK. The crafts of patchwork and quilting are listed as 'currently viable' on the Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

### **Historical context -**

As stated in the Case Study chapter there is scarce information available about this contemporary Guild's history aside from the fact that it was established by 'a group' of quilters in 1979 with the intent of creating an organisation that would facilitate contact between quilters from around the country, hone the skill levels of its members and 'promote the Art of Quilting in this country' (The Quilters' Guild, 1979a, caps in the original). The collection began with the Guild's founders' intent, as stated in the Guild's Constitution, to enlist the help of its members in 'formulating a museum of quilt blocks' (Quilters' Guild, 1979a). The Guild had a founding membership of three hundred quilters and now has seventeen regional quilting groups across the UK (and an eighteenth international 'region') as well as five specialist quilting groups, such as the Miniature Quilt Group, as well as a Young Quilters group (The Quilters' Guild, 2016).

In 1990 the Guild initiated its UK-wide British Quilt Heritage Project to document 'domestic items of patchwork and quilting' that were created before 1960; a three-year project that documented over four thousand objects and culminated in the Guild's 1995 book entitled *Quilt Treasures: The Quilters' Guild Heritage Search* (The Quilters' Guild, 2016; The Quilters' Guild Shop,

2016). According to curator Heather Audin, 'some of the items that were documented and featured in *Quilt Treasures* have eventually entered the collection, but only if the owners have offered them up for donation, which some have over the years ... it has been a gradual process and has not been actively pursued' (2017a). The Collection has grown to over eight hundred quilts and related items, dating from 1700 to the present, obtained through both donations and Guild acquisition. The Guild chose to open a Resource Centre and library in 2001 for its heritage quilt collection and were awarded full museum status for the collection later that year (Bowden, 2016; The Quilters' Guild, 2016).

In 2008 the Guild relocated to St Anthony's Hall, a recently refurbished medieval guildhall, in York and opened the Quilt Museum and Gallery in the same location (The Quilters' Guild, 2016). The facilities in St Anthony's Hall included the Guild/Museum store for the quilt collection, a space which had been retrofitted to the Guild's specifications for quilt storage (The Quilters' Guild, 2016, Audin, 2016b). In 2009, 'the Museum achieved Museums Libraries and Archives Accredited Museum (MLA) status' (The Quilters' Guild, 2016).

While the Guild closed the Museum in October of 2015, The Quilters' Guild Collection is still the property of the Guild and continues to be housed in its St Anthony's Hall headquarters. However, as discussed in the earlier Case Study chapter, the closure of the Museum has meant a change in the Guild's museum status from 'Accredited Museum' to 'Working Towards Accreditation'. As such, The Collection continues to be maintained with 'the same standards of collections care' (Audin, 2016b), just with more limited public access. Plans for how the Guild/Museum might rectify their accreditation status in the future was also discussed previously in the Case Study chapter. In the meantime, pieces from the over eight hundred items in The Collection dating from 1700 to the present, are available for access by appointment, as well as through a series of temporary exhibitions being offered in their St Anthony's headquarters site which will be discussed in the Exhibitions themed chapter of this thesis. The Guild also 'continue[s] to loan

items where appropriate for exhibitions in museums and galleries in the UK and abroad' (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016).

### **Collection development -**

The Quilters' Guild's/Museum's Collections Development Policy was scheduled for review in December of 2016 and had not been reviewed since the Museum's closure. However the 2016 review was postponed and allowed to expire. Museum curator, Audin, stated at the time that although the policy had expired, 'we are currently "working towards" status, and so it made sense to wait and review the policy with the rest of the documents when we reapply for full status next year. So [the current] copy ... still stands' (2017c). When queried earlier in 2016 as to whether the policy would be affected by the closure, Audin said 'no' but that, due to their comprehensive niche collection, they saw 'development of The Collection as a research collection as an important future direction' and were consequently hoping to apply for Designated Status (2016b). To this end, they applied to the Arts Council for Designated Status and were denied but invited by the Arts Council to resubmit (Audin, 2017b; The Quilters' Guild, 2016b, pp. 21 & 28). As a result, the Guild/Museum had thought to revise their application and resubmit by the end of 2017, but those plans have been put on hold yet again contingent on their museum accreditation application in the summer of 2018, to be discussed shortly (Audin, 2018b; 2017b; The Quilters' Guild, 2016b, pp. 21 & 28).

As a result of the evolving status of this collection and its 'Museum', the Quilters' Guild of the British Isles produced a 'Forward Plan' for the Collection that was adopted by the Guild's Collection Committee in January of 2017 (The Quilters' Guild, 2016d). The Plan states that the 'vision' for the Collection continues to be development and care of their heritage quilt collection, 'making it accessible to members and the public [and] preserving quilting and patchwork history for future generations' (The Quilters' Guild, 2017d, p. 7). In addition, the Plan states that,

It is of vital importance that the Guild Heritage Collection continues to be professionally maintained, reviewed and developed. It is a source of inspiration and education and, in

addition to being a national treasure, provides us with our organisations [*sic*] USP. Our aim is to achieve designated status for the collection in 2017 and to continue to work towards museum status by Dec 2018 in the expectation that at some point in the future we will once again be in a position to have a functioning museum. (2017d, pp. 7-8)

However, as stated previously in the Case Study chapter of this thesis, the Guild has found that, through a combination of loaning objects from The Collection to various external temporary exhibitions, as well as accessibility through their own external traveling exhibitions, they have managed to reach more 'visitors' than when The Collection/Museum was in a static location. Hence, while the Guild is still looking for opportunities to reopen the Museum and, according to the Forward Plan, hopes to have a 'functioning museum' in 2019, it is not currently the priority that it was initially, and any plans have now been put on hold (Audin, 2018b; 2017b; The Quilters' Guild, 2017d, p. 8; 2016d, p. 29). However, in the summer of 2018 the Guild intends to submit its application for reinstating The Collection's full museum accreditation status, as discussed in the Case Study chapter, based on its new annual temporary exhibition series that fulfills the criteria for accessibility required for full status (Audin, 2018a). This is interesting because it highlights the fact that, if approved, it is possible to receive accreditation without benefit of a dedicated 'museum' exhibition space, regardless of the fact that, as stated earlier, their activities toward opening a new full-time museum are currently on hold (Audin, 2018b). It would also makes this 'museum' different from the other four case studies in that it becomes an accredited museum that is 'officially open' to the public for just one month per year, although The Collection can still be accessed in other ways throughout the year.

A Collections Development Policy is included in the Forward Plan 2016-2020 documentation and gives an overview of its current collection, states priorities for future collecting for the purpose of filling identified gaps in the collection and, like that of the Lace Guild Museum collection, states an intent to 'rationalise' its Collection for the purposes of possible disposal of objects that 'now lie outside our collecting policy' (The Quilters' Guild Collection,

2017d, p. 14). Just as with the Lace Guild, this Guild is a contemporary craft guild that began collecting before determining its acquisition policy standards that are necessary for accreditation. As a result, this contemporary guild finds itself in the same predicament, and for the same reasons as those cited above in the Lace Guild case study, regarding disposal of inferior or unnecessary objects.

On The Collection's website The Collection is divided into eleven sub-categories delineated by time period, function or craft style; categories such as The 90's Collection, Domestic Items, and Mosaic Patchwork (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2014; 2016). However, according to Audin, The Collection is 'roughly stored in the order in which it entered the collection' (2017a), much like the Stained Glass collection discussed in the following case study. Information gathered on those items that enter The Collection include the maker, place and date of production, dimensions, patchwork and/or quilting patterns, materials used on the top and reverse of the object and its history/provenance (The Quilters' Guild Collection, no date).

#### **Supplemental information -**

As stated earlier, while the Museum is now closed, items in The Collection can be viewed by appointment. As the Guild is also an educational charity, individuals may access the collection by appointment for educational research and the Guild 'continue[s] to loan items where appropriate for exhibitions in museums and galleries in the UK and abroad' (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016). An additional avenue of accessibility to items in the collection is what the Guild calls their 'Travelling Trunks'. 'Your quilt group can book one of our "Travelling Trunks" which provides a small exhibition or "show and tell" of items from the handling collection complete with notes telling you about the items' (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016). More details on these Traveling Trunks can be found in the Education chapter of this thesis.

The closure of this museum creates challenges for the Quilters' Guild organisation and its activities associated with fulfilling the Guild's constitutional remit to perpetuate the craft and maintain a museum (Quilters' Guild, 1979a). Loss of a dedicated space that offered regular access to this

heritage craft has the greatest impact on Guild members and craft practitioners. It is interesting to note that the Quilters' Guild's Forward Plan document acknowledges the impact of this loss. The Guild states that, while students, researchers, study groups and specialists have not been 'greatly' affected by virtue of other modes of access, 'it is QGBI [Quilters' Guild of the British Isles] members, quilters, [and] others interested in craft related skills...that have been the most affected' (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2017d, p. 16). While this Museum's collection has the ability to contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK, and the Guild clearly has the intent to use it to perpetuate the intangible skills associated with their craft, time will tell whether or not they are able to do so on a sustained basis in a manner that not only encourages and supports their practitioners and enthusiasts but also manages to engage the wider public with their craft.

### **The Stained Glass Museum –**

The Stained Glass Museum opened to the public in Ely Cathedral in 1979 as the result of a group trust founded in 1972 (The Stained Glass Museum, 2016, p. 2; 2013). As stated in the Case Study chapter, it is understood that the trust that created the Museum is, for all intents and purposes, The Stained Glass Museum and its collection, thus the trust and the Museum are viewed as one and the same entity, rather than the Museum being an extension of the trust (Allen, 2017b).

The Museum's collection consists of over '1000 panels...and numerous fragments [as well as] designs, cartoons, tools and books' (Allen, 2013c), illustrating the history and development of the craft since the thirteenth century (Mills, 2004, p. 1). Stained glass and glass painting are listed as 'currently viable' on the HCA's Radcliffe Red List (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6),

### **Historical context -**

The Museum was founded as The Stained Glass Museum Trust, an independent charitable trust, in 1972 but did not open as an actual museum space until 1979. The members of the group trust were a disparate group of

individuals including, among others, artists, conservators, curators and members associated with church buildings, but all with a common link to stained glass (Allen, 2018b). The Trust was established to ‘rescue stained glass windows under threat from destruction’, the instances of which occur when stained glass is ‘removed from redundant buildings across the British Isles’ (The Stained Glass Museum, 2016, p. 2; 2013). However, initially, the Museum Trust’s ‘rescue project’ was a repository for the rescued glass ‘that aimed to actually rehouse some of that glass’ (Allen, 2017b) and, much like The Lace Guild and The Quilters’ Guild, accepted inferior objects into the early collection (Allen, 2017b). As Dr Jasmine Allen, the Museum’s Curator put it, the act of rehousing objects ‘obviously is not what a museum is’ but ‘it must have just been allowed in the [19]’70’s’ (2017b) [before the Museum was accredited].

Once the Trust had ‘assembl[ed] its collection’, the Museum opened to the public in 1979 with rescued windows forming part of the display ‘which sought to draw public attention to this fragile heritage’ (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017a; The Stained Glass Museum, 2016, p. 2). As the Museum evolved and became more professional, the rescue ‘mission’ was turned over to The London Stained Glass Repository, which is part of the Glaziers’ Foundation. The Glaziers’ Foundation is the charitable arm of The Worshipful Company of the Glaziers and Painters of Glass, the medieval London guild that is informally associated with The Stained Glass Museum. The Glaziers’ Foundation consists of four different charitable bodies that include The Glaziers Trust and The London Stained Glass Repository (Allen, 2017b; The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass, 2017). As Curator of The Stained Glass Museum, Allen is a committee member on The Glaziers Trust and serves as an advisor to The Repository (Allen, 2017b). In addition, The Museum is a member of, and in regular contact with, the British Society of Master Glass Painters (Allen, 2017b). These affiliations, combined with the Museum’s ongoing craft workshops and school’s program to be discussed in the Learning chapter, see the Museum actively engaged in perpetuating and promoting this heritage craft art form.



## **Collection development -**

The 'museum's statement of purpose' in its Collection Development Policy document states that,

The Stained Glass Museum Trust believes strongly that stained glass forms an important part of our cultural and artistic heritage, and is committed to raising the profile of the medium as an historic and contemporary art form. The Stained Glass Museum exists to collect the finest representative examples of stained glass and associated materials, of all periods. The Museum aims to develop its role as a leading national centre for the display, research, interpretation, and enjoyment of stained glass, while safeguarding and enhancing its collections for the benefit of future generations. (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, p. 2)

The statement above raises an important point. While stained glass, as a material, is different from the material aspects of the objects in the previous four case studies, and is generally able to withstand exposure to the elements, safeguarding these historical examples of our intangible cultural heritage is more problematic than with the objects in the other case studies presented here. The craft objects that are the focus of the previous four case study museums share characteristics that make their continued existence more feasible. For instance, relative to a stained glass window, the other objects are smaller (quilts can be folded down), portable, easily stored and have the potential to be prized as family heirlooms, thus handed down through families and generations. Stained glass windows and panels, on the other hand, are generally fixed decorative elements of public buildings and thus subject to the same provisions of care as the structure itself. While windows and panels that exist as part of one of the UK's tangible heritage sites would be protected as part of that specific structure, the survival of stained glass that exists outside this remit is left to fate. Arguably the destruction of early stained glass in this country during The Reformation and again after the English Civil War, hence the rarity of British medieval glass today, is an extreme example, but modern day destruction of churches and other public buildings, for whatever reason, poses no less of a threat to the availability of examples of this heritage craft,

particularly where the work of the artist can be attributed (Allen, 2017a; 2017c, p. 12; p. 18; p.20). As a national centre of stained glass, this Museum acts as an important repository of the intangible cultural heritage of this craft and, in turn, an important resource for this heritage craft's practitioners and enthusiasts (The Stained Glass Museum, 2016, p. 2; 2013).

Stained glass panels from 1850-1950 form the majority of the collection, 'reflecting the fact that the majority of surviving stained glass windows in Britain were produced in this period' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, p. 2). However, due to the destruction of medieval glass as cited earlier, 'much of the medieval glass on display at the museum is on loan' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, p. 2). While the collection's remit is for stained glass from the British Isles, 'items from other countries and by international artists representing techniques or artistic developments not represented in the collection have also been occasionally acquired' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, p. 2). The art of stained glass was 'less popular' during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries so the museum has fewer representative examples from this time period (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, p. 2).

Due to the nature of stained glass, a custom light box is necessary for proper display of each object, resulting in the Museum's permanent display of the glass, and Allen estimates that thirty percent of the collection is on display (2017a). According to Allen, the pieces on display were chosen for curatorial reasons based on chronology (2017a). Allen became Curator in early 2013 and chose to switch out some of the glass then on display for what she felt was 'a better chronological perspective' (Allen, 2017a). The remaining stained glass panels that are not on display are stored in accessible rolling racks in an on-site location. The glass is not categorized in any way in storage, but much like the Quilt Museum discussed previously, stored 'as it comes in' (Allen, 2017a). However, Allen adds that the location of all the glass is catalogued so as to expedite immediate access (2017a). Other objects in the collection, such as paper-based materials, are stored in an off-site facility. Information pertaining to items accepted or acquired for the collection is primarily in the form of basic details such as the artist, date and measurement of the item.

However, one 'unusual' data set is that of the building provenance where the glass came from and the glass's location within the building (Allen, 2017a). According to Allen, 'artists are not always known but historians can get a pretty good idea based on the building and location of the building' (2017a).

In keeping with its remit to collect stained glass from all periods, the Museum's Collections Development Policy includes a detailed acquisition wish list for future collecting (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, pp. 3-4). This list is broken down into eight sub-categories by time period or material. Examples include 'medieval stained glass (c. 700-c.1550)' and 'post-reformation stained glass c.1550-1660' and, within some of the categories, desired work by specific artists (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, pp. 3-4, brackets in the original). The Museum's general criteria for acquisition is a reflection of its intent to contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of this craft, as well as encouraging and supporting the craft's practitioners and enthusiasts through its intent 'to represent all significant developments in the art and craft of stained glass. In particular it seeks to collect objects of significant artistic, historic or technical interest which relate to stained glass in the British Isles, or objects which have had an important influence on stained-glass in Britain' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2014, p. 4).

### **In Closing –**

The collections represented by the five small craft-specific museums highlighted in this thesis include objects ranging in age from the eleventh century to the twenty-first, with the museums themselves ranging in age from one hundred and forty five years old to essentially now non-existent. Collection sizes range from roughly seven hundred and twenty five objects in the oldest of these museums, to over eighteen thousand in the youngest with sizes ranging from pocket watches and lace baby bonnets to bed quilts and stained glass windows. And yet, despite this diversity, the collections offered by these small, single subject, single room museums share important characteristics.

First, and foremost, is each organisation's commitment to promoting and perpetuating their heritage craft, which includes maintaining collections that are representative examples of the artistic skills inherent in their specific craft.

Second, while the craft skills they represent may be represented in the collections of other larger museums, their display and accessibility in larger institutions are underrepresented relative to other artistic skills, regardless of the overarching museum typology. As a result, the opportunities for accessibility offered by the small case study museums increases the value of the contribution offered by their collections to their craft practitioners and enthusiasts. In addition, the craft-specific focus of these collections serves to focus the public's attention on the artistic skills associated with these heritage crafts.

Third, these collections are based on objects that are representative of specific handcrafts that were viable professions in the UK prior to the Industrial Revolution and, as such, have historical heritage significance for the purposes of intangible cultural heritage and the perpetuation of these heritage crafts through their practitioners. Furthermore, all five craft skills represented by these collections can be found on the Heritage Craft Association's Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts. Yet these craft skills are not formally recognised by the governmental body that safeguards the UK's cultural heritage; leaving organisations of craft practitioners and enthusiasts, like those represented in the case studies, to be the standard bearers for their craft-specific collections.

Fourth, all five are collections in independent museums and educational charities, with the financial challenges that implies. As a result, both the Clockmakers' and the Quilt Museum and Gallery faced closure in 2015. The Clockmakers' survived, albeit with a significant change to its physical circumstances; The Quilt Museum had to close its doors and continues to try to find a viable means of allowing access to its Collection while keeping its accreditation status.

Fifth, the heritage crafts of clock and watch making, as well as fan making, are 'endangered' and 'critically endangered' respectively (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6). The Clockmakers' has had its profile raised by virtue

of a more visible location, while The Fan Museum enlisted the help of the public through a crowdfunding campaign, 'stepped outside of [its] comfort zone' (The Fan Museum, 2017f, p. 11) to collaborate with street artists and successfully mounted a special exhibition and series of community outreach activities to raise the profile of its craft.

Some of these collections receive objects, including contemporary work, from their practitioner Guild members and the wider public, while the Stained Glass Museum displays historical objects saved from the wrecking ball.

However, while these collections have some characteristics in common, they also represent distinctly different heritage crafts and face different challenges, some more serious than others, in maintaining their collections and trying to keep them accessible to their practitioners, enthusiasts and the wider public. The value of these small museums is in their fundamental differences; the differences that make their specific craft and associated museum distinct from the others. I have presented evidence in this chapter that there are differences in the characteristics of their crafts, their histories, their organisations and their collections too numerous to list and too varied to articulate with a broad brush. Every aspect, from the type of building where the collection is housed (medieval Cathedral, medieval guildhall, Victorian townhouse, Edwardian house, large science museum) to the variety of tools and materials required for craft practice, most of which find their way into the various specific collections, contributes to ongoing collection challenges for these small organisations for which there are no one size fits all solutions. As a result, these organisations are left to find creative solutions to developing and maintaining their collections in a way that also promotes their specific heritage craft, while simultaneously supporting their practitioners and keeping the doors open.

Regardless of their similarities or differences, the overarching *raison d'être* of these small organisations is their dedication to the survival and perpetuation of their specific heritage craft and the collections that represent them. As such, small craft museum collections have the ability to represent tangible examples of Hooper-Greenhill's new, twenty-first century, post-museum paradigm, by

acting as repositories of intangible cultural heritage and choosing to use the objects in their care to perpetuate heritage craft skills in the UK.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Exhibition and Display**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the museum sector is comprised of myriad museum typologies that exist in a variety of sizes in locations both urban and rural. This chapter explores the functions of exhibition and display employed by museums, regardless of size, typology or location, as the primary means of allowing public access to their collections. This exploration begins with a brief overview of various basic components that, combined, comprise an exhibition. Components such as object display styles, permanent versus temporary exhibitions, museum texts and exhibition design are all important fundamental elements of the approaches used by museums for conveying exhibition narratives. While these approaches are covered extensively in the sector literature from the perspective of large museums, the majority of the case study museums in this thesis consist of a single room, the attributes of which, by definition, differ from that of large museum institutions. However, there are some similarities in style and methodology that exist regardless of size, such as the common use of object labels. As some of these similarities will be referenced in the case studies, this initial overview will be useful for the purposes of comparison before presenting the individual case studies.

#### **Evolution of Museum Exhibition and Display Styles:**

Although many authors in museum sector literature have discussed various exhibition styles utilised by museums to display their collections (Marincola, 2006; Lord and Lord, 2002; Dean, 1996; Pearce, 1993; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Alt and Shaw, 1984), for the purposes of clarity in this chapter, I am choosing to reference the examples given by A. E. Parr, writing in 1959 and then Director of The American Museum of Natural History as well as Editorial Board member of *Curator: The Museum Journal* (Parr, 1959). Parr manages to distill what could otherwise prove to be a confusing array of display styles, into three basic succinct, coherent categories. For instance, Parr offers the term

'storage display' for a style proposed by Lord as 'visible storage' in answer to 'display/storage ratio' considerations (Lord and Lord, 2002, pp. 263-264), and by Hooper-Greenhill (1992, p. 201) and Dean (1996, p. 5) as 'open storage'; although Hooper-Greenhill states that this style 'has emerged in the last few years' (1992, p. 201) while Dean states that it is a 'largely obsolete display methodology' (1996, p. 5). In addition, while Parr offers examples from The American Museum of Natural History to illustrate his categories, his examples are also applicable to small single subject museums, as I found examples of all three of Parr's categories during the course of my research.

Parr identified 'three basic styles of exhibition' based on 'the density and arrangement of specimens on display'; that of 'storage display', 'abundance' and 'choice and sparse selections' (1959, p. 275). 'Storage display', defined as a display in which every object, or the vast majority of objects, in the collection is on display as a means of 'storing' it (1959, p. 275), was utilised by the wealthy owners of early *Wunderkammers* (McCellan, 2008, p. 117; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 13; Worm, 1655, no pagination; Imperato, 1599, frontispiece), generally regarded as the museum prototype of contemporary museums (McCellan, 2008, p. 117; Hein, 2000, p. 19; Weil, 1999, p. 246; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 104). This display style served as a means of putting the owner's wealth and worldly intellect on display as well as facilitating comparative scrutiny, contemplation and erudition in pleasurable surroundings, thus creating environments that were both educational and decorative (McClellan, 2008, p. 116; Abt, 2006, pp. 120-123; Pearce, 1993, pp. 95-98; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 103; Parr, 1959, p. 275). Storage display was also the normal mode of display for art collections in early museums, with paintings densely and/or ornately arranged on the walls from floor to ceiling, again for the purposes of comparison (McClellan, 2008, p. 19; p. 119; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 143).

*Wunderkammer* owners continued to collect, despite the space constraints of the storage display format necessitated by their desire to display their entire collection. Duplicates, or 'lesser' examples, appeared, engendering a curatorial process that, in turn, created a reserve collection, which then



necessitated classification and storage. These activities led to the use of Parr's second basic style of exhibition, that of 'abundance' (1959, p. 275), during the eighteenth century, as these ever expanding collections necessitated new taxonomies for object classification, display and storage, as well as new art designations, precipitating the number of objects and art on display to be pared down. While still abundant, designated objects were redistributed into separate collections for more clearly defined areas of study (McClellan, 2008, p. 120; Bennett, 1995, p. 37; p. 77; p. 96; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, pp. 137-144; p. 186-187; Pearce, 1993, pp. 99-101). Art displays still consisted of innumerable works, but the new designations meant that displays became arranged by school and artist and, in some cases, chronological order, resulting in fewer works on display, more space between works and an enhanced overview of the works chosen for display (McClellan, 2008, pp. 120-122; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, pp. 190). Regardless of object or art, Parr describes this exhibition style of abundance as the one that gives the visitor the best opportunity to hone their skills of discernment 'through the opportunity to compare good with better and the important with the more important' (1959, p. 279).

During the latter half of the nineteenth century a newer, more modern, permanent exhibition style of 'filtered' abundance, with its emphasis and reliance on masterpieces for narrative structure, became the new benchmark for exhibition and display in art museums in the West, (McClellan, 2008, pp. 123-124; Bennett, 1995, p. 44; Pearce, 1993, pp. 100-101). The term 'masterpiece' in this particular context can be understood to conform to the widely held definition of 'a work of outstanding artistry or skill' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018), making it a subjective term that can be applied in a variety of contexts, and potentially problematic for small craft museums as unique one-off pieces of exceptional quality tend to be in large museum collections and exhibitions, the V&A being a primary example (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016; 2015). As such, I raise this point here to draw the reader's attention to another definition of the term that is applicable within the context of the small craft museums that are the focus of this thesis; that is,

‘masterpiece’ as ‘a piece of work produced by a craftsman in order to be admitted to a guild as an acknowledged master’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018) within the medieval craft guild system. As a result, craft-related small museums may display masterpieces, and label them as such, by craftsmen who may be otherwise unknown to visitors without specialist knowledge, for instance in The Clockmakers’ Museum.

The next stage in the evolution of display styles is Parr’s third style of exhibition, that of ‘choice and sparse selection’ (1959, p. 275) which favours quality over quantity in objects chosen for display, that became the new norm in exhibition style and display methodology by the turn of the century and on into the early part of the twentieth century (McClellan, 2008, pp. 126-127). For example, Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) set the new exhibition standard in the West by choosing to place even greater emphasis on masterpieces by displaying ‘only the best original works of art’ (McClellan, 2008, p. 126), resulting in even fewer works displayed in a single line across the wall and with greater space between the works than previous display styles (McClellan, 2008, pp. 126-127), a style still in common use today.

While exhibition methods for display of art collections had been curated to the point of ‘choice and sparse selection’ (Parr, 1959, p. 275), with the subsequent implications for overall collection access by the public, methods for display of object collections were going through evolutions that were to have their own implications for public access and visitor engagement. First was the introduction of plate glass for display cases in the early twentieth century, eliminating the viewing distortions and obstructions inherent in the previous smaller glass windowpanes; characteristics that, prior to the introduction of plate glass, meant objects were removed from the display cases for closer, more accurate, inspection (Pearce, 1993, pp. 105-107). The new plate glass cases facilitated the growing ‘need’ at the end of the nineteenth century for displays that were ‘clear and open but secure and controlled’ (Pearce, 1993, p. 105). The ‘cuboid’ design of the new cases also facilitated a display method of ‘regimented rows’ that ‘contributed considerably to the solidity of the classificatory regimes’ already prevalent in museum display; an

approach that continued to be the 'the mainstay of museum display until the...1960's' (Pearce, 1993, p. 105).

The second collection display evolution, with implications for public access and visitor engagement, was a seismic shift in perspectives in the closing decades of the twentieth century that redefined the purpose of the museum and, in turn, museum exhibition display (Dierking, Falk and Ellenbogen, 2005; Anderson, 2004, pp. 1-9; L. Roberts, 2001; Freedman, 2000; Hein, 2000, p. 2; Roberts, L., 1997b; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, pp. 6-34; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, pp. 1-9; Weil, 1990, pp. 57-65). Displays had historically been based on 'limited frames of reference' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 205) such as segregated disciplines and classifications, but the interrelationships between the objects that comprised these various parts and their relation to human beings were not clearly defined so as to allow the whole to be understood within a human context. As such, 'evolutionary sequences', 'context rather than classification' and human 'communities and cultures' began to inform museum display methodology (Bennett, 1995, pp. 96-97; Pearce, 1993, pp. 109-110). Contemporary display now placed importance on the object relative to humans rather than just its position relative to other objects on display. This contextual approach has shifted focus to a human narrative resulting in museum spaces and display methods that emphasise visitor engagement and experience (Duke, 2010; Simon, 2010; Pekarik, 2007; Black, 2005; Rand, 2001; Doering, 1999; Pearce, 1993, pp. 109-117; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, pp. 197-214). 'The notion of the museum as a collection for scholarly use has been largely replaced by the idea of the museum as a means of communication' (Lumley, 1988, p. 14); and communication of knowledge in the modern age 'is shaped through a mix of experience, activity, and pleasure, in an environment where both the "learning" subject and the "teaching" subject have equal powers' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 214).

### **Permanent versus Temporary Exhibitions:**

The brief overview of exhibition and display presented in the previous section traced the evolution of permanent exhibition styles. Permanent exhibitions are a common convention for the objects in many museum collections regardless of size, such as the V&A, The British Museum, the Broadfield House Glass Museum and The Straw Museum. However, of the five small museums presented in this thesis, The Clockmakers' Museum and the Stained Glass Museum exist as permanent displays, The Fan Museum has a very small permanent display in addition to a larger temporary display and The Lace Guild and Quilt Museums exhibit only temporary displays.

In addition, by the end of the twentieth century, museums had evolved into institutions that included both permanent exhibitions and revolving temporary exhibitions, with more fluid 'subject boundaries' which 'allow for greater cross-fertilisation of ideas' (Ravelli, 1996, p. 368), and with the primary intent of the exhibitions being that of communication and connection (Roberts, L., 1997, p. 151). Implicit in this intent to facilitate communication of multiple perspectives is the 'acknowledgement that there is more than one way of knowing' (Roberts, L., 1997b, p. 153). These circumstances, combined with the new twenty-first century museum paradigm that prioritises education through visitor experience and engagement as the institutions' primary function, puts even greater pressure on the need for exhibitions, both permanent and temporary, to elicit successful visitor connections.

While the term 'permanent' implies a certain level of longevity and an associated level of completion, it also brings with it its own set of challenges regarding the lifespan of the exhibits and the ramifications of exhibition longevity for some visitor groups. Yani Herreman, writing in *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook*, describes a 'permanent exhibition' as one that 'is expected to last from ten to fifteen years' (2004, p. 92). Parr concurs and elaborates on the description of a 'permanent exhibit' with the following: 'In common museum usage this term can be taken to cover installations that may be left on display for ten years or more without causing serious embarrassment' (1962c, p. 260). Here Parr is referring to the challenges of

keeping permanent displays 'current' in both appearance and content. Lord agrees, stating, 'too often displays that looked good originally and in their first five years are left standing ten or fifteen years later' (Lord and Lord, 2002, pp. 266-267), while Hudson is even less charitable, stating, 'social attitudes, educational standards and methods of communication are constantly changing...and museums have to keep pace or lose customers. A museum exhibition that remains unaltered for as long as five years and still retains its power to attract and stimulate is remarkably fortunate' (1998, p. 44). Within the context of museum exhibitions, their associated collections and the five museums in this thesis, these descriptions raise an important point worth noting, which is that of visitor incentive via exhibitions.

To clarify, visitor incentive here refers to those visitors with specific areas of interest that may not be met by large museum exhibitions, either permanent or temporary. Most large museums devote the majority of their exhibition space to permanent displays (Weil, 1990, p. 33). It can be inferred from the descriptions mentioned above that the objects large museums have chosen to put on permanent display will remain in place for at least ten to fifteen years. This can be further understood to mean that objects in the remainder of the museum's collection, unless placed in a study collection or brought out for the sake of a temporary exhibition, will be unavailable to members of the public for the indefinite future (Conn, 2010, p. 23). As the number of items on display in large museums has diminished to the point where the objects have become a component of exhibitions rather than the focus (Conn, 2010, pp. 22-26; Hein, 2007, pp. 78-79; Hein, 2000, pp. 65-68; Roberts, L., 1997b, p. 155), temporary exhibitions would seem to offer the only opportunity for these institutions to briefly display objects that are otherwise inaccessible for indefinite periods of time. But even subject-specific temporary exhibitions in large museums can be few and far between, a situation that was illustrated by the V&A Quilt exhibition provided in the Craft Related Exhibitions section of the Introduction to this thesis.

Hein maintains that 'the "what" of a thing commonly begs a "why" or "how" and is incomprehensible without that' and that 'museums are no more -

but no less - about objects than about people and ideas, since these categories are mutually entailing' (2007, p. 79). But for those practitioners, specialists and enthusiasts for whom the large museum exhibits a less than satisfying selection of related objects for examination, the small single subject museum exhibition, with its multiple examples on display, offers the opportunity for potential insightful inspection and comparisons. Furthermore, for visitors to the small museums in this thesis that utilise an exhibition style of revolving temporary displays, there is the additional incentive of a potentially new visitor experience, relative to a new exhibition, every three to four months that not only keeps the museum 'fresh' but also allows for exhibition of objects from the museum's entire collection in a flexible format.

### **Interpretation Materials:**

Interpretive museum texts are a typical aspect of museum exhibitions. Texts in various forms are utilised by museums to help interpret and contextualise their exhibitions, and the objects on display, for the visiting public (Ravelli, 1996, p. 369). However, the variety of modalities used for disseminating the relevant information has grown over time as the size and nature of collections and museums have evolved into the visitor centred institutions they are today (Ravelli, 1996; Serrell, 1996).

The private *Wunderkammers* discussed earlier were self-contained microcosms, shared with selected guests by the collector/owner who was the primary source of collection-related information for the visitor (McCellan, 2008, p. 116; Hein, 2000, p. 19; Pearce, 1993; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 88; p. 103). As these private collections expanded, the subsequent stored reserve collections necessitated classification, inventories and, in some cases, catalogs that were used for documentation and information exchange with other collectors, thus precipitating the need for labels (Schaffner, 2006, p. 156; Parr, 1959, p. 278).

With the advent of public museums, permanent exhibitions intended for the sole purpose of presenting collections to the public became the norm, with the continued use of the aforementioned associated labels for dispensing

information to a passive visitor audience (L. Roberts, 1997b, p. 155; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 172; Ravelli, 1996, p. 368). However in these new circumstances, the labels that had previously been adequate for collectors and specialists proved to be less than helpful for the masses, and explanatory texts were introduced (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 182). Yet, what constitutes an effective label in the sciences could be argued to be different from that in the arts and so forth, leading Laurence Vail Coleman to address what he felt was the issue of 'aesthetics versus information' in 1927 (Schaffner, 2006, p. 157). His solution was two-fold; 'short inconspicuous labels' and a 'gallery leaflet' containing more detailed label information (Coleman, 1927, p. 224).

With the emergence of museum visitor studies in the latter half of the twentieth century, it became apparent that the communication style of labels and other museum texts was ineffective, resulting in 'the development of new writing styles' to 'achieve a balance between accuracy and intelligibility' (Roberts, L., 1997b, p. 149). George Weiner was hired by the Smithsonian Institution during a period of extensive modernisation within the institution, as its Supervisory Exhibits Editor, 'to improve the effectiveness of exhibits labels' (Weiner, 1963, p. 144). As such, his office oversaw all label content for both temporary and permanent exhibitions. The goal set during his tenure was for 'not more than seventy-five words in a main or general text for an entire exhibit case and considerably fewer for individual specimen labels' (Weiner, 1963, p. 146). However, elucidating specialist (expert) knowledge for non-specialist (public) comprehension, regardless of word length, continues to be one of the biggest challenges associated with exhibition labels. In addition, as stated in the previous section, museums have evolved into institutions whose primary exhibition intent is that of communication and connection with multiple perspectives, thus increasing pressure on the efficacy of the informational materials provided by museums for their visitors. (Roberts, L., 1997b, p. 151; p. 153; Ravelli, 1996, p. 368).

The intent to engage and 'communicate' with the broad spectrum of visitors to large museums creates challenges for the museums' education and exhibition design teams; as 'texts must cater for a more general audience,

across a broad range of ages and coming from diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds' (Ravelli, 1996, p. 367; p. 370; p. 373; Roberts, L., 1997b, pp. 153-158). As a result, efforts to create all-inclusive interpretive materials have resulted in strategies that include attempts to define different learning styles, (Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; McCarthy, 1997; Gardner, 1993; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Kolb, 1981), as well as labels that include text written for children and adults on the same label (Gurian, 1991, pp. 185-186).

Regardless of what approach is utilised for creating informational materials, Serrell states they should 'contribute to the overall visitor experience in a positive, enlightening, provocative, and meaningful way' (1996, p. 9) and cites four types of interpretive label based on function and hierarchy of use: title labels (the title of the exhibition), introductory or orientation labels (for setting 'the organisation and tone of the exhibition'), section or group labels and captions (labels for specific objects) (1996, pp. 22-25). In addition, Ingrid Schaffner recommends that 'the language of labels should be tuned to viewers' ears' and to 'write as you yourself would like to be addressed' (2006, p. 165).

Irrespective of whether a museum employs permanent or temporary exhibitions, chooses to display its entire collection simultaneously or only a handful of objects at a time, presents brief or lengthy worded labels, according to Herreman, in *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook*, 'the ultimate aim should be to communicate the message of the display or exhibition in a clear and precise visual and written language, easy to understand at whatever level or levels of interpretation are intended' (2004, p. 100).

### **Exhibition Design:**

The term 'exhibition design' entails a myriad of complex components including curation, installation, conservation, display, interpretation, and so on (MacLeod, Dodd and Duncan, 2015; Marincola, 2006; Lord and Lord, 2002; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Dean, 1996; Pearce, 1993; Alt and Shaw, 1984). However, while A. E. Parr lamented in 1962 that, at the time of writing, there was no research on scientific evidence to prove that the design of an



exhibition (as separate from the objects) impacts an individual's ability to learn from an exhibit (1962a), a great deal has changed in recent decades.

With the evolution of museum exhibition function to what is now considered to be education and communication (Hein, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994), museums have become increasingly focused on the exhibition's role in the visitor experience. Sector literature is filled with contributions by numerous authors covering subjects such as visitor participation, experience, education and learning (Falk and Dierking, 2013; Duke, 2010; Simon, 2010; Pekarik, 2007; Black, 2005; Roberts, L. B., 2001; Doering, 1999; Hein, 1998; Roberts, L. C., 1997a; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994).

It was not until the beginning of the twenty first century and the sector's dawning realisation of the interdependence between the linguistic communication offered within galleries and the material objects on display, that interpretation practices for public galleries began to be integrated with the methods associated with object display (Batty et al., 2016; Francis, Slack and Edwards, 2011; McLean, 2007; Roberts, L. C., 1997b; Ravelli, 1996; Serrel, 1996).

In addition, as cited earlier with Robert's 'acknowledgement' of multiple perspectives (Roberts, L., 1997b, p. 153), considerations were now being given to the concepts of representation, from material to ethnographic, within exhibitions; whether it be as complex as the issues of 'the poetics and politics' of exhibition displays (Lidchi, 2006; Karp and Lavine, 1991), or as 'simple' as determining the classification of a specific object (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, pp. 6-7). As a result, exhibition design has come to be considered an important field for research in the museum sector and an expanding professional specialism (MacLeod, Dodd and Duncan, 2015, p. 314; Fritsch, 2011; Hughes, 2010, p. 7).

Museums, and the collections they display, are understood to be the 'storytellers' of a variety of values and ideologies in the sense of the organisational, curatorial and design decisions that are made regarding what to collect, what to display (or not display) and the myriad communication methods chosen for a given exhibition for the visitor's personal making of

meaning (Batty et al., 2016; Pekarik, 2010; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 2000; Dean, 1996; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; 1992; Lumley, 1988; Roberts, L. C., 1997a; Serrell, 1996). Multitudes of factors including gallery interpretation materials, the earlier cited exhibition styles, colour, lighting, visitor routes through the exhibition, even the physical entrance to the exhibition space itself, all combine to create a specific narrative that shapes the 'visitors' intellectual and emotional journey through an exhibition' (Batty et al., 2016, p. 74) (Batty et al., 2016; Pekarik, 2010; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 2000; Dean, 1996; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; 1992; Lumley, 1988; Robert, L. C., 1997a; Serrell, 1996). The methods for constructing narrative can take a variety of forms, from linear to chronological to thematic, object-based or concept-orientated, and combinations in between (Hughes, 2010; Black, 2005; Lord and Lord, 2002; Dean, 1996; Pearce, 1993). Object-based exhibitions place the primary emphasis for the exhibition's narrative structure on the display of objects with varying degrees of interpretation materials, whereas, conversely, concept driven narratives rely heavily on didactic information materials with varying numbers of objects. In addition, thematic exhibitions utilise concepts or groups of objects in various types of thematic structures to impart the desired narrative. Combinations of these approaches result in exhibitions that, for example, could be an object-based exhibition displayed chronologically, or thematically, or by chronologically based themes.

It is not unusual for larger organisations in the cultural sector to have in-house design professionals on staff who are part of the collaborative team responsible for combining the various components listed above to realise the final exhibition (Williams, 2017; Locker, 2011, p. 25; Lorenc, Skolnick and Berger, 2010, pp. 48-69; Prichard, 2010, p. 237; Prichard, 2009b; 2009e; 2009g). However, AIM states that one third of its 'member museums are run entirely by volunteers' (2018) from which it can be inferred that in-house professional designers do not exist in those small museums run by volunteers and/or part-time staff with very limited budgets. Nor are the services of an external professional exhibition designer typically a budgetary option;

particularly for those small museums whose collections dictate a series of rotating temporary exhibitions throughout the year such as The Fan Museum, The Lace Guild Museum and the Quilt Museum. For those small museums that are primarily permanent displays, or what Yani Herreman terms 'core' exhibitions (2004, p. 92), again there are no in-house professional designers, and the services of design professionals is usually only made possible by external means such as sponsorship; as with the Clockmakers' Museum discussed in more depth in the case studies to follow.

As a result, some of the contemporary display techniques that visitors to large museums are used to encountering, such as gateway and star objects, may or may not be present in exhibitions in small museums. Gateway objects are important 'eye-catching' (Batty et al., 2016, p. 75) objects from the collection chosen to represent key themes in the exhibition (Frost, 2017; Batty et al., 2016; Francis, Slack and Edwards, 2011), while a star object is an object that, by virtue of the framing method chosen by the museum to highlight its display, can be understood to have exceptional significance distinct from the other objects on display (Stanley, 2013, p. 397; Francis, Slack and Edwards, 2011, p. 160; Wingfield, 2010, p. 55).

Regardless, small museums have unique attributes that make exhibition design comparisons with much larger institutions simultaneously problematic and potentially insightful. While the upcoming case studies will be discussing specific exhibition attributes in the individual museums in greater detail, these small organisations also share some important commonalities that should be mentioned before moving forward. Many of the associated differences between small and large museum exhibitions can be attributed to two, albeit financially based, factors: human resources and the fact that small museums are rarely located in purpose built structures. Consequently, there tends to be a 'make do and mend' mentality associated with exhibition methods in small museums. A few examples of the ramifications of these two factors would be the size of the small museum's gallery space relative to the size and composition of its collection, available storage and conservation facilities, administrative office space availability and staff/volunteer versatility.

## **Case Studies:**

### **The Clockmakers' Museum – Guildhall**

As this museum has been located in two very different locations I will first discuss its exhibition and displays in its original location that opened in 1874 in the City of London's Guildhall, followed by a brief overview of the Museum's present location that opened in October of 2015 in the Science Museum.

The Clockmakers' Museum opened in the City of London's Guildhall in 1874 by invitation of the City of London. The Museum is an extension of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers and, as such, tells a chronological history of the Company's contribution to the science of accurate timekeeping from the unique perspective of the Company's members.

The collection was displayed in the 'old' Guildhall Library from 1874 to 1976 when it was relocated to the 'new' Guildhall Library, where it remained until its move to the Science Museum in 2015. Due to its location in the Guildhall, and now the Science Museum, it is the only Museum in this thesis where visitors gain entry to the Museum via a security desk and bag search. The Museum consisted of a single, moderately sized, room approximately 7.5x18 meters (25x60 ft.) on the ground floor, with a single point for entry and exit and located adjacent to the entrance to the Guildhall Library. The entirety of the Clockmakers' collection, over six hundred objects, was displayed here across eighteen display cases as a permanent exhibition. The Clockmakers' did not hold temporary exhibitions due to space limitations but designated one of the eighteen cases specifically for the purposes of highlighting work from a rotating series of clockmakers, which will be discussed later in this case study.

#### **Exhibition style-**

The Museum's display was largely unchanged from its original installation until 2000, at which time Sir George White, the collection's part-time Keeper (or curator), was responsible for its refurbishment. White felt that it was important for the Clockmakers' Museum to be different from other museums

that also exhibit clocks and watches; for example the Science Museum for its technical focus, the V&A for its design focus and the British Museum for its international (rather than specifically London) focus (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2018, p. 6; White, 2013a). To this end, White 'decided to try to tell the story of the clockmakers' themselves and of clockmaking in London (not least because most were members of the Clockmakers' Company)' (2013a, parentheses in original).

White was responsible for the design of this new permanent Guildhall exhibition and display in terms of 'how the objects would be set out, the way they would be divided up and the order in which they would be placed' (White, 2013a). While White continued to put the entire collection on display, he states that he would have liked to have included more of the recorded memorabilia they have related to specific makers, but was ultimately unable to include them due to space constraints (2013a). White's choice to continue the Museum's use of Parr's 'storage display' style (1959, p. 275) was not as a means of displaying wealth and intellect, as with the previously discussed *Wunderkammers*, but rather to display 'as much as physically possible' (White, 2013a) for two reasons. First, because the Museum's 'visitors travel across the world to see specific objects' (White, 2013a), and second, while visitors 'can request to see objects in store [at other museums], it [was] not possible to do that at Guildhall' (White, 2013a), due to the Museum's limited facilities in its Guildhall location and the lack of a dedicated Museum staff/volunteer presence. This is interesting because, while White was exhibiting everything in consideration of all interested visitors, it makes the assumption that the limited information available about the objects, obtained through labels and text panels that will be discussed shortly, is enough to satisfy the interest of someone who has travelled across the globe to see a specific object.

The permanent nature of the storage display style is made possible in The Clockmakers' Museum by virtue of the material composition of its collection. The materials used for clock and watch making, while still necessitating a programme for monitoring and conservation, as discussed in the previous

Collections chapter, differ from the more fragile nature of the materials used in fans, lace and quilts that require more rigorous conservation methods.

In addition, it is important to note that the Clockmakers' collection consists of rare one-off, priceless objects, such as Harrison's marine timekeeper that, for the purposes of security, justify the need for a 'one-time' expenditure for the services of an exhibition design professional for the creation of its permanent display and subsequent appropriate high quality museum industry-specific display cases. As a result, this Museum used an external design professional for the 'overall design' of this permanent exhibition, a rare option for small museums (White, 2013a). It is important to note here that the physical design and construction of this exhibition were made possible 'mostly by way of sponsorship' (White, 2013a). This museum was, and still is, supported by the Clockmakers' Museum and Educational Trust (although recently renamed the Clockmakers' Charity [Nye, 2017a]), 'which is a charity independent of the Company' and 'struggle[s] to find sufficient funds' (White, 2013a). In addition, the 'Company itself has modest charitable funds to spend on the museum' (White, 2013a). The use of sponsorship was also made evident in the display cases, as eleven of the eighteen cases in this Museum credited a sponsor for their existence. Sponsors included individuals, charitable trusts and another medieval London guild. It should also be noted that these same display cases, now located in the Science Museum, no longer acknowledge their previous sponsors. However, details of the new location's exhibition will be discussed shortly.

Decisions regarding what and how to display objects in the collection were a source of friction between White and the exhibition designer. 'Designers tend to want to reduce the numbers of objects on display, in order to present them at their best and most dramatic. For the reasons explained above [wanting the museum to be different than those already established], I wanted pretty much the opposite' (White, 2013a). It can be deduced from this admission that the designer was attempting to create an exhibition following Parr's exhibition style of 'choice and sparse selection' (1959, p. 275), due in part to the size of the exhibition space relative to the size of the collection, and

in keeping with more conventional or generic notions of the way museum visitors behave and learn. However, the choice and sparse design style would have had the opposite narrative effect of the storage style desired by White who, as curator of a small, single subject, specialist museum (and an active Clockmakers' Guild member) has a good knowledge of its visitors' needs.

### **Interpretation Materials-**

All interpretive material in this Museum was didactic in nature and delivered via wall panels, text panels and labels. All materials were written in English only, with no foreign language guides available. While the lack of non-English language materials is not unusual in this type of small museum, it could have proven problematic for the Museum's international visitors, particularly as White was keen to display the entire collection for visitors who 'travel across the world to see specific objects' (White, 2013a).

Although this is a small single subject, single room museum, making Serrell's hierarchy of interpretative texts only loosely applicable (for instance a panel naming the title of the exhibition would be pointless), the panels and labels did follow a hierarchical format. The wall panels, as the largest, gave the most general historical information regarding timekeeping and the medieval guild system, in accessible language and terminology; or, as Schaffner recommended, written 'as you yourself would like to be addressed' (2006, p. 165). The exceptions were the occasional horological term that may not have been correctly understood by non-specialists and there was no glossary available for insight. The display case text panels, smaller in size than the wall panels, offered more specific historical information pertaining to the evolution of the Clockmakers' Guild and the craft of clockmaking, as well as the ramifications of historical events on both. While still written in accessible language, these display case panels were interspersed with specialist terminologies. An additional level of hierarchy within the textual information on all wall panels and display case text panels, was the 'categorisation' of information achieved through changes in the point size of the type. A brief paragraph, located just below the number and title of the panel, acted as an abstract for the entire panel. Additional, more detailed, information was

provided below the abstract in a smaller point sized type. This method allowed visitors to control their level of engagement as they moved through the Museum.

The object labels cited the type of object, place and date when known, the craftsman when known and specifics regarding the internal working mechanisms of the object. In some instances, the label included further information about the object or craftsman. For example, a typical label reads as follows:

**WATCH MOVEMENT BY RICHARD WEBSTER**

*London, c.1820*

Enamel dial signed 'Webster 3384' Subsidiary seconds, gold spade hands. Duplex escapement with bi-metallic compensation curb. Plain brass balance. Signed 'Rd. Webster Change Alley London No. 3384'.

Webster succeeded to his fathers business in 1802 aged 17. He became a member of the Clockmakers' Court in 1819

*Museum No. 404. Presented by A & J Smith, Dublin, 1934*

(The Clockmakers' Museum, 2013;  
2017)

As understood from this example, labels were written using primarily specialist language leaving the non-specialists to admire the appearance of the craftsmanship of the designated item without any real concept of the level of expertise being exhibited.

As illustrated by the information cited in this section, the written information used to convey the intended narrative of the collection displayed in this Museum was offered in the form of a useful hierarchy that became more specialised in language as the visitor got 'closer' to the object, with the most specialised text being reserved for the specific objects themselves. This approach allowed those visitors with no knowledge of the heritage craft of clock and watch making to engage with this craft in very broad terms and to control the level of knowledge they were willing to access in a single visit. It should also be stated that, for those specialists for whom the specialist



information was not detailed enough, or for visitors desiring more information, the Clockmakers' Library and archive was accessible 'next door' in the Guildhall Library. The two possible impediments of significance to engaging with the written material in this Museum's display were the lack of a glossary of specialist terminology and no foreign language translations for international visitors. Both of these impediments require a financial outlay and implementation time, however one is more problematic than the other. Foreign language translations would require additional research into visitor nationalities, with subsequent decisions as to how many and which languages to include, as well as locating and employing translators. While these activities present fewer challenges for large museums with greater access to in-house resources, for small independent museums run primarily by volunteers, it is financially not an option.

### **The Exhibition Design-**

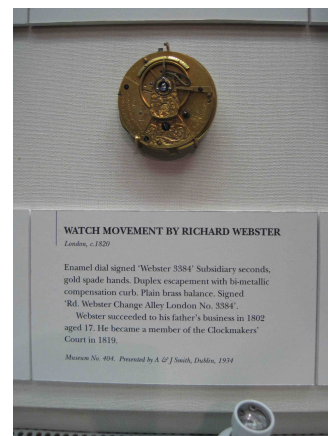
The Clockmakers' Guildhall exhibition used an object-based thematic approach, with didactic information panels offering contextual details pertaining to the collection's objects being displayed, to tell White's chosen narrative of clockmaking in London from the Guild's perspective (White, 2013a; Locker, 2011; Hughes, 2010; Lorenc, Skolnick and Berger, 2010; Black, 2005; Lord and Lord, 2002; Dean, 1996; Pearce, 1993). The collection was displayed chronologically, charting the evolution of the craft and the advancements in timekeeping achieved by London's clockmakers. Visitors were guided numerically through the exhibition using numbered wall panels and smaller numbered text panels inside fifteen of eighteen display cases. The numbers were indicated by Roman numerals that are in keeping with a style commonly used on clocks and watches, thereby reinforcing the timekeeping narrative.

The visitor's Museum experience started with three large wall panels giving historical background information, including 'London as a Major Clock and Watch Centre' and 'The Influence of the Guild System', that was intended to put the Museum's collection into context for the non-specialist. Two separate objects, the first identified as a fifteenth-century domestic clock and

unsophisticated in appearance to a non-specialist, and the second as an 'Astronomical and Automaton Monstrance Clock', a shining gold masterpiece dated 1625, and totally opposite in appearance, were displayed in isolation on either side of the initial wall panels. The juxtaposition of these objects at the start of the exhibition, as well as their display style, are indicative of gateway objects intended to illustrate the key theme of the evolution of the craft (Frost, 2017; Francis, Slack and Edwards, 2011, p. 157). However, the importance of this 'masterpiece' here lost some of its significance without an adequate explanation for the visitor as to its importance within the context of the medieval guild system. Within the hierarchy of the medieval guild system, the creation and crafting of an accepted 'chef d'oeuvre', or masterwork, was essential for promotion within the guild master's workshop from apprentice level to that of journeyman. In addition, while the position of journeyman was still subordinate to the master, if a journeyman wanted to become a master and open his own workshop it was necessary for him to create yet another master piece of even higher quality and craftsmanship for evaluation by the guild and consideration for subsequent promotion to master (Rosser, 1997, p. 16; Sennett, 2008, p. 58).

Beyond the initial wall panels and gateway object display, were a series of four wall display cases, identical in design layout but for their content and increasing number of objects; an approach that served as a subtle indication to comprehend these cases as a 'set'. The objects in this set of cases were limited in number relative to other display cases in the Museum and, combined, served to give the visitor a historical overview of the early history of clock and watch making from 1520 to 'The Golden Age of English Clockmaking' in 1666-1700, inclusive of a timeline of world and English events for the specified time period designated in each case. While the use of timelines in exhibitions can prove problematic in some circumstances (Lubar, 2013), used here in combination with the associated historical text panel, they were particularly helpful for the uninitiated by putting the specifics of the evolution of the clockmaking craft into context with simultaneously occurring historical events.

## 7. The Clockmakers' Museum, Guildhall



Three more chronologically placed cases were used to illustrate the overarching subjects of timekeeping in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries and included the vast majority of the collection's pocket watches, displayed with the back of the watch facing the observer and opened to expose the inner working mechanisms of the watch. This display method was important for both specialists and non-specialists for a couple of reasons. It allowed the obvious ability to see the details of the mechanisms for specialists and facilitated comparisons between the various watches, making it possible to view and discern the evolution of the mechanisms, even if only superficially for the non-specialist, via the visual differences in the mechanisms. In addition, it served to reinforce the Museum's emphasis on the technology of clock and watch making rather than the more common use of clocks and watches in museum displays as objects included to reinforce a socially orientated narrative. For these reasons, this display method proved particularly effective in highlighting the craftsmanship of the makers and reinforcing the remit of the Museum's exhibition.

Two individual display cases were dedicated to specific clockmakers which I will address shortly, and a third case contained the entire personal collection belonging to Reverend H. L. Nelthropp who donated his private collection to the Company and was instrumental in the Company's acquisition of Harrison's marine timekeeper for the Museum's collection. Display of the original solid mahogany bureau and bookcase that was purchased specifically to store the Company's early Library and Collection, helped to put the Museum's inception as the Company's collection into context while the remaining display cases, covering subjects such as chronometers and tools of the trade, illustrated details of the Guild's craft.

Outside of the physical environment of the Museum White has highlighted an object from the collection that he considers to be extraordinary (Fowler, 2015; Holt, 2015, p. 82), however within the Museum's displays, any objects that White would have considered to be star objects were not delineated as such. For the first four cases that focus on specific time periods, a few clocks/watches were chosen as representative of the period, and were thus

attached to the text panel, otherwise no differentiation was made with the other objects in the case. The remaining cases were treated with the same equality, with the exception of the three individual display cases mentioned earlier. These cases each highlight the work of a notable clockmaker and their contribution to the craft including watches and clocks created by them. The case dedicated to Harrison includes his fifth marine timekeeper. This object, 'dated 1770 and tested under the personal supervision of King George III' (White, 1998), is, according to a reference on one of the Museum's text panels, considered to be 'the Company's greatest treasure'. And yet this object does not take pride of place in the Museum nor is it treated as a star object in any way. This is important to note because the display approach utilised for this Museum's exhibition placed equal importance on the displayed objects, as well as the vast majority of clockmakers/craftsmen represented in the exhibition. This democratisation reinforced White's intended narrative of the Clockmakers' exhibition, which was that of clock making from the Company's perspective, by echoing the workings of the medieval guilds where production was seen as a group enterprise. As Richard Sennett explains, 'medieval guilds did not tend to emphasize individual differences within a town's workshops; the guild's collective effort of control names where a cup or coat was made rather than who made it' and it was not until the Renaissance that 'naming the maker became increasingly important' (Sennett, 2008, p. 68).

The lack of available space in its Guildhall location also meant that the Clockmakers' was unable to present temporary exhibitions. As such, the Company chose to use one of the Museum's display cases, entitled 'Artist Craftsmen: Clock and Watchmakers of Today and Tomorrow', to highlight the work of contemporary craftspeople. The case's text panel stated: 'The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers has sought to assist and encourage the continuation of its trade for over 370 years and continues to do so today. It is proud to set aside this showcase for loan exhibitions of the work of today's craftsmen and craftswomen' (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2013). Although the Clockmakers' is a static permanent display, this showcase served a couple of important purposes for the Clockmakers' Museum; it allowed the Company to

celebrate those makers who are currently perpetuating this heritage craft and, for visitors, it gave the Clockmakers' the opportunity to ground contemporary craft practice within the historical narrative of the previous makers and the evolution of their craft in London.

I argue that the design methods utilised for this exhibition were quite effective in reinforcing White's intended narrative of the role of London's clockmakers in the evolution of timekeeping, from the Guild's perspective. The concepts of time, in terms of the Clockmakers' four hundred year craft legacy and its physical manifestation as clock, were evident everywhere. All aspects of the exhibition and displays were crisply and cleanly executed, including the hundreds of watches and their associated labels displayed in neat, precise rows. The use of Roman numerals as a wayfinding device simultaneously led the visitor, both literally and figuratively, chronologically through time and the evolution of the clockmakers' craft. Longcase clocks, displayed in a corner of the museum, could be heard ticking and would chime intermittently; the sound of which not only indicated the passing of time, but helped to humanise White's intended narrative of the four hundred year history of the clockmakers and their craft.

### **The Clockmakers' Museum – The Science Museum**

The Clockmakers' new home, on the second floor of London's Science Museum, is a rectangular gallery space similar in shape to its original home, albeit only slightly wider but double in length, measuring approximately 8.5x38 meters (27x125 ft.). The vast majority of the exhibition is unchanged with the exception of a few additions that include a glossary wall panel placed at the entrance to the gallery, new material devoted to the craft of engraving, which is an integral part of watch making, as well as two cases dedicated to famous London watchmakers and Guild members, thus increasing the number of display panels from eighteen to twenty four.

However, while The Clockmakers' Museum continues to operate 'independently' of the Science Museum the fact remains that it is now a small museum inside a very large museum institution, creating radically different



8. The Clockmakers' Museum, Science Museum



frames of reference and dramatically affecting how visitors now experience this small museum. For instance, The Clockmakers' no longer has a single entry and exit point but rather can be accessed from either end of its gallery space, thereby negating the reinforcing layers of effectiveness gained through the use of the chronological display style.

While a comparative analysis of the exhibitions in the two Clockmakers' locations would be interesting, comparative analysis of the exhibition in the new location with the other small museum exhibitions in these case studies would not be relevant for the purposes of this chapter.

### **The Fan Museum –**

The Fan Museum is located inside two Grade II listed Georgian townhouses that border Greenwich Park in Greenwich, London. The Museum's interior design and décor offers the visitor constant subtle reminders that the visitor is in what was originally a residential house rather than a purpose built museum building and serves to reinforce the Museum's narrative of hand fans as prized and important objects of detailed skilled craftsmanship.

#### **Exhibition Style-**

Items from the Museum's collection of over six thousand objects are displayed in four different areas over two floors, in a combination of permanent and temporary display. The three permanent display areas include two rooms on the ground floor and utilisation of the stairwell to the first floor as the third permanent display area. However, while three out of four areas are dedicated to permanent display, the available viable display space in these permanent areas is very limited, as reflected in the number of objects on display and Parr's 'choice and sparse' style of display.

Rotating temporary displays are located in two adjoining rooms on the first floor that are joined in an open manner to create a moderately sized, L-shaped exhibition space. Temporary displays utilise Parr's 'abundance' style of display with as many as one hundred fans on display across approximately eight display cases, the number of which may vary from one exhibition to another. It is important to point out here that, due to the nature of the constantly rotating



temporary displays, for the purposes of this case study, my analysis of the temporary exhibitions found here will be from a general perspective, seeking to highlight the commonalities observed in the exhibitions I attended that would be indicative of a coherent display methodology, rather than the specific details of a single temporary exhibition.

Hélène Alexander, the Museum's founder, while now in her eighties, is still the guiding force behind this Museum and its exhibitions. Jacob Moss, the Museum's curator, has been with the Museum for seven years and states, 'Mrs. Alexander continues to lead on all exhibitions (other than Street Fans) and writes all the [exhibition] catalogues. I propose themes from time to time but the schedule is very much dictated by the pace at which Mrs. Alexander is able to work (2018b). From this it can be inferred that the Museum is still, nearly thirty years after its opening, very much a personal endeavour for Alexander. Regarding the style of the temporary exhibition space, Alexander stated that,

When the Museum first opened, having spent so much money on essential refurbishment, freestanding cabinets were kindly donated by the Maritime Museum. Gradually these have been replaced by modern cases. The disposition of the cases works well for my needs. Perhaps not fort [sic] others? (2018, underscore in the original)

Moss adds that if he 'were to change one thing it would be to swap out the large central case for something less obtrusive. The case really cuts up the floor space in narrow channels which can be difficult to lead groups through' (2018b). In terms of the permanent exhibition spaces, Alexander states that she,

...not only determined the design of the 'Green Room' [the visitor orientation room] but, having studied in depth the colours of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mixed the [paint] colours and determined the way in which they should be used... (2018, quotes in the original)

From this it can be understood that Alexander has sought to make this Museum space as period authentic as possible. The atmosphere created by this attention to detail, from the location in a listed Georgian townhouse and its

façade, to the interior period décor, acts as a subliminal reinforcement of the Museum's narrative throughout the visitor experience, separate from the objects and associated texts.

### **Interpretation Materials-**

There are very few layers of interpretative material in this Museum, and no hierarchy of use to speak of (Serrell, 1996, pp. 22-25). As such, a single picture frame, displaying two A4 size promotional posters announcing the current theme of the temporary exhibition, hangs on the wall just outside the temporary exhibition space. This Museum has very little available wall space in its exhibition spaces and uses what it does have primarily for exhibiting framed fan leaves. As a result, there are only two wall panels used for conveying information; a pictorial fan glossary in the Green Room and a traditional glossary of fan terms in the temporary exhibition space.

All temporary exhibition information is conveyed via an exhibition specific catalogue that is available for purchase, a numbered label that accompanies every object and offers varying degrees of information, and the occasional A4 size sheet of paper on a pedestal next to a display case offering additional information pertinent to either the entire display case or a specific object. Although the fans on display come from both Museum founder H  l  ne Alexander's Collection (HA Collection), and The Fan Museum's Collection (TFM Collection) (The Fan Museum, 2012), Alexander, as cited above, writes the exhibition catalogues (The Fan Museum, 2013a; 2013b; Moss, 2013), that give a description of every fan in the exhibition, as well as the labels. This is interesting for the fact that, while the Museum has a full-time curator, it is Alexander's expertise that serves as the informative voice of the temporary exhibitions and is yet another clear indication of how personal this museum continues to be for Alexander.

The Fan Museum treats the fans in its collections as singular aesthetic works of craftsmanship that can be consistently recombined with other fans to form thematic groups, the variety of which are highlighted by the rotating temporary exhibition format. All interpretive materials cite fundamental information specific to each fan. The descriptions in the catalogues are given

in numerical order corresponding to the numeric designation cited on each fan's exhibit label and include information such as country of origin, creation date, component materials and, in some cases, descriptive details about the subject matter depicted on the fan leaf. A simple example is,

46. The Velvet Mask

Ebonised wooden fan, the guards fashioned as musician/acrobats (see Cat. No.45).

Black lace leaf, mounted *à l'Anglaise*, incorporating a black velvet mask.

French, c. 1890

*The Fan Museum, HA Collection*

(The Fan Museum, 2013b, italics in the original)

However, the use of numeric designations is not intended to dictate a specific narrative route for visitors but rather to facilitate identification, as the exhibition labels are a reiteration of the catalogue's descriptive text but with slight changes to grammar and less detail (The Fan Museum, 2013a; 2013b; 2017e; Moss, 2013). All catalogues include a glossary of terms customized for the specific exhibition and, like the Stained Glass Museum's guidebook, italicised terms within the labels and catalogue correspond to the terms in the glossary (The Fan Museum, 2017e; 2013a; 2013b). Any additional information offered in the catalogue varies by thematic exhibition; for instance an 'Index of Names' in one catalogue (The Fan Museum, 2017e) and a brief overview of European history from 1800-1850 in another (The Fan Museum, 2013a).

The display method used here gives equal 'weight' to all the objects on display, with the use of sub-themes being the only interpretive device used to differentiate their component attributes. As a result, the use of numeric designation and label reiteration is an affective method for helping visitors to make the correct connections between specific objects and their associated explanatory details.

All informational materials are written in English only, in a clear, concise manner that the majority of visitors can understand without being a specialist.

The possible exceptions to this are where fan-specific terminology is used but as previously stated, there are large wall panel glossaries and customised glossaries included in the catalogues to address this possibility. The ease with which visitors are able to access a craft-specific glossary in this Museum is the most visitor-friendly of the five small museums in this thesis. It allows visitors to better understand the objects and engage with the craft of fan making in an easy, efficient and expeditious manner, albeit for English speakers only.

### **The Exhibition Design-**

#### **The permanent exhibition spaces:**

The first of two permanent exhibition spaces on the ground floor, a bright yellow room known as the Reception Room, retains its domestic interior characteristics while doubling as the site of the reception/ticket desk and as an exhibition space, with a handful of items on permanent display. These objects, such as framed unpleated fan leaves, serve as a subtle form of object-based introduction to the museum. However, while the objects on display here have accompanying labels with varying degrees of information, in some cases with as few as twelve words, the objects are displayed in a manner that is more indicative of objects intended to act as decoration rather than as discreet sources of information; such as the two framed fan leaves displayed over the fireplace.

The Reception Room also displays the only evidence in the Museum of the Fan Museum's association with The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers via a section dedicated to Fan Guild related information and objects, including a framed photo of the Fan Museum's founder, Hélène Alexander, receiving the Company's Gold Medal, the Gold Medal itself and a small vitrine, displaying various Company related medals, a badge and a brooch. Two labels in the case state simply 'The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers' and that the items are displayed in 'tribute' to a specific past Master of the Company and Chairman of the Trustees of the Fan Museum (The Fan Museum, 2018a). While this entire display section serves to convey the relationship between Hélène Alexander, the Museum's founder, and the Fan Makers' Guild, it does nothing to articulate the relevance of this display, and the Fan Makers Guild,

to the Museum, the collection or the Museum's narrative, aside from subtly providing a historical context for this heritage craft in the UK.

The second exhibition room, a small room known as the Green Room due to its previously mentioned wall colour, is adjacent to the Reception Room and acts as an orientation room for uninitiated visitors. Here, built-in display cases that could be mistaken for china cabinets or book cases in a private home, display an object-based permanent display using items from the collection to tell a brief history of fans and an explanation of the fan making process, including a large, poster-sized fan diagram that acts as a pictorial glossary of the components of hand fans.

Three of the Museum's more important objects are also on permanent display in this room. Two of them, referred to as 'gems' in the collection on the Museum's website (The Fan Museum, 2018b), are similarly displayed in moderately ornate frames. The third, a recently acquired fan from the sixteenth century, thought to be the only surviving fan in existence from this time period, has been installed in its own display case beneath a text panel conveying details of its rarity, historical context of fans in the sixteenth century, and the conservation activities undertaken upon its acquisition by the Museum (The Fan Museum, 2018a). Within the context of display methods, it would seem possible that this exceptional new acquisition could potentially eclipse the 'gem' status of the two other permanently displayed objects. However, while the new object is included as an object in the collection on the Museum's website, it is not included in the website's description of the Green Room, much less as a new gem (The Fan Museum, 2018b), making any relative value judgments problematic for visitors.

The few items on permanent display in the Reception Room, as well as the generalised nature of the permanent display in the Green Room, make the permanent exhibitions useful for the first time visitor, but superfluous for subsequent visits. Rather, these permanent exhibition areas feel more focused on creating a transitional public space for the temporary exhibition upstairs that supports the Museum's narrative by emphasising a home-like environment and atmosphere that includes the Museum's tearoom and gift shop.

## 9. The Fan Museum, ground floor, permanent exhibition



## 10. The Fan Museum, first floor, temporary exhibition



### **The temporary exhibition space:**

However, the first floor temporary exhibition space differs from the permanent spaces. While the staircase to the first floor is used for permanent display in much the same way as the Reception Room, and has the same general feel to the display, that of a useful place for display as decoration, the stairs lead directly into the temporary exhibition space. For conservation reasons the Museum's collection cannot be put on permanent display so the Museum overcomes this limitation by offering a series of thematic temporary exhibitions that change every four months. Themes such as 'Fans of the Belle Époque', 'Fans of the Livery', 'Children's Fans' and 'Sports, Leisure and Fans' (The Fan Museum, 2016) allow the Museum to meet the requirements of conservation while simultaneously allowing public access to its extensive collection. However, while the Museum treats its fans as singular aesthetic works of craftsmanship that can be consistently recombined with other fans to form thematic groups as stated earlier, the specific themes are primarily focused on the subjects depicted on the fans rather than on the fan's structural components or materials.

The exhibitions are displayed in two adjoining rooms, one that measures approximately 6x9 meters (20x30 ft.) and the other approximately 5x6 meters (16x20 ft.). It is a quieter, more intimate space than the ground floor, with details that still evoke a period feel but in a far more subdued colour and style than that of the ground floor, and with a view over the manicured back garden; all of which serve to reinforce the understanding of this Museum as being situated in a residential, previously domestic space.

The Museum's display method for temporary exhibitions makes use of glass display cases, as well as two large, ceiling height, built-in display cases and one full height 360° glass case. In addition, while each temporary exhibition in this Museum is focused on a specific theme, the individual exhibitions are then further refined into sub-themes as a means of display. For example, the fans displayed in the 'All Creatures Great and Small' exhibition were divided into categories such as 'Birds', 'Bugs & Butterflies' and 'Cats & Dogs' (The Fan Museum, 2017e). Fans are displayed fully opened and either standing upright

or laying flat. Exceptions occur when a particular fan has a characteristic of interest that is only visible when the fan is folded closed, such as cigar fans (The Fan Museum, 2013b, no pagination). Mirrors are utilised in the display cases to facilitate viewing both sides of the fans. Fans that are displayed laying flat are spread on a sheet of glass suspended approximately 7cm (3 in.) over a mirror. This comprehensive use of mirrors is important because it serves to allow, not only a greater aesthetic appreciation of the fans, but also insight into their specific, individual, intended narrative when in use.

The style and combination of display cases used for temporary exhibitions allows for flexible display of numerous fans during any given exhibition, for example one hundred fans for one exhibition (The Fan Museum, 2013b), seventy nine for another (The Fan Museum, 2017e) and fifty four for yet another (AIM, 2018, p. 13; The Fan Museum, 2017f). Yet, like the displays in the other case study museums, all objects are given equal status in terms of display.

The temporary exhibitions on the first floor of this Museum offer a much more tangible depth of engagement with the narrative of ladies fans, as prized and important objects of detailed craftsmanship, than the permanent exhibitions. This is due in large part to the temporary versus permanent nature of the exhibition spaces and the resulting number of objects on display.

However, the perceived transitional nature of the experience on the ground floor, while useful for giving a brief overview of the craft and setting the general home-like tone of the Museum, does not offer a sizeable inducement to explore the temporary exhibition beyond the ground floor.

In the temporary exhibitions, deference is given to craftsmanship through the meticulous attention to detail evident in the display method that includes the use of mirrors. This extensive use of mirrors has the potential to create considerable visual confusion. However, here it is handled with great dexterity, allowing the visitor comprehensive 'access' to the artistic details and craftsmanship of the objects without the necessity of handling them.

Informational materials, written by specialist founder Alexander, are accessible even when using specialist terminology, due to readily available glossaries. All



of the factors of the temporary exhibitions combined give the impression of having been invited from the ground floor waiting area to Alexander's private reception room where she offers various objects from the collection for the visitor's inspection.

### **The Lace Guild Museum –**

The Lace Guild Museum is located in The Hollies, the Lace Guild's headquarters building, in Stourbridge. The Hollies is a two-storey residential building that was built between 1904 and 1906 on, what was then, farmland (The Lace Guild, 2013).

At over eighteen thousand items spanning over four hundred years, this Museum has by far the largest collection of the case study museums, yet has the smallest display space. It is also the youngest of the case study museums, having opened in 2009. The Lace Guild uses the Museum as a means of promoting the craft to the wider public, encourage high quality craftsmanship amongst its practitioners and to perpetuate the craft. As an extension of the Lace Guild it is overseen by The Lace Guild Museum Committee, all of whom are volunteers. Nor are there any museum professionals amongst the Guild's volunteers or staff, meaning that the exhibition space and all exhibitions are entirely the result of untrained volunteers.

### **The Exhibition Style-**

The Museum is a single room located on the ground floor. Eight floor to ceiling, glass fronted showcases with additional storage cabinets or drawers below, line the walls. These cases are not the high quality professional display cases typically associated with larger museums but, while still fit for purpose, appear to be a high quality version of the modular style of display case available from local DIY centres, made of composite material with adjustable glass shelves, that have been built-in to the space and, as such, are indicative of the make-do-and-mend activities that are prevalent in small independent museums.

For conservation reasons, items from the collection are displayed in an ongoing series of temporary thematic exhibitions that are changed

approximately every three months by Museum Committee members. This is an important point because it means that, in its capacity as an extension of a specific craft Guild, this Museum is an example of exhibitions that are organised and installed by craft practitioners, like that of the Grinling Gibbons exhibition, the ramifications of which were discussed in the Introduction chapter.

As a result of the wide ranging thematic display format and the fact that items of lace can vary greatly in size, from baby booties to tablecloths, the number of items placed on display for each exhibition is equally varied. However the use of mirrors to facilitate viewing, like those in The Fan Museum, dictates a display style that leaves enough space between objects to negate any potential issues caused by the necessity of using mirrors. As such the exhibition style in this Museum is typically that of Parr's 'choice and sparse' selection (1959, p. 275).

#### **Interpretion Materials-**

There is no signage anywhere at the Hollies, inside or out, announcing the exhibition or its associated theme. Nor are there any text panels, guidebooks or glossary of terms used in the exhibitions. The only textual hierarchy of information (Serrell, 1996, pp. 22-25) is in the form of textual information being offered only via object labels and laminated A4 sheets of paper that describe aspects of the current temporary exhibition. The visitor is invited to begin with the first display case to the right of the entrance and, using the A4 sheets as reference, move around the room in an anticlockwise direction. The object labels offer extremely limited information, simply stating the style of lace (such as Honiton, Bedfordshire), the type of lace (needle or bobbin), its purpose (bonnet, collar and so forth), date of origin and, in some cases, its 'catalog' number within the collection for reference purposes, for instance:

Blonde Bobbin Lace  
Tie  
3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
GF.5.2005  
(The Lace Guild Museum, 2013b)

The A4 sheets give semi-detailed information about only a limited number of pieces on display rather than all. The information is written in accessible language but is interspersed with specialist terminology making it somewhat problematic without an available glossary. This method of limited information, particularly on the labels, gives the impression of the Museum treating its objects as artefacts of the lace craft and implies that the objects are able to speak for themselves. While this may be the case for practitioners and specialists, it is problematic for uninitiated visitors.

Other interpretation material is offered via an eight-minute video playing in a continuous loop that presents a demonstration of bobbin and needle lacemaking and an explanation of the tools required, but there is no immediate source to explain the different styles of lace. In addition, most Fridays include a volunteer giving a live lace making demonstration that is informative for the uninitiated by virtue of the personal interaction made possible with the practitioner. This element of personal interaction is also engaging for other craft practitioners within the context of shared experience, which will be discussed in greater detail in the Learning themed chapter of this thesis.

There are introductory guides available for purchase that pertain to the different lace styles but nothing readily available for the visitor while moving through the exhibition.

As an extension of a contemporary craft Guild, this Museum's exhibitions act very much as a resource for its members and practitioners, resulting in museum texts that are directed at this specific visitor segment. The Museum tries, in a very limited space, to also engage non-practitioners/enthusiasts through the use of the demonstration video and Friday live demonstrations.

### **The Exhibition Design-**

The small exhibition space in this Museum measures approximately 3x4.5 meters (10x15 ft.), with the showcases lining the walls. As with the Fan Museum, glass and mirrors are used to facilitate viewing, with a mirror acting as the back wall in display cases and the lace displayed on glass shelves. However, in this museum the cases are only glass fronted so it is not physically

## 11. The Lace Guild Museum



possible to view the cases from different sides, as at the Fan Museum. As such, the mirrors in these displays are crucial for the examination of the objects from different perspectives. However, an additional challenge for the installation of items in this collection that differs from The Fan Museum is that lace is a textile and many types of lace can be virtually transparent. While fans are made of firmer materials that allow them to be easily propped upright for display and manoeuvred for optimal viewing, any folds in a lace item, or overlaps of adjacent items become problematic for detailed viewing of craftsmanship. As a consequence, the Lace Museum uses a variety of different types of props to support the lace for better viewing as well as indicating the object's intended use where relevant, for instance black 'wig heads', velvet covered cones and small pillows to name a few. In this way practitioners get a clearer understanding of the craftsmanship and details of the various items.

Exhibition themes vary widely, including topics that are Lace Guild related such as 'Bristol lace makers' and 'Devon lace teachers', object related such as 'shawls and stoles' and 'fans', technique related such as 'crochet', and so on (The Lace Guild Museum Committee, 2017i; 2017j; 2018). This varied programme of themes encourages perpetuation of the craft through its support of practitioners, and Guild practitioners in particular, by highlighting the wide range of lace types and styles available within the craft as well as the contemporary work of its membership. The Museum has also presented 'contemporary' exhibitions with more relevance for the wider public, such as its 2014 exhibition entitled 'The End of an Era: Lace Before and After the 1914-1918 War', intended to coincide with the nationwide First World War centenary commemoration activities.

There is little in these temporary exhibition displays to engage the non-practitioner/enthusiast aside from an opportunity to admire the handcraft the intricate lace. However, for the practitioner, there are myriad aspects of the craft on offer with which to engage.

## **The Quilt Museum and Gallery –**

The Quilt Museum and Gallery in York was open for seven years but is now closed. It should be stated at the outset of this case study that I was able to visit this Museum for only one exhibition during the period between the start of research for this thesis and the Museum's closure. While I continue to be in contact with the Museum's curator and volunteer staff for any necessary research information related to other aspects of this thesis, repeat visits to the Museum's series of temporary exhibitions for comparison purposes, is clearly not possible. As such, my observations in this case study are based on two visits to a single temporary exhibition in the Museum.

The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, a contemporary craft guild, opened the Quilt Museum and Gallery in York's medieval St Anthony's Hall in 2008. This museum, like that of the Lace Guild Museum, is an extension of the activities of the Quilters' Guild and The Collection, now comprised of over eight hundred items dating from 1700 to the present, is still the property of the Guild. The Guild used the Museum to promote knowledge and understanding of the craft/skills associated with patchwork and quilting and to perpetuate the craft.

Upon entering St Anthony's Hall it is readily apparent that, while the building's exterior still shows many characteristics of its 'ancient' heritage, much of the interior has been brought firmly into the twenty-first century. The Guild's visitor spaces were spread over both floors of the guildhall building, with visitor amenities and services located on the ground floor and The Museum and Gallery's exhibition spaces, accessible by either staircase or small lift, located on the first floor.

As with the Grinling Gibbons example cited in the Introduction, as well as the Lace Guild Museum example, craft practitioners were involved throughout the exhibition process. Exhibitions were decided by the Guild's Exhibition Committee, including curator Audin who, in turn, designed the exhibitions and installed them with the help of Guild volunteers (Audin, 2018; Audin, 2016a; The Quilters' Guild Shop, 2016).

### **The Exhibition Style-**

Items from the Museum's collection were displayed across three different sizes galleries on the same floor, in a series of object-based rotating temporary displays, with each of the three galleries serving a different display purpose. Parr's 'choice and sparse' style of display was evident here due to the various sizes of the quilts and display limitations imposed by the architecture of the spaces which will be discussed shortly.

The guildhall's 'timbered' Great Hall measures 24.5 x 8 meters (81 x 27 ft.) and retains its original medieval guildhall features (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016). The Hall served as the Museum's primary exhibition space, with two smaller adjacent rooms, the Bailey Gallery and the Aldwark Gallery, serving as secondary space for additional exhibitions. The Bailey Gallery was a smaller version of the primary Great Hall, long and narrow but with a much lower vaulted ceiling, and was used primarily for exhibitions of contemporary work by Guild members, guest exhibitions or for heritage displays during the unusual event of a contemporary exhibition in the Great Hall (Audin, 2016a; The Quilt Museum and Gallery, 2013). Highlighting the work of contemporary makers in this way, in conjunction with but separate from heritage works, served to both reinforce the historical nature of the intangible cultural heritage of this craft as well as this craft's place in contemporary craft practice. The Aldwark Gallery was a small space originally intended as an office, hence its size and non-compliant fluorescent strip lighting, making it problematic for use as an exhibition space for quilts (2016a). As a result, it was instead used for a variety of purposes including small-scale displays such as a 'behind-the-scenes' exhibition explaining the day-to-day operations of the Museum, such as its conservation activities, thus offering the visitor a means of deeper engagement with the Museum.

### **Interpretation Materials-**

As with the previous two museums there were very few layers of interpretation in this Museum. There was no signage either outside or inside of St Anthony's Hall announcing the theme of the exhibition, and no exhibition-specific guidebook available, for purchase or otherwise. There were two

primary levels of textual information; four wall-mounted text panels dotted around the gallery that acted as an introduction to the fundamentals of the Log Cabin quilting style by giving detailed information, including illustrations, pertaining to its history and craft methods, and object labels associated with each quilt.

Labels for the exhibition were written in a consistent format that included identifying information: the name of the quilt, its date of creation, its size, the quilt's creator and the source of the quilt for the purposes of the exhibition. This information was followed with varying amounts of descriptive information such as the type of fabrics used, the quilting method utilised, historical information and information pertaining to the artist/creator. For instance:

**Velvet Log Cabin (right)**

1890-1900

153 x 183cm

Maker Unknown

The Quilters' Guild Collection

The thirty blocks of velvet and silk log cabin squares in this quilt have all been hand sewn onto a variety of different foundation fabrics. The dark and light tones have been grouped together in clusters in the arrangement known as 'Sunshine and Shadow'.

(The Quilt Museum and Gallery, 2014)

Additional materials pertaining to the exhibition could be found on a long wooden refectory table located in the exhibition space. These included various items from the handling collection offered as 'handling samples' for closer inspection by visitors as well as binders containing 'large print' versions of the wall-mounted text panels and object labels. It is interesting to note that this is the only case study museum to make 'large print' materials available for visitors which is indicative of a considered level of engagement with their Guild practitioner community and wider public.

All printed materials were in English and there were no foreign language guides available. The wall panels were written in a visitor friendly non-specialist language while the label descriptions were written in the same accessible language, but with the occasional specialist term or reference. As



there was no glossary of terms available these terms could prove problematic. However, volunteers were available in the exhibition space to answer questions and could be utilised in this capacity. This is an important distinction from the other case study museums. Regardless of the availability of a printed glossary, the personal touch offered by the presence of the volunteers had the potential to offer a more comprehensive explanation of sewing techniques or other detailed information through conversational exchange that a written text, by definition, is unable to do.

The volunteers were on hand to personally greet visitors to the exhibition space when they passed through the door into the Great Hall. The volunteer made enquiries regarding any special objectives for the visit that they could assist with and the visitor's level of quilting/sewing expertise (Prichard, 2010g). In addition, the volunteer offered a general overview of the space to orientate the visitor and offered to answer any questions the visitor may have had before beginning their tour of the exhibitions. During the course of my visits over two consecutive days, there were always two volunteers in the exhibition space who made sure that every visitor was personally greeted when they entered the space. This is important because this type of 'personal' connection is a reflection of characteristics of the craft itself. The craft can be both a solitary practice (Prichard, 2010, p. 99) and a social communal group effort (Prichard, 2010, p. 102; p. 108) that encourages connection, camaraderie and knowledge transfer through shared craft practices, such as quilting bees. It was exactly within this type of shared craft-practice circumstance under which both the Lace Guild and The Quilters' Guild were conceived (The Quilters' Guild, 2016a; Dye, 2001; The Quilters' Guild, 1979a, no pagination) and that was reflected in the presence and behaviour of the volunteers in this Museum.

### **The Exhibition Design-**

Entrance to the exhibition spaces was through a closed door to the Great Hall on the first floor. According to curator Heather Audin, the door to the exhibition space was kept closed for a few reasons but primarily for conservation purposes in an attempt to 'keep a stable environment' (2016a). A stable environment was particularly important here because the quilts were

displayed without benefit of enclosed display cases and, as such, were left exposed to, not only normal environmental risk factors such as dust, but also the additional risk factors created by the flow of visitors through the space, such as moisture and dirt (Audin, 2016a). It is important to note here the similarities between the exhibition design in this Museum and that of the Stained Glass Museum, and the ensuing ramifications for object display. Both museums have collection objects that vary in size from quite small to very large and both use an 'unprotected' display style. The permanent display style at The Stained Glass Museum allows the use of custom light boxes but The Quilt Museum has material conservation issues to consider that necessitate temporary display, making display cases, custom or otherwise, more problematic. As stained glass is by definition meant to 'withstand the elements' and quilts are not, this important distinction meant that The Quilt Museum was the only museum of the five in this thesis that puts its objects 'at risk' through 'open' display like that inherent in art museums. This display method, combined with the 'choice and sparse' display style, can be seen to mimic art museum display methods, and while motivated by the need to resolve practical display challenges, nonetheless offers a subliminal representation of this craft, and its intangible cultural heritage, as aesthetic works art.

The quilts were hung on the walls and, depending on the exhibition, from ceiling beams and displayed on raised platforms on the floor (BBC News, 2015; The Grid, 2015). For some exhibitions, temporary walls were erected in the center of the room to accommodate display of smaller quilts and quilt panels. In some instances, contextual displays were created using mannequins dressed in period clothing, and accompanied with period sewing related equipment. While the lack of display cases had the potential to be detrimental to the objects on display, it was beneficial for practitioners in particular as it offered an opportunity for close inspection of the objects, much like that of the display method used in The Stained Glass Museum which will be addressed in the next case study. This type of face-to-face inspection at close range allows visitors to ascertain details that may otherwise go unnoticed and is particularly useful for practitioners in facilitating the skills inherent in this craft's heritage. It

## 12. The Quilt Museum and Gallery

All images copyright The Quilt Museum and Gallery



helps to reinforce the Museum's narrative of appreciation, knowledge and understanding of the craft/skills associated with patchwork and quilting.

The exhibitions were changed approximately every four months for conservation reasons and, like The Fan Museum, different exhibition themes allowed items in The Collection to be seen in different contexts relative to the other items in The Collection and items on loan from external collections. Examples of the Museum's thematic exhibitions includes: *Dressed to Quilt* – an exhibition of contemporary quilted dresses; *Le Tour de France* – a small exhibition of work by Quilt Museum and Gallery volunteers in response to the Tour de France in Yorkshire; and *Patchwork and Quilting in Britain* – a short introduction to the history of patchwork and quilting in Britain' (Quilt Museum and Gallery, 2013). It is important to note here that these themes encompass not only decorative aspects of quilts but also other aspects such as quilted clothing, patchwork, Guild member craftsmanship, construction methods, and historical craft perspectives. This diverse theme structure, like that of The Lace Museum, illustrated the wide variety of applications of the craft and allowed the Museum to engage with its Guild members and visitors through a broad range of interests. It is also interesting to note that while The Fan Museum and The Lace Guild Museum also use the object-based thematic structure for their exhibition programme, The Quilt Museum and The Lace Museum share similar perspectives in the focus of their thematic choices.

Although the exhibition space was one big room, curator Audin designed exhibitions with an 'intended' route and expressed a combination of frustration and resignation on the topic. She said that while 'exhibitions were influenced by the inconsistent spaces' (2016a) on the walls created by the medieval wall timbers as well as the irregular sizes of the quilts in The Collection (making it problematic to place the quilts in any type of specific order), every exhibition did have an intended route. However Audin added that when the route was delineated to visitors entering the Hall, the visitor would generally express their recognition of the intended route but then would often wander off in any direction they chose, ignoring the route altogether (Audin, 2016a). It is interesting to note here that the medieval wall timbers in this exhibition space,

while somewhat problematic for hanging an exhibition, served to divide the walls literally into blocks that were visually reminiscent of the segmented patterning inherent on quilts, and doubly so with the quilts displayed 'inside' each 'block'; all of which served as a subtle reinforcing aspect of the quilt narrative in the exhibition space.

As previously discussed in the Collections themed chapter of this thesis, the Quilters' Guild Collection initiated a new 'private' exhibition programme entitled 'Friends of the Collection' in October of 2017 (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2018b). Friends of the Collection is a programme of four, five-day-long, quilt exhibitions to be held at St. Anthony's Hall, the Guild's headquarters and previous Museum location, in York. However, the Friends programme is a membership scheme, separate from Guild membership, that asks £15 for an annual membership, inclusive of exhibition access and quarterly email newsletter, with a discount for Guild members (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2018b). The Guild is trying this new scheme as a means of 'support[ing] the exhibitions and maintenance' of the Collection (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2018b). It is early days yet to try to ascertain whether these very brief Monday to Friday exhibitions will work as a viable replacement for the regular access provided by the Museum but, at the time of writing, three of the four exhibitions have taken place. While curator Heather Audin states that the scheme has been well received (2018a), a recent change to the programme now allows admission to individual exhibitions for a reduced fee, but with the ability to bring a free guest to two of the four exhibitions as an added incentive for annual membership (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2018a).

This Museum celebrated the craft of quilting by offering its Guild members and visitors an opportunity for close inspection of quilts and related crafts on a daily basis, year round, and from a variety of thematic perspectives. For practitioners and enthusiasts, the access The Quilt Museum provided was invaluable as an ongoing resource of inspiration, practical knowledge and affirmation of their craft. This type of opportunity for regular access and engagement with exhibitions that celebrate both the craft and craftsman associated with a specific craft, differs greatly from the example cited earlier in

this chapter, of museums such as the V&A that stage exhibitions displaying a number of quilts from their collection, all together, once in one hundred years.

### **The Stained Glass Museum –**

The Stained Glass Museum is located in the south triforium of Ely Cathedral. A triforium is 'a gallery or arcade above the arches of the nave, choir and transepts of a church' (oxforddictionaries.com). This location, overlooking the nave, results in two sides of the Museum's exhibition space being totally 'exposed' to the medieval Cathedral and its daily activities. Regardless of its age, Ely Cathedral is open all day, seven days a week as a working Cathedral, with religious services conducted three to four times a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year. While the Museum is accessible only from inside the Cathedral, the location of its entrance in an area just inside the Cathedral's front entrance means that Museum visitors can bypass the main areas of the Cathedral and visit only the Museum if so desired. The fact that the Museum visitor must enter the Cathedral to access the Museum helps to put objects in the Museum's collection into context before the visitor even enters the exhibition space. Once inside the Cathedral the Museum is accessed via a series of stone staircases that ultimately lead to the top of one of the Cathedral's towers. The Museum's exit off the staircase on the way to the top leads the visitor into a large room that serves as both the reception area and gift shop for the Museum. Entrance to the Museum's exhibition space is through a small doorway on the opposite side of the reception area.

### **The Exhibition Style-**

Due to the material characteristics of the glass panels and the methods required for their display, this Museum's exhibition is an object-based permanent display. While the collection consists of nearly one thousand panels, this exhibition space is a single 'room', resulting in an exhibition style indicative of Parr's 'choice and sparse' selection (1959, p. 275), with one hundred and fifteen pieces of glass or approximately ten percent of the collection on permanent display (Mills, 2004).

The Museum's triforium location, while perfectly appropriate for the Museum's subject matter, is nonetheless a structural component of a medieval building, rather than a purpose built museum space, and results in challenges for the Museum's exhibition. For instance, the Museum's display space is long and narrow, approximately 75x5 meters (246x16 ft.) with the only permanent wall being the stone outside wall of the Cathedral that runs the length of the exhibition space. However it is not possible to reconfigure the shape of this medieval space by tearing down or moving walls and thus presents the challenge of trying to display an exhibition in a space with essentially only one solid wall.

### **Interpretation Materials-**

This Museum starts its exhibition by offering two different informational videos, both of which run on a continuous loop. One, a four-minute demonstration video, silent but with subtitles, originally created for the V&A and entitled 'Making a Stained Glass Panel' (Victoria and Albert, 2013), is helpful for putting the craftsmanship involved in the production process into context before examining the displays. The other video, eight minutes in length and entitled 'Capturing Magic: The Making of Stained Glass' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017), is narrated in English without subtitles and tells the history of glass and stained glass, production methods and conservation. These initial sources of both historical and practical craft information are important for helping to create a frame of reference for the value of the objects on display within the context of intangible cultural heritage.

According to curator Jasmine Allen, the criteria for determining which pieces would form the permanent display were curatorial decisions based on chronology (Allen, 2017a). As a result, following the initial videos at the entrance, this object-based exhibition is presented in chronological order, broken down by period or movement, to tell the evolutionary narrative of the craft beginning with a panel of medieval glass and ending with a panel from 1994. All interpretive information is conveyed via lit 'wall' panels, object labels and an optional guidebook. The text panels act as section introductions for conveying historical information related to the specific artistic periods or

styles of stained glass. This chronological style of presentation, like that at the Clockmakers' Museum, reinforces the evolutionary narrative of the craft as evidenced by the details in the glass physically presented. Numbered labels accompany each of the display objects. The labels cite factual data of the piece and a brief description. For instance:

9. Peasant Figure  
c1340–9  
English Artist (East Anglia)  
From the Lady Chapel, Ely Cathedral

This image of a peasant is rare in medieval stained glass, which usually shows religious or wealthy figures.

Lent by the Dean & Chapter, 1991 (L1991–4)  
(The Stained Glass Museum, 2013)

However, The Stained Glass Museum Gallery Guide, available for a fee, offers far more detailed information. The text is in English only, and includes the historical text from the wall panels, as well as more detailed information additional to the individual exhibition labels next to the works. The displayed works are listed in the booklet in numerical order corresponding to the number assigned on its exhibition label and are accompanied by a colour photograph of the corresponding panel. While the use of numeric ordering in this Museum is similarly useful to that in The Fan Museum for facilitating object identification, unlike The Fan Museum it is also indicative of the chronological route through the exhibition.

All informational materials are written in an accessible language for non-specialists but do include specialist terminology. A brief explanation of specialist terms used is offered on its label, space permitting, but for those with a Gallery Guide a comprehensive glossary of stained glass related terms is included in the back. Like The Fan Museum's catalogues, this Museum encourages use of the Guide's glossary by italicising any stained glass term used in the body of the text for which a corresponding definition can be found



in the glossary. While this is a useful learning device for engaging those visitors who choose to purchase The Guide, engagement with non-specialist visitors who have chosen not to purchase The Guide is potentially more problematic, as there is no 'publicly available' glossary of terms like that made available in The Fan Museum.

This Museum is similar to the Clockmakers' in its new location in that neither museum is a stand-alone museum located in a structure dedicated specifically to its existence. Both are sited in locations that can draw internationally diverse visitors to their location for reasons unrelated to the museum's existence there. In the case of The Stained Glass Museum, 250,000 people visit the Cathedral annually (Ely Cathedral, 2017). As such, it is important to note that this is the only one of the five case study museums that offers separate foreign language guides in ring binders that, unlike their English equivalent, are free of charge. While not a comprehensive list they include French, German and Polish. The silent demonstration video, 'Making a Stained Glass Panel' is subtitled only in English. However, visually, without reading the subtitles, the process appears relatively straightforward with only a few visual representations possibly creating gaps in knowledge or understanding. Any gaps may or may not be resolved by the information supplied in the other, longer video without subtitles. In addition, the glossary in the back of the English language Guide does not include some of the terms used in the video subtitles so they are absent from the translated version in the foreign language guides as well. It could be problematic if the visitor requires a language guide other than those on offer and is reliant on the videos alone for understanding the production process.

While the Museum is a fully accredited museum it is not accessible by those with physical disabilities. However the museum tries to address this disparity by offering disabled visitors a 'virtual tour' via a touch screen located on the ground floor in the Cathedral. This 'solution' makes the Museum somewhat 'accessible' but the unique benefit derived from personal inspection of the real objects at close-range is not duplicated.

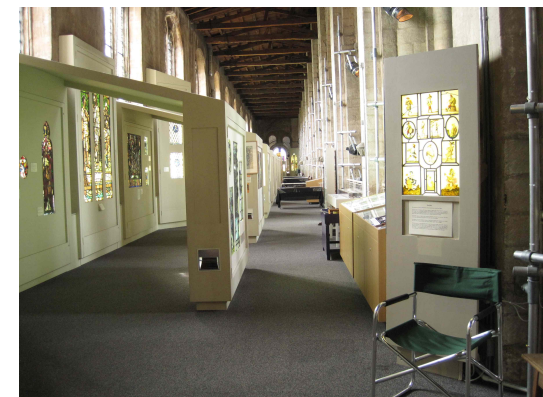
## **The Exhibition Design-**

The Stained Glass Museum and the Clockmakers' are both permanent displays and, as such, chose to use design professionals to create their displays. The Stained Glass Museum's permanent display, as it appears today, was the work of an external exhibition design firm in 2000. Similar to the Clockmakers' Museum, the work was only made possible through funds from external sources; in this case an anniversary appeal (Allen, 2018). But while Sir George White worked closely with the designer and was thus able to offer insights regarding the design process for The Clockmakers' Museum, Allen came to the Stained Glass Museum in 2012 so is unable to offer firsthand knowledge for this Museum.

In addition to the design challenges represented by the lack of solid walls, light boxes are required for proper display of the stained glass because stained glass windows were originally intended as vehicles of religious metaphor and narrative, which would be lost without light to 'illuminate' them, and thus need to be lit from behind to be 'understood' and appreciated. The windows are of various shapes and sizes, as they were either custom made for a specific location or are a fragment of a window. These varying characteristics of the individual objects create a situation whereby the 'one size fits all' of 'traditional' museum collection display cases used by other museums, such as The Clockmakers' and The Fan Museum, would not work here. For the collection in this Museum, what are effectively giant built-in 'light boxes' have been custom made for each window or panel. A series of these light boxes runs the length of the Museum's outside wall, as well as in a row down the middle of the Museum, thus forming two lengthy display 'corridors', much like the Cathedral's formal nave below. This corridor-like linearity is an efficient way to display a large number of panels in a very narrow space but also facilitates a clear visitor route through the exhibition that reinforces the linear chronological narrative.

The use of custom-built display 'boxes' solves a variety of display challenges for the Museum. In addition to those already mentioned, is the fact that the light boxes allow the visitor to examine the glass at close range. This

### 13. The Stained Glass Museum



level of visitor engagement is the most important benefit of this exhibition's display approach. The extensive detail in the panels is not nearly as evident when these types of panels are traditionally installed as a church or cathedral window at a much greater distance from the observer. Allowing closer inspection of the panels serves to reinforce the Museum's narrative emphasis on the evolution of the craft by drawing attention to the expertise of the craftsmen responsible for their creation, and instills a greater appreciation of the art form. As cited in the previous Quilt Museum case study, this method of open/unprotected display facilitates inspection at close-range, combined with the 'choice and sparse' display style, can also be seen to mimic art museum display methods, and offers a subliminal representation of this craft, and its intangible cultural heritage, as aesthetic works art.

The design approach utilised in this Museum, that of face-to-face interrogation of objects that are rarely physically accessible, is particularly effective in creating opportunities for visitor engagement and charting the evolution of this heritage craft. But I would also like to add there is another aspect to this exhibition that makes it a more immersive and engaging experience for the visitor; that of the Ely Cathedral environment itself. As the visitor moves through the museum there are constant visual reminders of being in a cathedral that reinforce the context of the displays for the visitor.

However, the subtlest and yet most powerful reinforcement here is sound. Yet, where *The Clockmakers'* required an enclosed space for the subtleties of its sounds to be appreciated, a condition that is now problematic in its new 'open' location, this Museum benefits from its open location. Ely Cathedral is a working cathedral and the Museum's open location means that, aside from the customary sound echoes usually associated with huge cathedral spaces like this one, the three to four religious services a day in the Cathedral create additional layers of sound, including the choir and the organ. For the visitor, the experience of viewing a stained glass window at close range while the live sound of the choir, whether practicing or during a service, resonates throughout the space, adds a dimension to this Museum experience that is atypical of most other museums.

## **In Closing -**

Much like the private collections of early museums that were eventually made public, the collections of the small craft museums represented in this thesis were established as a 'private' enterprise, in this case for documenting, preserving and celebrating a specific heritage craft rather than for the purposes of demonstrating wealth and prestige. Regardless of whether the collection was initiated by a craft-specific organisation, such as the medieval Clockmakers' Guild, or for personal edification like that of Hélène Alexander's fan collection, these craft-specific collections are intended to simultaneously act as a research and skills resource for specialists and practitioners, as well as a catalyst for perpetuating the intangible cultural heritage of the craft. While some of these collections remained exclusive longer than others, all were eventually made public through the establishment of the small museums we see today. This important shift from private sector 'members' type collections to craft-specific museums offering exhibitions and displays in the public realm, is a characteristic that this thesis argues is an important distinction between the collections of contemporary large museums and small craft-specific museums, as well as a critical factor in promoting public awareness of these heritage crafts; without which it becomes virtually impossible to perpetuate them.

Due to their encyclopaedic collections, large museums such as the V&A are able to bring millions of visitors through their doors by offering permanent displays and simultaneous multiple temporary exhibitions covering an equally encyclopaedic variety of subjects. In addition, temporary exhibitions in these large museums are planned years in advance. As a result, these organisations do not have any real impetus to offer, much less repeat, craft specific exhibitions, such as *Quilts: 1700-2010* and *Grinling Gibbons and the Art of Carving*, cited in the Introduction chapter, on any kind of ongoing basis. This thesis argues that this limited access for practitioners, specialists and enthusiasts, with a craft-specific interest that is either underrepresented in the exhibitions of large museums, or not at all, is a crucial distinction between the exhibition programmes at large museums and those at small craft museums like those in the case studies. For these interested parties in particular, the

ongoing displays, both permanent and temporary, at small craft-specific museums, offer important learning opportunities via regular access to multiple representative examples of their craft throughout the year, as well as the benefits of potential interaction with fellow practitioners. This is especially significant for the intangible cultural heritage of those heritage crafts that are underrepresented in large museums due to concerns associated with conservation and those that, according to the Heritage Craft Association's Radcliffe Red List, are at risk of extinction. The evidence I have presented indicates that one of the fundamental strengths of the small craft museum's contribution to intangible cultural heritage lies in its craft-specific focus and the important alternative access it affords practitioners and enthusiasts to the objects of their craft on a regular basis.

These small museums were created by enthusiasts and practitioners of their specific craft, neither of whom were or are museum professionals, but who continue to be involved in the day-to-day operations of these small organisations. The fact that these small independent museums are predominately run by practitioner volunteers, and with minimal budgetary options, means that responsibility for the design and installation of exhibitions, particularly those with rotating temporary exhibitions, tends to fall to museum volunteers and/or part-time staff, none of whom have professional training in exhibition design; the exception to this being that of The Clockmaker's Museum which has a professionally designed permanent display and no temporary exhibitions. This thesis argues that the direct involvement of craft practitioners in the creation of exhibitions and displays is rare in large museums and is an important aspect of the exhibition process that has the ability to differentiate small museums from their larger cousins. For example, Sir George White, The Clockmakers' part-time Keeper and a professionally trained clockmaker, was the person who, as cited earlier, decided 'how the objects would be set out, the way they would be divided up and the order in which they would be placed' (White, 2013a); and The Lace Guild Museum's Museum Committee that is responsible for all aspects of the Museum's temporary exhibitions, are all lace practitioners. However, while these

circumstances, and the subsequent 'make-do-and-mend' approach that they elicit, contribute to display and exhibition methods that may at times appear amateur or outmoded, the overriding concern for these small organisations is giving their craft peers and the wider public access to the objects of their specific craft within the limited time and resources available to them. This study argues that, as craft practitioners themselves, they know the needs of their audience. Hence, regardless of the degree of 'professionalism' to be found in the finished installation, the direct involvement of practitioners in the process has the potential added benefit of facilitating communication of inherently unique craft-specific skills and knowledge, both explicit and tacit that, to reiterate Richard Sennett, '...is perhaps beyond human verbal capacities to explain' (Sennett, 2008, p. 95).

The evidence I have presented indicates that the exhibitions created across all five case study museums share a common methodological commitment in that they all place similar importance on display methods that facilitate visual inspection to emphasise details of the craft; the watches displayed in the Clockmakers' with their backs open to expose the mechanism, fans and lace displayed with mirrors to facilitate viewing from various angles, and quilts and stained glass displayed openly that facilitates interrogation at close at range. I argue that this commitment to opportunities for visual interrogation of constituent components of the specific crafts has the ability to contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of the associated craft skills, and subsequent perpetuation of the craft; a process of knowledge acquisition I explore in more detail in the Learning chapter of this thesis.

In addition, I have presented evidence that the objects across all five craft museums are displayed in a manner that differs from those that visitors are used to seeing in large museums in that none of the objects are given star status within the exhibition, regardless of their relative value within their associated collection, but rather are presented as equal examples of skilled craftsmanship and intangible cultural heritage. This democratic display method means that, in many instances, all of the objects on display may be perceived to be of equal 'value'; a characteristic also upheld by medieval craft

guilds where completed objects were not signed by the individual craftsman but rather were considered a product of the workshop (Sennett, 2008, p. 68); much like the hand-crafted objects created within the workshops of contemporary luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Hermès (Wierzba, 2015).

This thematic chapter has argued that the wide variety of sizes and shapes, styles and methods, that are prevalent in the exhibitions and displays of small heritage craft museums in the sector, are all elements indicative of the unique characteristics of their individual crafts. However, while the small museums highlighted in the case studies herein are characteristically distinctive, they are united in their desire to offer exhibitions that celebrate and support their respective crafts, practitioners and enthusiasts, as well as hoping to inspire the public to join their ranks. To that end, regardless of the specific craft chosen, any level of participation incited by the exhibition and display in these small museums can only serve to help perpetuate these heritage crafts as intangible cultural heritage for the future.



## **Chapter 5:**

### **Learning**

The theme of this chapter is learning within the context of the five small single subject museums that are the focus of this thesis. While ‘learning’ and ‘education’ are both terms commonly used in the museum sector, I will begin by outlining why I have chosen to use ‘learning’, rather than ‘education’, as the subject of this chapter and to describe the activities associated with the heritage craft related museums in this thesis. I will then give a brief overview of the current viability of those heritage crafts, represented by these five museums, for the purposes of illustrating the position of these heritage craft specific museums within the wider context of heritage craft practice in the UK. Next, as the five small heritage craft related museums in this thesis have a direct connection with either a medieval or contemporary heritage craft guild that is intrinsic to the individual museum’s identity, I will present a brief history of medieval craft guilds. This explains how education is the basis for the medieval craft guilds’ existence, as well as the foundation for the existence of the contemporary heritage craft guilds. This will be followed by a discussion of the education-related theories and methodologies used within the museum sector that are relevant to the case study museums presented in this thesis, which will focus the reader’s attention on the five individual case study museums and the role of learning within each.

#### **Learning versus Education:**

The museum sector uses the terms ‘learning’ and ‘education’ in variable ways. While education has become the primary function of many museums in the sector in recent years, ‘museum education’ now implies not only attention paid to exhibition design and the related interpretive materials offered by the museum, but additional implications for the visitor’s museum ‘experience’. These include educational activities that can be formal structured programmes with clear educational outcomes attached to them (The British Museum, 2017; Museum of London, 2017; Natural History Museum, 2017; Science Museum,

2017), or organised activities and events that encourage visitor engagement and informal learning without prescribed outcomes. The type of small single subject museum represented by the five in this thesis place importance on education but differ from the large museums in how and why the learning process associated with their organisations is important, and in some cases, fundamental, to their agenda. But small museums do not always have the space or resources, either financial or human, to offer the variety of structured educational activities provided by large museums. In addition, in those small museums that do manage to offer some type of 'educational' activity, the person implementing that activity may or may not have any type of formal professional educational qualification from which to base their pedagogical methodology. Of the five small case study museums highlighted here, the 'structured' educational offerings range from non-existent in The Clockmakers' Museum, to those devised in The Stained Glass Museum by a dedicated Learning Officer who is professionally qualified. These five museums, and their exhibitions, are heritage craft-specific and therefore any educational remit is focused more specifically on informal learning methodologies associated with their particular heritage craft, and are typically offered by a craft practitioner. For the purposes of this paper, and due to the interchangeable and variable nature of the terms 'learning' and 'education' cited above, I will use the term 'learning' throughout this chapter as it is the preferred term in the UK.

### **Craft Practice in the UK:**

A brief overview of the historic connections between handcraft and guilds in the UK, followed by the current viability of the heritage crafts represented by these five heritage craft specific museums, is relevant here, as stated earlier, because these museums are heritage craft specific repositories of intangible cultural heritage in the UK. This perspective focuses on the intangible skills associated with making, rather than the subsequent finished tangible object, by placing greater emphasis on the heritage craft practitioner and the health of

specific practice-based skills acquired through knowledge transfer via craft-centred learning methodologies.

### **The Craft Guilds:**

The five heritage craft specific museums highlighted are associated to a greater or lesser degree with organisations known as 'guilds' which are either medieval or contemporary in origin and, in some cases, are intrinsic to the museum's specific history and identity. While learning is the cornerstone of both types of guild, it is important here to clarify why the inherent differences between the two guild types influences the ways in which these organisations deliver learning opportunities.

#### **Medieval Guild -**

One definition of this guild type states, '(esp in medieval Europe) an association of men sharing the same interests, such as merchants or artisans: formed for mutual aid and protection and to maintain craft standards ...' (Collins English Dictionary, 2016). This definition, with its reference to medieval Europe, is indicative of some of the guilds associated with museums presented in this thesis that trace their inception to the medieval time period; and in fact still exist in London today (unlike their European counterparts) with an active contemporary membership. It is important to note that this 'formal' dictionary definition recognises medieval craft guilds as groups of artisans with a common skill and interest in maintaining their craft.

Education and knowledge transfer, as a means of perpetuating the various crafts, was at the core of the medieval craft guild system. As such, craft guilds were based on a three-tiered hierarchical system of master, journeyman and apprentice (Richardson, 2008; Sennett, 2008; Epstein, 1998; Rosser, 1997). The fact that a craftsman's workshop was also his home didn't change the working structure of this 'business' hierarchy. The head of a workshop had the title of 'master' craftsman and parents paid master craftsmen to train their sons, a process that took from five to nine years with the definitive time to be stipulated in a contract (Richardson, 2008; Sennett, 2008, p. 58; Epstein, 1998, pp. 688-689). Mass formal education as we know it today did not exist and

apprenticeship offered the opportunity to learn a craft or skill. As such, the apprentices 'worked for room [and] board [throughout the course of their contract]... in exchange for a vocational education' (Richardson, 2008). In England, the craft guilds 'continued to be the main source of specialized training up to at least the third quarter of the eighteenth century' (Epstein, 1998, p. 698); by which time the first museums had begun to appear, with limited public access and no defined educational benefit. According to one estimate, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries roughly two-thirds of the English male labor force had at one time or another been apprenticed in one of the greater cities, primarily London' (Epstein, 1998, p. 707).

The guilds were at the height of their powers during the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. However 'by the end of the eighteenth century the Guilds' original functions were largely inoperable although they have never been legally rescinded' (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2013) and by the middle of the nineteenth century the medieval guild system was evolving into the first incarnations of our modern day labour unions. But while guilds thrived throughout Europe for centuries, the City of London companies...are unique in their survival, number and diversity' (LiveryCompanies.com, 2013). The present-day City Companies continue to support their 'communities' by 'promoting general and technical education through charitable means related to their respective crafts' (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2013). It is important to note here that, within the context of perpetuating their particular heritage craft in a modern day context, these medieval guilds now have a more indirect 'hands-off' structure of educational grants, bursaries and trusts that are intended to help students and craft professionals meet tuition costs at various established, formal education facilities rather than passing on the skills themselves within the guild structure. This approach can be attributed to the fact that some of these crafts require specific tools and facilities, as well as lengthy periods of study to acquire the necessary skills, a set of criteria that is problematic for teaching the craft in weekend workshops or short courses.

Due to the formal nature of the inception of these guilds' for business purposes, as well as to their lengthy histories, the medieval guilds in this category typically have more detailed and accessible records of their history than those of contemporary guilds defined in the second definition, discussed below. As such, historical information about these City Guilds can be found in various conventional academic sources.

### **Contemporary Guild –**

A second definition of 'guild' in the Oxford English Dictionary states that it is 'an association of people who do the same work or have the same interests or aims' (Soanes, 2006, p. 335). This definition could be used to broadly describe the medieval guilds previously discussed but it more accurately describes the other type of 'guild' associated with The Lace Guild and Quilters' Guild museums highlighted in this thesis. In this context these guilds are similar to their medieval counterparts in that they are a group of individuals who have formed a membership organisation that is focused on a particular craft or skill that they have a collective interest in perpetuating. But while members of this other type of guild also teach their craft to a professional standard, these guilds differ from their medieval cousins in that they are neither a formally chartered guild within the specific craft's profession nor did they ever adhere to the 'professional' hierarchy of the master, journeyman, apprentice model. Rather, these guilds are commonly thought of as 'amateur' organisations whose memberships consist of groups of people from diverse backgrounds and skill levels that are united by their passion for a particular craft. For these guilds and their members the guild acts as an educational and informational resource for its community of craft practitioners and those non-practitioners who have a keen interest in supporting the craft. Within the context of perpetuating their particular heritage craft, these contemporary guilds differ from their medieval counterparts in their organisational approaches. Like the medieval guilds, they too offer various bursaries to help their student and craft practitioner members meet outside costs for developing their skills, but in contrast to the medieval guilds, these contemporary guilds take it upon themselves to offer classes, training and

other craft related activities by their guild members, typically volunteers, in informal settings, to any interested parties regardless of age or skill level. How this is accomplished differs from guild to guild and these differences are discussed, where relevant, in the case studies. It is interesting to note that the contemporary guilds in this thesis that have a 'grass-roots' approach to perpetuating their heritage craft are also crafts listed as 'currently viable' on The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts (Heritage Crafts Association, 2017a).

Due to the informal nature of the origins of the guilds in this category, and their more contemporary context, historical details about the individual guilds tend to be minimal at best and are generally sourced from the guilds themselves rather than from formal academic sources.

### **Intangible Cultural Heritage -**

As outlined above, both medieval and contemporary guilds have their roots in specific crafts or skills. For these organisations their craft is intrinsic to their identity and their members passion for celebrating and perpetuating their craft. All of the heritage crafts associated with the small museums in this thesis were being practiced long before the Industrial Revolution, regardless of whether or not the practitioners chose to form a medieval craft guild. As handcrafts, all of them were affected to a greater or lesser extent by the dramatic changes engendered by that revolution. Some were lost, along with the medieval guild traditions that demanded excellent workmanship from their craftsman. 'The artisans and the art industries thus suffered the simultaneous loss ... of their own professional organs of control, and of a solid esthetic education' (Kielland, 1963, pp. 317-318). These losses then prompted the establishment of museums of industrial design in the mid-nineteenth century that were intended to, among other things, 'restore the artisan's lost contact with the traditions of his craft. ... Publications and schools sponsored by the new museums were meant to replace the solid educational functions abandoned by the guilds (Kielland, 1963, pp. 318). But while these museums had changed the focus of their mission statement by the end of the first quarter of the

twentieth century, it was felt that ‘there is also a great need to preserve and give modern expression to national artistic traditions that are not always consciously recognized even by their own practitioners’ (Kielland, 1963, pp. 320). This statement has significance because it was originally published in 1930 and reflects an early comprehension of the importance of craft as intangible cultural heritage. Craft guilds, regardless of whether they are medieval or contemporary in origin, have an innate association with their craft and its existence as intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO’s *Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* defines intangible cultural heritage (also known as ‘living heritage’) as,

The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted by communities from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (UNESCO, 2015b)

A key point here is that this definition speaks to both types of guild. For contemporary members of a medieval guild, and their associated museum, this definition recognises not only the historical significance of their craft but also the educational practices that formed the cornerstone for the guilds’ existence. For members of a contemporary guild, and their associated museum, this definition recognises not only the ‘informal’ club-like origins of their guild to celebrate their heritage craft but also respects and values the ‘amateur hobbyist’ nature of their educational activities as a community of practitioners collectively trying to perpetuate their craft.

UNESCO goes on to state that ‘the importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next’ (UNESCO, 2015a). This thesis, in keeping with UNESCO’s emphasis

specifically on 'knowledge and skills', is focused on the craft skills represented by five small case study museums, and how these craft museums support the viability of their associated crafts. UNESCO also states that the process of knowledge transfer for these forms of cultural heritage can happen through a variety of methodologies inclusive of 'formal and non-formal education' with the intent of 'safeguarding' the heritage (2015a). This distinction is crucial because here UNESCO is placing value on people and their intangible knowledge and skill, regardless of whether they acquired their skill through formal or informal means. It places an equal value on the amateur and the professional as standard bearers of the craft.

### **Current State of Heritage Craft in the UK -**

In May of 2017 The Heritage Craft Association (HCA), cited earlier in this paper as 'the advocacy body for traditional heritage crafts' in the UK (Heritage Craft Association, 2015), published its Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts which, as previously cited in the Literature Review chapter of this thesis, states that, 'Heritage crafts currently fall in the gap between the Government agencies for arts and heritage, which focus respectively on contemporary crafts and tangible heritage (historic buildings, monuments and museum collections)' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 4). From this perspective, the restrictive position of cultural 'misfit' has serious consequences for traditional heritage craft, heritage craft practitioners and the intangible heritage they represent. It is important here to understand that heritage crafts in the UK do not receive any public funding while contemporary arts in the UK receive government support through ACE (Heritage Craft Association, 2017b, p. 3). In addition, until such time as the UK decides to sign the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, heritage craft will continue to be ineligible for the 'significant government funding' that would be necessitated by the UK's recognition of heritage craft as intangible cultural heritage (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 5). Even more importantly, the financial ramifications of this lack of formal governmental recognition forces the communities of heritage craft practitioners, both professional and amateur,



to find a means of keeping their particular intangible heritage craft skill practices alive without access to the same avenues of funding support available to contemporary craft practitioners and the heritage sector.

The Radcliffe Red List report states that its primary aim ‘was to assess the current viability of traditional heritage crafts in the UK and identify those crafts which are most at risk of disappearing (i.e. no longer practiced)’ (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 3). For the purposes of conducting the research for the report, the HCA defined ‘heritage craft’ as ‘a practice which employs manual dexterity and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, design and techniques, and which has been practiced for two or more successive generations’ (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 3). The report goes on to refine the definition by stating that:

‘this research focuses on craft practices which are taking place in the UK at the present time, including those crafts which have originated outside the UK. Over 165 crafts are covered by this research’ (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 3).

The report divides these crafts into four ‘categories of risk’ that are classified as ‘extinct’, ‘critically endangered’, ‘endangered’ and ‘currently viable’.

All five of the heritage crafts represented by museums highlighted in this thesis can be found in the Radcliffe Red List report:

- fan making, as represented by The Fan Museum, is ‘critically endangered’
- clock and watch making, as represented by The Clockmakers’ Museum is ‘endangered’
- lace making, quilting and stained glass, as represented by the Lace Guild Museum, The Quilt Museum and The Stained Glass Museum respectively, are ‘currently viable’ (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

This means that as fan making is ‘critically endangered’ it is seriously at risk of becoming ‘extinct’ as a practice in the UK. In addition, the HCA has published an additional booklet, confusingly also titled ‘The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts’ (Heritage Craft Association, 2017b), which highlights in more detail those crafts specifically on the ‘critically endangered’ list. Page 19 of this booklet is dedicated to fan making. It states that ‘there is one skilled fan

maker in the UK...one trainee...and one fan conservator' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017b). The page then directs the reader to both The Fan Museum and The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers (the craft's medieval Guild located in London) for further information, and includes contact information for both (Heritage Craft Association, 2017b, p. 19). This is significant because it establishes a direct connection between the craft, The Fan Museum and the Guild by identifying both organisations as representatives of this dying craft in the UK and, in turn, serves to affirm these museums as heritage craft specific repositories of the UK's intangible cultural heritage.

As an 'endangered' craft, clock and watch making is considered by the Red List criteria to 'have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation, but ... there are serious concerns about their ongoing viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6). While lace making, quilting and stained glass are classified as 'currently viable', meaning they are 'in a healthy state and have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation', the report also states that this classification 'does not mean that the craft is risk-free or without issues affecting its future sustainability/viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

It is important to note that 'issues affecting viability of heritage crafts', as cited by the heritage craft communities participating in the research for the report, included an ageing craft practitioner base, coupled with limited opportunities for training new practitioners, and an internal loss of craft skills for a variety of reasons specific to each craft (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 12). These issues combine to form, what could be considered, a 'perfect storm' of challenges faced by practitioners trying to perpetuate the craft skills inherent to their specific craft and raises serious concerns for the viability of heritage crafts in this country. This positions the heritage craft museums in this thesis as strongholds for their particular craft, offering 'learning opportunities' via their communities of heritage craft practitioners and/or associated craft Guild organisations in an effort to support perpetuation of their individual crafts.

Museum supported craft practice is not a new concept. In fact Hooper-Greenhill cites an early example of craft being practiced specifically for the 'museum' itself:

The *Kunstammer* [cabinet of curiosities] of the Elector Augustus in Dresden in the seventeenth century was 'not a museum in the sense of an exclusive exhibition: it was a working collection', with places to work, particularly at technical processes, within the *Kunstammer*. ... It is further recorded that tools, books, and materials were loaned from the *Kunstammer* to craftsman who were producing items for the collection. (1992, p. 22, single quotes in the original)

It is important to note that this example cites craftsmen participating in the 'museum as workshop' and that 'the collection' was as much an exhibition/record of the skills of the craftsmen as it was about the resulting objects. It should also be noted that craftsmen created items for the collection. In this context this *Kunstammer* was very similar to the contemporary small heritage craft museums in this thesis that offer workshops at the museum and display the work of their members in their exhibitions. In her 2010 book, *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon defines a 'participatory cultural institution' as a 'place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content' (p. ii). While the majority of the 'techniques' she discusses 'for cultural institutions to invite visitor participation' are centred on larger museums, for the purposes of the five case study museums in this thesis, there is a parallel that can be drawn with her definition and its emphasis on the concept of direct engagement with a museum's visitors. Where the proposed concepts in Simon's book, and indeed much of the sector literature, fall short, when applied to small craft museums, is that these small museums were created for the express purpose of creating greater awareness of, and accessibility to, their specific heritage craft as a means of perpetuating the craft. While these museums would like to reach as wide an audience as possible to realize these goals, the individual crafts these small museums represent, with their networks of craft guild members and global practitioners, presupposes an established community of interested and engaged visitors with

its inherent connection to each museum's subject. As such, these craft-related museums are not faced with trying to find a means with which to engage visitors in the same types of ways necessitated by broader subject collections in other museums. However, it is important to point out that the learning opportunities associated with these small heritage craft museums have a direct correlation to the active participation of each craft's guild members and volunteer practitioner community, and thus offer opportunities to 'create, share and connect' as Simon proposes (2010), precisely because of their pre-existing connection to the museum's subject matter.

Within the context of the small heritage craft-related museums highlighted in this thesis, it is important at this point to make a slight shift in perspective for the purposes of considering Simon's participation definition from a craft person's perspective, and consider its impact on the learning associated with participation in these museums. Peter Korn is a master craftsman, educator and author. In his 2013 book, *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters*, he proposes three contexts for participation in a creative field: what he calls 'first-, second- and third-person voices':

- You participate in the first-person when you explore new ideas for making things yourself
- You participate in the second-person when you interact with the ideas of others through a direct response to the objects they have created
- You participate in the third-person when you engage with someone's creation at a remove, through language and images, as when listening to someone explain a technique on television, seeing a craft object in a magazine, or reading about a craftsman in a book. (p. 147)

Here Korn further refines Simon's *acts* of participation to incorporate *creative purpose*. Simon's visitors participate in the process as a means of making a creative connection with the institution for meaningful engagement. Korn's craft visitors find meaningful engagement with the creative process through various modes of participation in the craft; participation which is then further facilitated by the museum. Small craft museums offer various pathways of

participation and learning opportunities depending on the visitor's level of expertise and the 'voice' they use in which to participate.

### **Teaching and Learning:**

A perceptual shift occurred in large museums during the early twentieth century away from the previous notion that an object's ability to inform was merely by virtue of its intrinsic value. This transition was based on the supposition that the introduction of specific information and details about an object by the museum would provide a more straightforward learning opportunity for the uninitiated (McClellan, 2008; Anderson, 2004; Hein, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Hein, 1998). In the latter half of the twentieth century there was a second shift in educational thinking that moved away from passive presentation/display of objects for consideration to actively creating learning opportunities for visitors; a paradigm shift that divided sentiment amongst museum professionals, as evidenced by the debate in sector literature as far back as the 1950's (Anderson, 2004; Bunning, 1974; Parr, 1963; Hofmann and Johnson, 1962; Parr, 1962a; Colbert, 1961a; Hellmann, 1958; Hunter, 1958; Rosenbauer, 1958). While there was general agreement that the educational process could and did take place in these large museums, there was an active debate as to the methodology of the process and the role of the museum in facilitating that methodology. This is important because these debates on the responsibilities of the traditionally large museums were occurring during the same decades that saw unprecedented growth in the number of small independent museums appearing outside the traditional public sector. This means that while the large museums were busy trying to redefine themselves and their mission statement, individuals in the private sector were busy opening small museums to share their respective hobbies/collections, and their associated knowledge, with the public without bureaucratic agendas and guidelines. 'Hundreds of independent museums in the UK were created ... in a wave of local enthusiasm and determination by spirited individuals to save and communicate important aspects of Britain's heritage' (Middleton, 1990, p. 7). In this way, learning in museums had

expanded outside the remit of the large public sector museums and become part of a 'grass-roots' movement in the private sector.

By the end of the twentieth century the concept of education in large museums had continued to evolve through further iterations of proposed purpose and function (Spock, 2006; Dierking, Falk and Ellenbogen, 2005; Anderson, 2004; Pekarik, 2003; Roberts, 2001; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Roberts, 1997a; Beer, 1990). Yet the activities that formed the basis of these proposed new paradigms saw museum functions continue to be inward facing, focused on the institution rather than the visiting public. However by 2000 Hilde Hein had, in her book entitled *The Museum in Transition*, proposed that 'museums [had] reinvented themselves as institutions whose foremost function is "public service" defined as education' (p. 143). Evidence for Hein's assertion can be seen in museums in the twenty-first century offering themselves as learning environments inclusive of activities that compliment the UK's National Curriculum for schools, and the fact that recent changes to the curriculum have seen school group visits to museums drop (Harris, 2014a, p.7).

Other research in recent years has built on earlier findings by underscoring the wide variety of ways in which learning occurs when applied in museums (Chatterjee, 2008; Falk, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill, 2004; Rounds, 2004; Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1991; Knowles, 1990; Kolb, 1981). As Falk states, 'When using the term "learning," we should never fall into the trap of thinking that it refers only to the internalization of facts and concepts. This is true of learning in general, and learning from museums in particular' (2006, p. 152).

The five case study museums in this thesis offer learning opportunities that employ various educational theories and methodologies to varying degrees, to celebrate and/or perpetuate their specific heritage crafts. The following section will give a brief overview of some of the theories and methodologies for learning that are most relevant to this study and begin by discussing those that are more 'physical' in nature such as hands-on and object-based learning, followed by a discussion of those that are more 'cognitive' in nature such as situated learning. The overview will be followed with an explanation of how

they apply to learning experiences within the case study museums. While I readily acknowledge that the theories and methodologies I have chosen to discuss here can, and do, occur as complementary overlapping approaches when applied in situ, a brief overview of each as individual tenets at the outset will help to facilitate an understanding of their various combined applications in the individual case study museums. It is also important to note that one of the primary reasons these theories and methodologies are relevant to the heritage craft museums in this thesis is their overarching age-inclusive nature. As the practitioner communities associated with these museums are primarily adults, many of the pedagogical learning modalities are not necessarily applicable in these instances.

Dr. Malcolm Knowles, an authority in the field of adult education (1990, 1984, 1970) states that there are distinctions between child and adult learners, in part because ‘adults are almost always voluntary learners [who will] simply disappear from learning experiences that don’t satisfy them’ (1970, p. 54). Knowles proposes three types of adult learner: ‘goal-oriented’ learners who have educational objectives, ‘activity-oriented’ learners who seek participatory learning activities primarily for the purposes of social interaction, and ‘learning oriented’ learners ‘who seek knowledge for its own sake’ (1990, pp. 46-47); all of which conflict with standard formal modes of delivering curriculum-based pedagogical education. I will return to some of Knowles concepts on adult learning in a separate section following the brief overview of learning theories and methodologies.

### **Objects and touch...**

Object-based learning entails the use of an object in a learning environment for active, focused exploration. Within the informal learning environment of a museum this means that any item from the museum’s collection can be considered as an object for interrogation and meaning making (Chatterjee, Hannan and Thomson, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Paris, 2002). But while object-based learning requires, by definition, a specific object of focus, and can involve a variety of senses, it does not rely on tactile, active, object-handling activities for learning to occur. Hands-on learning is

however, as the term implies, learning that is associated with direct physical contact with an object. Here, a variety of senses are still involved in facilitating learning but the learning experience is predicated solely on active touch and handling of an object (Chatterjee, 2008b; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Pye, 2007a; Trewinnard-Boyle and Tabassi, 2007). However, where object-based learning can be applied to almost any object in a museum's collection, the use of hands-on learning within the museum context has far more limited applications for active touch. This is due, in part, to curatorial concerns pertaining to access to original objects in the collection and has resulted in subsequent debates within the sector regarding the viability of separate collections for the purposes of allowing object handling to occur on a regular basis (Willcocks, 2015, p. 47; Dudley, 2010; Candlin, 2008; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Hein, 2007; Van Balgooy, 1990). However, regardless of the limitations, the haptic nature of hands-on learning experiences allow a level of direct engagement with objects in museum collections in a way that cognitive-based engagement with exhibitions do not. Within the context of craft and craft practitioners, the materials inherent in their particular craft, be they textiles; glass; lead; metal clock gears; thread; needles; bobbins; and so on, are 'objects' with 'educational potential' (Morrison, 2015, p. 207) in their own right as well as crucial mechanisms for the evolving process of learning their particular craft.

Much has been written in recent years regarding continuing research on these two object-based educational approaches when applied in museums as educational environments (Chatterjee and Hannan, 2015; Chatterjee and Duhs, 2010; Chatterjee, 2008; Pye, 2007; Paris, 2002). While these two learning methodologies are complementary, and would seem to be interdependent from the perspective that 'hands-on' has to be object-based and 'object-based' is more comprehensive when facilitated by touch, within the learning environment of museums they can also be mutually exclusive, as in the case of works of art where touch is prohibited, and 'virtual' handling of objects through new virtual reality technology that seeks to replicate the sensation of touch (Zimmer, Jeffries and Srinivasan, 2008; Geary, 2007;



Prytherch and Jefsoutine, 2007). However, regardless of the medium, both 'object-based' and 'hands-on' modalities incorporate objects in the learning process for active engagement, which encourages not only multisensory participation but also encompasses various cognitive learning theories. 'Hands-on' and 'object-based' learning are both relevant and important learning modalities as associated with heritage craft museums for interrelated reasons.

Learners and practitioners can combine various aspects of their creative practice and museum experience to facilitate both explicit and tacit knowledge about their craft and its heritage (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Durrance, 1998). This can be achieved through active engagement with the objects/tools of their specific handcraft, opportunities to observe and interrogate the displayed work of other practitioners and social interaction with other craft practitioners and enthusiasts. These informal learning activities and experiences exemplify the interactive and experiential aspects of 'cognitive' theories such as Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (1993), Hein's Constructivist Theory (1998), Kolb's Experiential Learning (1981), McCarthy's Learning Styles (1990), as well as Falk/Dierking (2000) and Lave/Wenger's (1991) socially based situated learning.

Tacit knowledge, as mentioned above, is also known as non-declarative memory or procedural memory (Cutler, 2010, no pagination) and has been described in general terms as something that 'you know how to do ... so well that you don't actually have to *know* how to do [it]; you just do [it]' (Durrance, 1998, p. 24, italics in the original), such as driving a car or riding a bicycle (Cutler, 2010; Durrance, 1998, p. 24). And Cutler adds that, 'long-term learning, habit and behaviour depend on non-declarative memory [tacit knowledge] and are what we rely on once our formal learning has finished' (2010). For instance, within the context of handcraft and handcraft practitioners, tacit knowledge is at work when a knitter is knitting and watching television simultaneously or the wood carver is able to reach out blindly and immediately 'confirm' the identity of exactly the desired tool from a selection of 130 tools on his workbench merely 'by its heft and balance and

the feel of its handle and shaft. No need to look' (Esterly, 2015, p. 2). Here tacit knowledge is acquired by the same methodology of repetitive 'hands-on' practice as when driving a car or riding a bicycle but through the repetitive use of the tools of the specific handcraft during the more 'formal' procedural activity of continued craft practice.

### **Cognition -**

When considering the cognitive aspects of the learning process, it is now generally understood that a number of factors, in combination and specific to the individual, will contribute to the acquisition of knowledge (Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1998; Kolb, 1981; McCarthy, 1990). The cognitive learning theories just mentioned above explore some of these individual differences and, regardless of the specific theory, share a common approach that we as individuals perceive, process and communicate information differently, which in turn, directly affects how we learn and acquire knowledge. The inclusive nature of these theories makes them applicable across all aspects of education and learning.

The theories of David Kolb (1981), Bernice McCarthy (1990) and Howard Gardner (1993) elucidate various unconscious or natural learning systems that individuals instinctively employ for acquiring and processing information. Kolb's theory of experiential learning proposes a four stage learning cycle applicable to all learners (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation) as well as four learning styles used for engaging in a variety of tasks (McLeod, 2013; Kolb, 1981). McCarthy built on Kolb's theoretical foundations to create the 4MAT System, a learner-focused system based on four similar, yet refined, versions of Kolb's learning styles (1990). Howard Gardner's theory also proposes a set of unconscious or natural learning systems in the form of what he calls multiple intelligences or 'human intellectual potentials' (1993, p. 278) rather than just one, overarching, 'flexible' intelligence (1993, p. xii). In this theory individuals employ these various multiple intelligences to greater or lesser degree for information gathering and learning. Gardner's eight intelligences, including 'musical', 'spatial' and 'bodily-kinesthetic', act as information receptors and

processors rather than innate methodologies, like those of Kolb and McCarthy's learning 'styles' that individuals use for 'approaching a range of tasks' (Edutopia, 2016, no pagination). Everyone has varying aptitude levels of all eight intelligences 'and all learning experiences do not have to relate to a person's strongest area of intelligence' (Edutopia, 2016, no pagination; Gardner, 1993, p. 278).

Regardless of which combination of learning style and intelligence an individual employs for a given learning experience, George Hein's learner-based constructivist theory postulates that 'there is no such thing as knowledge "out there" independent of the knower' (1991, p. 2), but rather that individual learners construct knowledge and meaning for themselves (both individually and socially) as they learn (1998; 1991). The constructivist theory views learning as a social activity that is contextual in nature and influenced by the language used in the process (1991, pp. 5-6). While this theory is applicable in both formal and informal educational contexts, within the context of museums, Hein's theory emphasises the importance of activities that are both cognitively and haptically engaging, citing that 'all hands-on activities must also pass the test of being minds-on – they must provide something to think about as well as something to touch' (1991, p. 8). Of note in this theory is Hein's acknowledgement of the social, contextual and linguistic aspects of learning for constructing knowledge and meaning regardless of the educational context.

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger expand on this concept by proposing that all learning activities are situated and by focusing specifically on the relationship between social context and learning (1991). In their theory of legitimate peripheral participation, or situated learning, a learning activity is not an 'independently reifiable process that just happen[s] to be located somewhere' but rather 'engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent' (1991, p. 35). Lave and Wenger view legitimate peripheral participation, through co-participation situated in communities of practice, as an interactive learning process between participants rather than a structure in which learning takes place; in other words, a way of engaging

rather than a structure for engagement. They stress that this emphasis on the processes of learning through co-participation in communities of practice is not an educational methodology or technique but an approach to understanding learning. They add that this type of learning through participation occurs regardless of the educational modality employed for learning or whether or not there is any premeditated educational intent (1991, p. 40). It is important to note that Lave and Wenger cite various examples from both the more 'formal' medieval guild apprenticeship/master learning model, as well as the more 'informal' model of the contemporary guilds for which they use the terms 'newcomer' and 'old-timer', as representative of learning through co-participation in communities of practice (1991, pp. 56-57). Lave and Wenger view the participants in both models as co-learners in the process, which, in turn, affects the evolution of the craft/skill and its larger community of practitioners. In addition, Lave and Wenger cite the importance of language in these relationships within communities of practice and make a distinction between terms they call 'talking within' and 'talking about' a practice (1991, p. 107). The first, 'talking within' a practice, demonstrates one's legitimacy as a full member in the community and includes use of the 'proper' terminologies and phrasing commonly used by participants within a specific community of practice. The second is the use of language to share knowledge via conversations and stories associated with the practice. Both types of language can be found in the heritage craft museums in this thesis; whether it is the language used in the interpretation materials, demonstrations or classes that reflect a level of mastery of the specific craft or the informal craft-related conversations that occur between volunteers and visitors.

### **Adult Learning -**

Lave and Wenger's concept of 'newcomers' and 'old-timers' can be applied to learners of any age and potentially any activity, including that of museum visitor. Adult education authority Dr. Malcolm Knowles, cited earlier, proposes that, regardless of which type of adult learner we are discussing ('goal', 'activity' or 'learning' oriented [1990, pp. 46-47]), a common

denominator is an inherent depth of life experience and its role in the adult learning experience. Knowles states,

Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths. By virtue of simply having lived longer, they have accumulated more experience than they had as youths. But they also have had a different kind of experience. ... This difference in quantity and quality of experience has several consequences for adult education.' (1990, p. 59)

Knowles proffers that, by virtue of their extensive catalogue of experiences, the individual members of any group of adults have the ability to offer a more diverse range of differences to their learning groups than the members within groups of young learners (1990, p. 59). This adult heterogeneity creates a situation whereby, as Knowles puts it, 'for many kinds of learning the richest resources for learning reside in the adult learners themselves' (1990, p. 59). Utilising this pool of experience to create 'peer-helping activities', or communities of practice, draws on experiential learning techniques (Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981) and exemplifies Lave and Wenger's newcomers and old-timers model (1991, pp. 56-57). In addition, utilising the experience of the learners within these peer-based communities of practice offers the opportunity for the subtle shaping and reinforcement of self-identity. Knowles proposes that 'young children derive their self-identity from external definers... [whereas] adults define themselves by the experiences they have had' (1990, p. 60). As a result, to ignore or reject an adult's experience is perceived by the individual as a personal rejection (1990, p. 60). Hence, peer-based communities of practice provide an acknowledgement of the 'value' of an individual's personal experiences/identity.

The characteristics of adult learners discussed in this section are important contributing factors in a discussion of the heritage craft museums highlighted in this thesis. Regardless of whether it is a discussion of the experience of the specific communities of heritage craft practitioners, museum volunteers, guild members or adult museum visitors, each has a unique life experience from

which to base their learning but also from which to contribute to the learning environment of the museum (Hein, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Knowles, 1990; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981).

The case studies that follow will analyse how the various components discussed in this chapter combine to form learning experiences within the museums created by their specific communities of practice.

## **Case Studies:**

### **The Clockmakers' Museum –**

Originally located in a single room in the City of London's Guildhall, the Clockmakers' chose to keep the same configuration, appearance and display style in its recent move to the Science Museum in South Kensington. As a result, within the context of education and learning, it still exhibits its collection as a permanent exhibition, using a didactic learning approach in its object-based chronological display style. This includes glass display cases, text panels and individual object labels with no additional interpretation materials available for visitors aside from an informational video about British Guild member George Daniels, cited by the Guild as 'the greatest watchmaker of the twentieth century'. Unlike the other case study museums, The Clockmakers' has no handling collection, nor the facilities or 'staff' to facilitate an object-based hands-on learning programme (Chatterjee, 2008b; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Pye, 2007a; Trewinnard-Boyle and Tabassi, 2007). As a result, The Clockmakers' learning opportunities are most conducive to learners who favour visual, cognitive and linguistic learning styles and intelligences (Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981).

There are essentially no temporary exhibitions, with the exception of two display cases to be mentioned later. There are no Clockmakers' staff or volunteers available to answer questions about the objects on display or to personalise the visitor experience in any way. This Museum, like the others in these case studies, is hands-off, with 'no-touching' symbols located throughout

the Museum. But, unlike the other four case study museums, neither the Clockmakers' Museum nor the Science Museum has, as yet, initiated any type of proactive, educational learning programmes or activities that would include participatory, hands-on, or otherwise creative experiences for organised groups or interested casual visitors. In addition, the Clockmakers' Museum did not have any learning provision in place in its previous Guildhall location nor has it ever had its own museum building or facilities outside of the four walls of its own exhibition space in which to conduct learning activities, like those at The Fan Museum for instance. This is even more apparent since its recent move to the Science Museum. Within this context, the Clockmakers' exemplifies the historically passive approach to visitor engagement and learning prevalent in museums during the middle of the twentieth century mentioned earlier in this chapter (Anderson, 2004; Bunning, 1974; Parr, 1963; Hofmann and Johnson, 1962; Parr, 1962a; Colbert, 1961a; Hellmann, 1958; Hunter, 1958; Rosenbauer, 1958).

The didactic approach to learning in this Museum results in either self-directed learning by the casual visitor, regardless of learning style, or learning that is initiated and predetermined by an external source directing the learning experience within the environment of the Museum; for example an outside educator who creates a learning plan in advance for use specifically in the Clockmakers' by his/her group. However it is important to note here that this entirely self-directed methodology may be changing. While the Guild was not in a position to offer structured educational activities in its Guildhall location, its new home in the Science Museum affords it the opportunity to explore educational options facilitated by the Science Museum's in-house Education Team. For instance the Clockmakers' has supplied the Science Museum with materials that will allow the Clockmakers' Museum to be included in 'overall' guided tours of the Science Museum given by '[the Science Museum's] specialist guides' (Nye, 2017a). It should be pointed out here that, within the context of museum proffered learning opportunities, The Clockmakers' is in an unusual position. This museum exists as an independent 'museum within a museum', meaning that the move to the Science Museum did not change the

organisational circumstances of The Clockmakers' itself. For instance, there continues to be no structured educational offering by The Clockmakers' in the Science Museum. As a result, the addition of The Clockmakers' to the Science Museum's guided tours, while useful for conveying information about The Clockmakers', and another useful option for cognitive, linguistic style learners, means it will be conducted by individuals with no connection to The Clockmakers' Museum or Guild, thus making it the only museum of the five case study museums to relinquish organisational responsibility for delivering a portion of its educational offerings to a third party communicator.

In addition, the Clockmakers' 'have started exploratory talks [with the Science Museum's Education Team] about what we can do to support broader educational goals' (Nye, 2017a). James Nye is the Chairman of the Company's Collection Committee and, as such, is responsible for managing the collection and the Museum. According to Nye, considerations include trialing 'some sort of practical demonstration' during one of the Lates before the end of 2017 that will be geared 'for educated adults' (2017a), and use of the Science Museum's new lecture theatre (2017a). While the Lates demonstration option would see The Clockmakers' taking responsibility for a live educational offering similar to that of The Lace Guild Museum's in-gallery live lace making demonstrations, realisation of this educational opportunity had yet to happen by the spring of 2018.

All of the above mentioned educational initiatives, made possible by the Clockmakers' new home, are being introduced slowly with the purpose of exploring how the Clockmakers' can best retain its independence yet find its niche within the Science Museum's overall educational offering. To that end, it would seem that the Science Museum has a strategy in place that will include The Clockmakers' Museum in a new overarching narrative for the second floor galleries adjacent to the Clockmakers' gallery. According to Nye, the Science Museum will be opening its new 'London Science City: 1600-1800' gallery adjacent to the Clockmakers' in 2019 and [The Clockmakers'] understand the Science Museum's 'vision' to be that 'it should be a space that mainly targets "educated adults"' (2017a, quotes in the original). Nye goes on to state that,



‘we are convinced we can contribute to an educational drive, but how best to do so is still being worked through’ (2017a).

From the examples cited above it can be understood that, due to its previous location and circumstances, with its approximately ten thousand visitors per year (The Clockmaker, 2012; 2013), The Clockmakers’ Museum has no precedent for onsite Museum-based learning initiatives, much less any that would fit with the Science Museum’s child/family friendly ethos. As a result, while The Clockmakers’ is grateful for the circumstances that have allowed it to continue as a viable museum, it is now faced with the challenge of exploring different learning initiatives for engaging the more than three million annual visitors to the Science Museum (Science Museum, 2018) as well as a viable method of implementation within the resources available to The Clockmakers’ and its Guild.

While the Clockmakers’ Guild has created a predominately didactic learning approach that is a text driven, self-directed, passive learning experience in the Museum, the Company does, in keeping with its medieval origins and the other guilds in this thesis, include education in its remit. As part of that remit, while there is no handling collection, items in the Museum collection can be made available for physical examination for the purposes of research and any application to see an object must first be submitted to The Keeper (curator) in the Clockmakers’ Company, rather than to anyone in the Science Museum. By allowing for the possible opportunity to inspect an object from the collection, the Clockmakers’ is offering its Guild members, practitioner community and enthusiasts an opportunity to engage with and interrogate objects associated with this heritage craft.

The educational remit inherent in its historical medieval origins extends to other education-related activities as well. As Nye states, ‘the Clockmakers’ has a strong charitable interest in education and the furtherance of the trade’ (2017a). To this end, the Clockmakers’ offers financial assistance, bursaries and awards for horological training (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2017). In addition, they provide ‘essential equipment for student use’ in informal educational settings and a research/personal development

award for continuing education for 'professional clockmakers and watchmakers' as well as 'scientists researching the measurement of time or a closely related project' (The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, 2017). These activities and incentives offered by the Guild act as an 'indirect' means of perpetuating their heritage craft; indirect by virtue of offering financial support and equipment for 'external' learning experiences rather than through active participation by its members in offering classes, workshops and other forms of knowledge transfer like those offered in the other case study museums. This difference can be explained by the complex technical nature of the clock and watch making craft itself, which requires a multiple technical skills set in order to be a proficient practitioner.

Alternatively, the Guild uses two of the Museum's display cases to highlight the work of contemporary British craftsmen and women. The text panel in the first case, entitled '21<sup>st</sup> Century Revival: British Clock and Watchmaking Today and Tomorrow' (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2017), states:

The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers has sought to assist, encourage and protect its trade for nearly 400 years. It continues to do so today. It is proud to set aside this showcase for the temporary display of loaned items, which demonstrate the exceptional skills and inventiveness of modern British horologists. (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2017)

This text panel also includes information regarding the existence of the grants, bursaries, awards and so on that the Guild offers 'to encourage horological education' (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2017).

The second display case is used for the temporary display of exceptional work by clock and watch making students. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, clock and watch making has been recognised as an 'endangered' heritage craft in the UK (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6), and the Clockmakers' Museum has since installed a new additional text panel next to this case, entitled 'Training in Watch and Clockmaking Today' which gives further information regarding educational organisations that teach clock and

watch making in the UK, as well as the types of support the Guild offers to students (The Clockmakers' Museum, 2017). As James Nye states,

'...the Clockmakers continues to believe it can also contribute to the trade and to promoting horological education. We can showcase talent, and we can provide a permanent display which not only highlights the wonderful legacy of our four centuries of British (largely London) horology, but which also celebrates the present and future. We hope that we can do many things to inspire students to take up horology.' (2017a)

As mentioned previously, the other case study museums are able to offer learning opportunities to perpetuate their heritage craft by virtue of the characteristics inherent in their specific craft as well as a space in which to conduct workshops, neither of which are applicable to The Clockmakers' Museum. In this context the Guild is using its Museum as a platform for raising awareness of the educational and learning opportunities offered by organisations that are helping the Guild perpetuate this heritage craft, with the added use of the Museum as a means to celebrate the craft and the accomplishments of its established practitioners, past, present and future.

### **The Fan Museum –**

The Fan Museum displays its collection in a series of temporary, object-based, self-directed, thematic exhibitions that utilise object labels and exhibition-specific catalogues to convey information; a didactic learning methodology that is helpful for the non-specialist, non-practitioner, self-directed visitor, and favours visual, cognitive and linguistic learning styles and intelligences (Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). However, unlike The Clockmakers' Museum, this Museum offers other learning opportunities for engaging with its heritage craft, which is important because the production of hand held fans nearly disappeared during the first half of the twentieth century and, as the only heritage craft in this thesis to be listed as 'critically endangered' (Heritage Craft

Association, 2017a, p. 6), continues to be at serious risk of 'extinction' in the UK.

The Museum is loosely associated with The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, which is a medieval guild with an active contemporary membership (The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, 2017). As a means of staying relevant, The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers has evolved since its origins and now 'play[s] an active part in supporting the ... heating, ventilating and air conditioning industry' (The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, 2014). This new focus has not, however, changed their support for 'the lady's fan and quality English fan making' or the fact that the Company has its own collection of hand fans (The Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, 2014). This means that while the Fan Makers' Guild is committed to education in the medieval guild context discussed in this chapter, and recognises and supports The Fan Museum as important to its heritage craft, the educationally related activities at The Fan Museum are initiated solely by the Museum.

In her book, *The Fan Museum*, Alexander states that 'the museum is as committed to the future of fan making as it is to the past' and 'aims ... to revive the art form by producing contemporary fans' (2001, p. 7). As a result, the cellars in the original Georgian building that houses the Museum were converted during the initial renovations in the late 1980's into a 'craft workshop for conservation, fan making and training' (2001, p. 7) where onsite workshops are held.

This craft's status as 'critically endangered' in the Radcliffe Red List report is due to the fact that there was only one skilled fan maker in the UK, Caroline Allington, as well as one trainee, Victoria Ajoku, and one conservator (Heritage Craft Association, 2017b, p. 19). Ajoku assists Allington with delivering the Museum's learning programme that includes monthly onsite hands-on fan making workshops for up to eight participants as well as onsite and offsite private workshop options arranged by request through the Museum (Ajoku, 2017; The Fan Museum, 2018b). Inclusion in the monthly workshops can prove problematic, as advanced booking is required and the workshops can book-up months in advance (The Fan Museum, 2016).

Workshops are participatory, hands-on classes that are open to both adult and young learners above the age of twelve. Alexander opens the onsite workshops with an introduction to the history of fans and utilises the Museum's handling collection to instruct the participants in the various types of fans. She then turns the workshop over to Allington who conducts the making session. Allington also uses a casual tea break as an opportunity for an informal 'lecture' on the evolution of fanmaking (Ajoku, 2017). With lectures by both Alexander and Allington, as well as hands-on fan making instruction, these workshops offer inclusive learning opportunities for cognitive and haptic engagement (Chatterjee, 2008a; 2008b; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Pye, 2007a; Trewinnard-Boyle and Tabassi, 2007; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981) and a comprehensive access to the Museum's expertise via simultaneous access to its founder and its craft practitioners. In addition, these workshops can be understood to be example of Korn's first-person mode of participation for creating meaningful engagement with the Museum and its heritage craft (Korn, 2013, p. 147). As a learning tool, aimed at perpetuating the craft by eliciting interest through participatory hands-on engagement, it would appear to be a successful one, but at the rate of eight participants per month, limited in reach that could ultimately prove problematic for perpetuation of the craft.

There are guided tour opportunities for organised adult groups, or communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Knowles, 1990), with special interests or specific predetermined learning agendas, such as university groups and decorative arts societies (The Fan Museum, 2016) rather than groups of disparate individuals. This approach is primarily object-based and cognitive in style but allows for opportunities to accommodate the various learning styles and intelligences found in groups of adult learners (Gardner, 1993; Knowles, 1990; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). For individual visitors a curator gives a free brief lecture four times in a day once a month, exclusive of a Museum tour. These approaches to adult learning show the Museum offering adult learners two very different learning experiences and forms of engagement with the Museum and its heritage craft; one, a 'personalised'

experience that focuses on members groups' specific interests and learning agenda; the other, individually self-directed.

Personalised private lectures by the Museum's curators are also available for groups outside Museum (The Fan Museum, 2016). This option allows the museum/curators to provide learning opportunities for a wider audience outside of the Museum through tailored lectures to specific communities of practice that may not have any direct connections to fans.

For school and university groups the Museum offers educational opportunities that include 'thematic tours of the museum, children's activity trails, lectures, handling sessions and fan-making workshops' (The Fan Museum, 2016). Here the Museum is taking a much more participatory approach to the learning process and incorporating modalities that support a variety of learning style and intelligences by making more creative use of the Museum's facilities for the purposes of engagement. It is interesting to note here that the Museum includes 'university groups' across all of its education orientated platforms meaning that there are a variety of educational opportunities available to university groups that include guided tours, lectures, handling sessions and fan-making workshops (The Fan Museum, 2016). These learning opportunities illustrate the Museum's use of a wide range of learning strategies to engage diverse learning types and intelligences, with the intent of making their heritage craft more accessible.

As discussed in the Collections chapter of this thesis, The Fan Museum initiated its Street Fans project in the autumn of 2017 in response to its status as a 'critically endangered' craft on the Radcliffe Red List (The Fan Museum, 2017f; Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6) and in keeping with Alexander's commitment to the future of fan making and revival of the art form, as cited earlier. Learning activities initiated during the project included various scheduled times throughout the period of the exhibition when 'several' of the participating artists were present in the galleries 'making new work in response to the displays' (The Fan Museum, 2017g). In this way the Museum was actively engaging the wider public with this heritage craft by allowing visitors an opportunity to engage with the artists in the process of making –

much like the lace practitioners making lace in the Lace Museum, to be discussed shortly – and creating an active object-based learning experience (Chatterjee, Hannan and Thomson, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002). Here the Guild/Museum is sharing its expertise in a more accessible and inclusive manner for a variety of learning types and intelligences. In addition, the Museum did outreach fan making workshops with Lewisham Southwark College and the University of Greenwich, as well as conducting classes in Greenwich Market where two hundred people participated in making fans (Moss, 2018c); again sharing its expertise in a more accessible and inclusive manner for a variety of learning types and intelligences but this time outside of the confines of the Museum.

### **The Lace Guild Museum -**

The Lace Guild Museum, as an extension of the Lace Guild, occupies a single room on the ground floor of The Hollies, the Guild's headquarters. Within the UK, handmade lace making can be traced back to the sixteenth century but The Lace Guild is a contemporary heritage craft guild and registered educational charity that includes both adult and Young Lacemaker practitioner membership groups (The Lace Guild, 2017a). The Museum's rotating object-based thematic exhibitions allow the Guild to display lace from its collection of over eighteen thousand items, as well as pieces created by its own members, as a means of supporting its community of heritage craft practitioners. As a heritage craft in the UK, lace making is classified as 'currently viable' meaning it is 'in a healthy state and ha[s] sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation' but, as stated earlier in this chapter, this classification 'does not mean that the craft is risk-free or without issues affecting its future sustainability/viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

This single room Museum is open to the public Tuesday through Friday and monthly Saturdays (although Tuesdays are by appointment only). On Tuesdays, the Museum experience presents a passive, object-based didactic learning environment that utilises object labels, information sheets and an

eight minute video describing the basics of lacemaking for self-directed learning. The object labels offer only a sparse amount of pertinent information such as style, type and purpose of the lace item, as cited in the Exhibition chapter. There are no text panels or exhibition catalogues. In addition, there are no volunteers manning the gallery space Tuesday so any questions would have to be directed to the Guild's office staff located across the hall from the Museum space, but who are not required to be either Guild members or lace practitioners, hence are unlikely to be able to help. All of the above mentioned attributes result in a Museum exhibition that, on Tuesdays, offers a learning experience favouring visitors who already have an understanding of the materials and methods involved in making. However, regardless of whether or not the visitor is a practitioner or specialist, the various exhibition display methodologies that form the basis for the Tuesday visitor learning experience support those learners with visual, cognitive and linguistic based learning styles and intelligences (Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). In this sense, the Tuesday learning experience here can be understood to be similar to that of The Fan Museum, albeit without a comprehensive exhibition catalogue.

However, on Wednesday to Friday and the monthly Saturday, the Museum is open to the public without appointment (for groups of up to five) and comes alive through the active presence of Guild volunteers, one of whom sits in the gallery space making handmade lace. These live demonstrations transform the Museum space into a dynamic object-based learning experience (Chatterjee, Hannan and Thomson, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002) for understanding the process of making lace and perpetuating this heritage craft. Here the Guild/Museum is sharing its expertise in a more accessible and inclusive manner for a variety of learning types and intelligences. Not only is the visitor able to make an immediate connection between the items in the display cases and the skill required to make them but, where the eight minute video offered a recorded overview of lace making, the live demonstration offers an opportunity for active educational engagement with a live craft practitioner that can be beneficial for both the uninitiated and practitioners



alike, regardless of skill level. In addition, it allows for informal social conversations and connections to occur between visitor and practitioner that add a different dimension to the perception of the craft. All of these characteristics combine to support socially-based learning styles and intelligences via a more direct form of engagement (Gardner, 1993; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Hein; 1991; Knowles, 1990; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). For the uninitiated visitor it offers a shift in the conception of lace making as a distant activity that creates the 'artefacts' on display in the Tuesday experience, to a hobby that people of all ages can participate in and that, due to its portability, can be practiced in a variety of locations; in other words it makes this heritage craft approachable for non-practitioners. For visiting practitioners it offers the opportunity to engage with a fellow practitioner, possibly hone their skills and, particularly for non-members, make an informal connection with the Museum and Guild. In this sense, the Museum's Wednesday to Friday exhibition learning experience also reflects both Lave and Wenger's newcomer/old-timer model, talking about/within a practice (1991, pp. 56-57 and 107), Knowles' experiential learning based 'peer-helping activities' (1990, p. 59) that utilise the experience of individual Guild member practitioners and offers reinforcement of self-identity for the Guild member practitioners (1990, p. 60) and Korn's participation in the second-person voice (2013, p. 147). It should also be noted that the four days a week live demonstrations have just been added to the Museum's learning initiatives. Previously the live demonstrations were offered on only one day a week, resulting in a predominately 'Tuesday' learning experience for Museum visitors. As this is a volunteer run Museum any additional demonstration days require the additional participation, organisation and procedural training of Guild volunteers, an activity that has taken nearly a year to realise, and which demonstrates this organisation's commitment to learning, to the support of its practitioners and to the perpetuation of their heritage craft.

The Museum offers periodic access to a curator to 'identify lace or give information' (The Lace Guild, 2017a). On these days the Guild/Museum offers itself in yet another incarnation by offering its expertise via a different avenue

for learning; returning to the didactic Monday to Thursday model but with a live voice. In this case, the learning modality benefits practitioners and those who may have no interest in knowledge transfer for the sake of learning to practice the craft itself but rather want information regarding lace they own or personally have access to. As the items in the Guild/Museum's collection come from members and bequests, the ability to engage a curator's expertise regarding the details and value of a privately held item has the added potential of benefit to both parties through the discovery of a rare example or a future bequest. These periodic Saturday curatorial events offer learning in yet another form of the Lave and Wenger 'newcomer/old-timer' and 'talking about/within a practice' models (1991, pp. 56-57 and 107).

Yet another object-based learning strategy can be found in the Guild/Museum's policy of allowing public access to its collection, 'to look at and study the lace and other artefacts' (The Lace Guild, 2017a) in the Hollies, by appointment. However, one extremely unusual aspect of the access policy here is that Guild members are able to sign-out pieces of lace for home study, with the requested lace piece being posted to the member. This extraordinary policy sees the Guild/Museum treating the collection in a manner that reflects the craft's original origins. Handmade lace was a cottage industry that was decimated by the Industrial Revolution. The Guild itself started in someone's home with the Guild operating out of a back bedroom (Roberts, 2013). From this perspective it can be inferred as to why the Guild sees the collection as a living educational record and resource, with the Museum as an extension of that, to be shared for the purposes of celebrating and perpetuating this heritage craft.

There is no fee required for this form of hands-on access but the member is expected to pay the associated postage costs (Roberts, 2013). The Lace Guild Museum is the only museum in this thesis to make items in its collection available in this way. This is important because while the other case study museums may offer items in the form of a handling collection, or allow inspection of an item by appointment, none allow handling without supervision. Admittedly the lace items available for sign-out are not the best in

the collection and could be considered to be the Museum's 'handling collection' but the fact remains that, in this context, the Guild/Museum is treating its collection as an open, accessible hands-on learning resource (Chatterjee, 2008b; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Pye, 2007a; Trewinnard-Boyle and Tabassi, 2007) without the requisite supervision. It allows for various levels of creative participation and engagement with the Museum's collection in both the first- and second-voice and in a way that acknowledges diverse learning styles and intelligences; however it achieves this in locations external to the physical space of the Museum and at the member's convenience rather than at times specifically dictated by the Museum (Korn, 2013, p. 147). This level of accessibility also recognises that it may be challenging for some Guild members to physically visit the collection in the Hollies; such as international members, members with physical impairments and younger practitioners under the age of eighteen. Allowing first-hand inspection of an item from the collection acknowledges that learning from material objects provides an expanded learning experience (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008b; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Pye, 2007a; Trewinnard-Boyle and Tabassi, 2007; Durrance, 1998) and that object-based learning that happens in a home environment is equally as authentic and valuable as learning that takes place in a museum environment.

The Guild/Museum offers hands-on lace making classes and workshops to help perpetuate its heritage craft. Separate classes are run weekly by a Guild member practitioner onsite in the Hollies that are structured in a manner that recognises the differences between child and adult learning (Coleman, 2017). The children who participate tend to be of a similar skill level and hence are offered their choice of patterns from which to work. Then, rather than setting specific tasks or goals, the tutor lets the children work at their own pace and offers guidance and supervision while they work on their chosen pattern, incorporating both object-based and hands-on learning methodologies (Chatterjee and Hannan, 2015; Chatterjee and Duhs, 2010; Chatterjee, 2008; Pye, 2007; Paris, 2002).

However the adult classes differ because the adult learners are more diverse in their skill levels and experience which includes both explicit and tacit knowledge of the craft (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Durrance, 1998) so, while the tutor is available to offer guidance, she tends to act as more of a troubleshooter. The adult classes also include external activities such as visits to related craft shows (Coleman, 2017). From these educational activities we see the Guild/Museum again offering hands-on learning experiences that support different learning styles and intelligences in addition to Lave and Wenger's 'newcomer/old-timer' model, 'talking about/within a practice' (1991, pp. 56-57 and 107), and Knowles' 'peer-helping' activities (1990, p. 59) that utilise individual practitioner experience and offer self-identity reinforcement for the Guild member practitioner (1990, p. 60).

While the aforementioned classes are hourly once-a-week onsite classes, more extensive off-site adult classes are also available in the form of a week-long, overnight, 'hands-on' 'Guild Spring School' and 'Guild Summer School' (Coleman, 2017; The Lace Guild, 2017a). These 'School' sessions are open to Lace Guild members, non-Lace Guild members and 'non-lacemaking guests' (The Lace Guild, 2017a). The sessions offer a more in-depth learning experience that include multiple Guild member tutors, each with expertise in a different style of lacemaking (Coleman, 2017; The Lace Guild, 2017a) and show the Guild/Museum actively engaging existing craft practitioners with explicit and tacit craft knowledge (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Durrance, 1998), as well as newcomers (Lave and Wenger, 1991, pp. 56-57 and 107; Knowles, 1990), and a variety of learning styles and intelligences (Chatterjee, 2008b; Paris, 2002; Pye, 2007a; Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). Due to the size of the Hollies headquarters building, and its facilities, sessions of this type are not possible with direct access to the Museum. However these types of activities are not dissimilar to the types of offsite educational opportunities offered by much larger museums like the V&A (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016).

As an incentive for their practitioners of all levels the Guild offers The Lace Guild Assessment Scheme (Coleman, 2017; The Lace Guild, 2017a; The Lace Guild, 2017c). Assessment schemes such as this used to be offered for lace makers through adult and further education classes from organisations such as City & Guilds but they no longer exist. The Guild felt that their lace makers would like a vehicle for recognition of their lace making abilities and initiated this 'formally' structured qualifications scheme as a result (Coleman, 2017). There are three adult assessment levels, as well as three levels for Young Lacemakers, for specific styles of lace (The Lace Guild, 2017a). There is a predetermined set of criteria for all submissions and entries are judged by Guild members that are experienced lacemakers (The Lace Guild, 2017a).

In addition, the Museum has registered itself as an Arts Awards Centre in conjunction with the Arts Awards Scheme offered by Trinity College London and ACE (Trinity College London, 2017). To this end, one of the Guild's lace instructors, and Museum committee member, has participated in training to become an Arts Award Advisor for the purposes of continuing to teach, assess and grant lace making award qualifications to young people through the Museum as an Arts Award Centre (Coleman, 2017; Trinity College London, 2017). These activities show the Guild/Museum participating in Korn's first- and second-voice (2013, p. 147), and utilising Lave and Wenger's newcomer/old-timer model (1991, pp. 56-57), to perpetuate their craft through hands-on learning modalities (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008b; Pye, 2007a) that reinforce self-identity (Knowles, 1990, p. 60), generate explicit and tacit knowledge (Durrance, 1998), and potentially generate new Guild members in their community of practitioners.

### **The Quilt Museum and Gallery –**

In 2008 The Quilters' Guild opened the Quilt Museum and Gallery in its headquarters building in York for the purposes of making the Guild's Collection of over eight hundred quilts accessible to the public. In this way the Guild's headquarters, collection storage facilities and the Museum formed an integrated hub for the Guild's regional communities of practitioners. The

Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, its heritage craft and its Quilt Museum share many similarities with The Lace Guild and its Museum. The Quilters' Guild is an active contemporary guild and registered educational charity founded in 1979, just three years after the Lace Guild. The Guild is comprised of eighteen 'quilting regions' and a Young Quilters group for quilters aged five to seventeen practicing within the same regional quilting structure. And like the heritage craft of lace making, this heritage craft is classified as 'currently viable' in the UK, meaning it is 'in a healthy state and ha[s] sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation' but, again, this 'does not mean that the craft is risk-free or without issues affecting its future sustainability/viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6). However, unlike the Lace Guild Museum that continues to be a viable resource for its practitioner community and for perpetuating its specific heritage craft, The Quilters' Guild was forced to close its Museum in November 2015, two years into this research thesis.

During the years it was open the Quilt Museum and Gallery exhibited items from the Quilters' Guild Collection in the same manner as that of the Fan Museum and The Lace Guild Museum; as a series of temporary object-based exhibitions that enabled the Museum to share its objects on a rolling basis while simultaneously meeting the necessary requirements for conservation of the Collection. The quilts were hung on the walls, from the ceiling and/or on free-standing temporary walls without protection of any kind, thus making them accessible for up-close object-based visual learning and interrogation (Chatterjee, Hannan and Thomson, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981) in a way that is very similar to the glass displayed in the Stained Glass Museum. Text panels and object labels provided information specific to the theme of the exhibition and the specific objects in language that was accessible for craft practitioners as well as non-practitioners. A binder with 'large print' versions of the text panels and labels was available for those with impaired sight, a condition which can also be a consequence of the close detailed handwork required for hand crafts such as watch making, lace making and sewing. While all of these interpretive

materials favoured learners with cognitive and linguistic learning styles and intelligences (Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981), other learning modalities were supported through the inclusion of dioramas, a few small objects as handling samples (Chatterjee, 2008b; Paris, 2002; Pye, 2007a) and the regular daily presence of Guild volunteers in the gallery space who were available for guidance and assistance. Prior to The Lace Guild Museum's recent additional demonstration days, this routine Quilters' Guild member presence in the gallery was unique to the five heritage craft museums in this thesis and, although the volunteers were not actively demonstrating their craft, as with the Lace Guild model, the accessibility of the volunteers was a learning resource that exemplified both Lave and Wenger's 'newcomer/old-timer' model and 'talking about/within a practice' (1991, pp. 56-57 and 107), Knowles' experiential learning based 'peer-helping activities' (1990, p. 59) and Korn's 'participation in the second-person voice' (2013, p. 147).

The learning opportunities listed above were available in the Museum's exhibition and gallery spaces throughout the Museum's seven-year existence. However, like the Lace Guild Museum and the Stained Glass Museum, The Quilters' Guild and Museum offered other learning experiences and practical skills knowledge for its member practitioners as well as the public as a means of perpetuating its craft. The Guild's headquarters building, St. Anthony's Hall, included a dedicated Education Room for teaching its craft and, just before the Quilt Museum opened in 2008, the Museum was granted £193,500 from the HLF for development of its education and volunteer programmes (Diaper, 2011; Lewis, 2008). The three year project, called 'Unfolding the Quilts', funded a full-time Education Officer and part-time Volunteer Organiser who worked in tandem to create activities that would engage Museum visitors and the local community in quilting and patchwork; resulting in over seven thousand adults and children learning sewing skills and the history of the craft (Diaper, 2011, p. 14). In this way the Museum actively engaged in a hands-on practical skills based educational programme that was, according to the Museum's Curator, Heather Audin, 'very much within the National Curriculum and within what the HLF wanted for a formal education offer' (2017b), in

addition to an informal offer that served to perpetuate the craft's intangible cultural heritage; both of which were achieved through Museum participation with a variety of learners, regardless of age. These learning initiatives were comprehensive examples of activities that draw on experiential learning techniques (Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981) that are cognitively and haptically engaging (Hein, 1991, p. 8) to create explicit and tacit practical skills knowledge (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Durrance, 1998) as a means of perpetuating this heritage craft.

The end of the project resulted in the end of funding and the exit of the Education Officer. From 2012 until the Museum's closure in 2015, the only Museum staff were the full-time curator and a part-time Museum Director. These two Museum staff positions were supported by volunteers and the Guild's staff but, 'anything specifically related to the museum was just [the curator] and the director' (Audin, 2016b). As such, the Museum's organised practical skills-related learning activities were drastically curtailed (Audin, 2017b), yet the Museum had managed to teach sewing skills to over one thousand additional people before its closure (The Quilters' Guild, 2015).

The dedicated Education Room in St. Anthony's Hall is now closed as well but each of the Guild's quilting regions continues its own programme of events and educational activities associated with the craft, including teachers and speakers that are available by region. The lack of instruction in practical sewing skills as part of the core curriculum in the nation's schools motivated the Guild in 2016 to initiate a programmatic extension of their Young Quilters group to include active sewing participation in schools; what the Guild refers to as its Young Quilters School Groups (The Quilters' Guild, 2016c). The Guild states that their activities made 'a positive start', with eleven schools participating (The Quilters' Guild, 2016c). These hands-on learning activities serve to teach practical hand skills that can be applied to the Guild's heritage craft (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008b; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Pye, 2007a; Trewinnard-Boyle and Tabassi, 2007; Durrance, 1998) as well as supporting a variety of learning styles and intelligences (Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981), and Lave and



Wenger's 'newcomer/old-timer' and 'talking about/within a practice' models (1991, pp. 56-57 and 107).

'The Museum' still exists in the form of its Collection, and is now understood within the Guild as the 'Collection', but accessibility is clearly problematic for the purposes of museum status and ongoing educational opportunities. As part of their ongoing efforts to keep the Collection accessible, items from the Collection are available for viewing on two days per month by appointment for groups of ten to sixteen people. These pre-booked appointments are open to the public and charged on a per head basis. However these learning opportunities are in the form of talks by the curator related to featured items (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016). Groups with an interest in a 'bespoke selection of items' can be accommodated with the proviso that some items may not be available due to loan commitments or conservation reasons (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016). These options show knowledge associated with the Collection being made available, albeit on a limited basis, using a more didactic object-based learning approach that favours visual, cognitive and linguistic learning styles and intelligences (Chatterjee, Hannan and Thomson, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008a; Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981) that is supplemented by the curator conferring her knowledge on a range of quilt related subjects, rather than the earlier hands-on approach when the Museum was a viable entity.

The Quilter's Guild Collection/Museum collection has made Travelling Trunks available for hire as a participative, object-based, hands-on learning experience that supports learning across a range of learning styles and intelligences (Chatterjee and Hannan, 2015; Chatterjee and Duhs, 2010; Chatterjee, 2008; Pye, 2007; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). The trunks were initially created as travelling learning resources for National Curriculum Key Stage Levels but have since evolved to instead meet the needs of the Guild's adult membership who request them for informal learning experiences in their regions now that they no longer have regular access to the Collection through the Museum (Audin, 2017b). The use of these trunks by the Guild's membership as a regional group

learning experience supports Hein's socially based 'constructivist learning' model as well as the 'newcomer/old-timer', 'talking about/within a practice' and 'peer-helping' models (Hein, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991, pp. 56-57 and 107; Knowles, 1990, p. 59). There are currently two different trunks available, 'Textile Treasures' and 'Textile Traditions'; both of which have interpretation materials geared to an adult audience as well as 'handling samples of quilts and quilted objects that show different quilting techniques and styles' (Audin, 2017; The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016). The trunks are also used 'to support and enhance' exhibitions and have proved to be such a popular resource, regardless of the method of utilisation, that a third one is being considered to help meet demand (The Quilters' Guild, 2016d, p. 22).

As previously discussed in the Collections and Exhibition themed chapters of this thesis, the Collection has recently initiated a new 'private' exhibition programme as a membership scheme entitled 'Friends of the Collection' (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2018b). The programme offers four, five-day-long, quilt exhibitions held at St. Anthony's Hall, the Guild's York headquarters. The Friends programme is separate from Guild membership, asking £15 for an annual membership, inclusive of exhibition access and quarterly email newsletter, with a discount for Guild members (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2018b). The programme will allow the Museum to apply to regain its full museum accreditation status (Audin, 2018a). While the programme offers learning opportunities to the wider public through access to the Collection, its five weekdays/four times a year schedule is problematic for its limited scope. Public access to examples of this heritage craft during only twenty days per year, while better than none, does not offer a viable replacement for the object-based learning opportunities that regular access provided in, what was previously, the Guild's full time Museum.

While the Museum's closure has meant that there are no longer any workshops offered within what was the Museum's education room, the Guild's regional groups continue to offer workshops and lectures on a local level (The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, 2017b) including the Young Quilters group activities (The Quilters' Guild, 2016a).

The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, as an educational charity, and like those of the Clockmakers' and Lace Guild, offers a range of educational bursaries, grants and awards 'to support members in developing their quilting skills and knowledge' (The Quilters' Guild, 2016a). These include, among others, a BA Student Bursary, a City and Guilds Award and the Anne Tuck Prize for Contemporary Quilting (The Quilters' Guild, 2016c) as a means of encouraging the perpetuation of this heritage craft.

### **The Stained Glass Museum -**

The Stained Glass Museum, located inside Ely Cathedral, was created by a trust to act as a 'repository to rescue stained glass windows under threat from destruction' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2016). The Museum's collection consists of over one thousand items of which one hundred and fifteen pieces have been included in its permanent object-based exhibition.

The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass is the craft's medieval guild that still has an active contemporary membership but, like that of The Fan Museum, the Stained Glass Museum's relationship to its related Guild is more indirect than the other case study museums (The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painter of Glass, 2017; Allen, 2013). However, while the Stained Glass Museum has a consistent relationship with the Glaziers' Company, the Museum is a separate entity and its educational remit is its own (Allen, 2017b; Allen, 2013).

Like lace making and quilting, the heritage craft skills required to create these windows are understood to be 'in a healthy state' in the UK and hence the craft is classified as 'currently viable' on the Radcliffe Red List (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6). This means that it 'ha[s] sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation' but, again, 'is [not] risk-free or without issues affecting its future sustainability/viability' (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 6).

The Museum's permanent exhibition offers a variety of learning opportunities for visitors by supporting a range of learning styles and intelligences, regardless of age. Two different craft-related videos run on a

continuous loop and serve two important contextual functions. The first is that of putting the craftsmanship involved in the production process into context for non-practitioners before examining the displays and, as such, is a learning opportunity that favours those visitors with learning strengths in visual, object-based styles and intelligences (Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981), as well as those learners without English as a first language. The second contextual function is that the videos put the craft's heritage viability in the UK into context, stating that 'there is only one factory left in the United Kingdom blowing hot glass for stained glass windows' and 'very little small scale production of lead casting [necessary for the production of stained glass windows] left in England' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017b). This is important because, within the context of the Radcliffe Red List, one of the factors contributing to the viability of heritage crafts in this country is the availability of the necessary materials for the continued practice of the craft (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a, p. 13). From this perspective, this craft-specific information regarding diminishing access to materials in the UK, sheds further light on the challenges facing this particular heritage craft's community of practitioners, as well as restoration and conservation practices going forward. In addition, this information helps to create a frame of reference for the value of the objects on display within the context of intangible cultural heritage.

The remainder of the Museum offers a passive learning experience with stained glass items displayed in chronological order in light boxes, utilising informational text panels and object labels to create an object-based, self-directed experience with a didactic learning approach. Here the learning opportunities favour those visitors who are stronger in visual, cognitive and linguistic styles and intelligences (Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). These learning styles are further supported by an illustrated *Gallery Guide* (Mills, 2004) for those visitors who choose to purchase one. The Guide mirrors the exhibition, offering numbered photographs and additional information corresponding to the numbers assigned on the exhibition labels. While the exhibition is laid out in chronological order, with numbered object

labels, any period specific text panel that is missed by the visitor can prove problematic for understanding the specific section's contribution to the evolution of the craft. As such, the methodology that utilises corresponding numbers and images in the Guide, makes the chronological aspect of this object-based self-directed learning experience easier to navigate, particularly for visually orientated learners (Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981).

This text-related limitation to the Museum visit creates a somewhat less informative learning experience without the *Gallery Guide*, particularly for non-practitioners and those learners who are more reliant on cognitive and linguistic learning modalities (Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). That being said, these minor limitations in the visitor experience are offset by the ability to examine stained glass windows and panels that are only a few centimeters in front of you. While still understood to be a definitively 'hands-off' display, this level of accessibility offers a more visceral visual, object-based opportunity to engage with the windows than is usually the case in traditional settings (Chatterjee, Hannan and Thomson, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008a; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981). Here the visitor is able to see details in the glass that are not readily visible in traditional settings and, for craft practitioners, allows participation in their craft in Korn's 'second-person voice' (Korn, 2013, p. 147). Regardless of the visitor's level of expertise, points of skill and craftsmanship may still be ascertained, and a level of knowledge acquired, through this ability to inspect a large number of windows at close range.

Aside from the Museum's primarily didactic learning approach, the Museum offers a variety of participative learning activities for those who are interested in more active engagement with the Museum and its heritage craft. The Museum hired a part-time Learning Officer as a member of staff in September 2016, which is unique to these case study museums. As mentioned earlier, The Quilt Museum briefly had a full-time Education Officer that was funded by its HLF grant, but the Stained Glass Museum is the only museum in this thesis to fund this position on its own. While there was a Learning Officer

available for the Museum in the past, it was a shared position with other museums. Curator Jasmine Allen says that a dedicated Learning Officer incurs a greater cost to the Museum but that it was felt it was worth the added expense for pursuing the Museum's educational remit (Allen, 2016). As such, the Museum offers National Curriculum based workshops that are facilitated by Museum staff and volunteers that include options across EYFS and Key Stages 1-3 as well as flexible art and craft activities that can be customised to support a variety of learning styles and intelligences (Haselgrove, 2017; The Stained Glass Museum, 2017c; The Stained Glass Museum, 2016). The majority of these workshops take place in an ancillary space that is separate from but adjacent to the Museum's main exhibition space. All workshops are participatory and four new workshops were added in the Spring of 2017. These include a 'participatory storytelling session' called 'Windows on Worlds' as well as 'Creative Science: Light and Colour' that 'explore[s] the transmission of light through glass' and 'experiment[s] with prisms and spectrometers' (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017c). These initiatives demonstrate that the Museum is taking a comprehensive approach to its educational programme with a dedicated Learning Officer and varied learning opportunities across all learning styles and intelligences (Chatterjee and Hannan, 2015; Chatterjee and Duhs, 2010; Chatterjee, 2008; Pye, 2007; Paris, 2002; Gardner, 1993; Hein, 1991; McCarthy, 1990; Kolb, 1981).

Other learning activities at the Stained Glass Museum that are not tied to the National Curriculum are offered for both adults and children and take place either onsite or offsite depending on the specific activity. For instance, the Museum offers a regular programme of hands-on workshops run by professional artists and craftsmen in a variety of stained glass related skills including painting, fusing and leading (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017d). These hands-on activities offer object-based haptic learning experiences (Morrison, 2015; Tiballi, 2015; Willcocks, 2015; Chatterjee, 2008b; Spence and Gallace, 2008; Pye, 2007a; Trewinnard-Boyle and Tabassi, 2007; Paris, 2002; Durrance, 1998) in a group setting that supports the 'newcomer/old-timer', 'talking about/within a practice' and 'peer-helping' models (Simon,

2010; Hein, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991, pp. 56-57 and 107; Knowles, 1990, p. 59). The Museum offers 'hands-on' family workshops (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017e) as well as 'holiday' workshops during half-term and seasonal holidays. For example, the February 2017 half-term workshop was devoted to glass fusing for children over the age of eight (The Stained Glass Museum, 2017a). These activities are a means by which the Museum is able to include people of all ages in its heritage craft, which in the context of families, allows all members of the family to participate in learning activities, to gain practical knowledge geared to their specific age group, but that has the potential to form an educationally based common bond, or community of practice, across the family (Simon, 2010; Hein, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

In addition to the learning opportunities offered within the Museum, the Museum offers an offsite seasonal lecture series that is open to the public and in various locations not far from the Museum. These lectures are presented by invited academics, researchers, conservators and artists, among others, and highlight a specific historical or contemporary stained glass artist. The lectures give the Museum an opportunity to offer public access to a wider knowledge base outside the walls of the Museum. For those lectures that take place in yet another local church space, regardless of the fact that the Museum is offering the learning opportunity outside of its location in Ely Cathedral, the context of the subject and the craft remain consistent and have the potential to be reinforced on a more visceral level.

### **In Closing:**

Small subject-specific museums tend to attract visitors with a preexisting mode of engagement from which they derive personal meaning that can facilitate learning. As demonstrated by the case studies, small heritage craft museums use their museum as a means of enhancing this visitor relationship to their specific craft, and offer learning opportunities predicated primarily on strengthening this craft-related relationship. The historical nature of these heritage crafts reinforces this visitor connection by virtue of the continued

transfer of craft skills and interest, facilitated by the associated craft guilds, be they medieval or contemporary in origin.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the medieval craft guilds associated with the museums in this thesis were part of an educationally based system that was the primary source of heritage craft skills training that perpetuated these skills through knowledge transfer to successive generations. It is important to note that the crafts represented by the two contemporary guilds in this thesis, lace making and quilting/patchwork, were also medieval professional handcrafts but, for various reasons associated with location and their cottage industry style of production, never became chartered guilds. However, regardless of the lack of a formally recognised medieval charter, the contemporary practitioner organisations of these ancient crafts, The Lace Guild and The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, choose to identify themselves as 'guilds' rather than by more commonly used terms such as association or club and, like their medieval cousins, include education, practitioner support and perpetuation of the intangible skills of their craft as part of their remit. As a result, the legacy of these medieval craft guilds provides an important context for learning in small heritage craft museums that makes them different in approach and motivation from the way that large museums, as well as other types of small museums, might operate. Furthermore, these differences in approach and motivation are exemplified by learning activities that are components of UNESCO's convention for intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2015b).

For those craft guilds with direct links to their museum, such as the Clockmakers', Lace and Quilters' Guilds, the relationship between the museum and their specific craft guild is important, not only for the public exposure the museum offers the guild and its craft, but also for the way the museum supports the self-identity of its practitioners and the learning opportunities offered for perpetuating the necessary hand skills of their craft.

The case studies have demonstrated that small craft museums continue to perpetuate their specific crafts in a variety of ways, through processes both direct and implicit. Some may take a passive indirect approach to knowledge transfer by offering educational funding opportunities such as financial



assistance, bursaries and awards. For instance, the Clockmakers' Museum represents a heritage craft with required skills that are not readily transferred during a weekend workshop, nor did the Museum have the facilities or resources in its Guildhall location to offer any type of learning provision; a situation that is beginning to change with its new location. However it did, and still does, support the perpetuation of its craft through other means such as financial assistance for both students and professional continuing education.

Others, such as The Lace Guild Museum and the Quilt Museum when it was open, take a direct approach to knowledge transfer by offering hands-on practical skills classes and workshops for guild members and the public, conducted by guild member practitioners, while non-guild craft practitioners run similar workshops in their craft for The Stained Glass Museum and The Fan Museum. In addition, young practitioner learning is supported through young people's member groups and activities in both The Lace Guild and The Quilters' Guild while The Stained Glass Museum has workshops for children, school groups and families. As such, these heritage craft museums offer an important avenue for the continuous transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge between craft practitioners and non-practitioners, between old-timers and newcomers. The old-timer/newcomer method of skills transfer is particularly important for those craft skills highlighted by the research conducted for The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a). I argue that, the knowledge transfer associated with these types of practical skills activities, regardless of age or skill level, is crucial for the perpetuation of the intangible skills of these crafts. Regardless of the level of the learning experience or the combination of learning theories and modalities utilised for implementation, these craft museums offer an important resource for practical and social interaction through their communities of practice within various frameworks such as academic support and peer participation activities and, as such, are an essential and possibly irreplaceable resource for heritage craft practitioners and knowledge transfer.

In some cases, like The Lace Guild Museum and the Quilt Museum, small craft museums use both hands-on learning and financial support approaches.

In addition, these small museums have a greater degree of flexibility, due to fewer bureaucratic constraints, that allows them to tailor possible learning opportunities to specific groups and events, such as the private lectures available from the curators of The Fan Museum and the Quilt Museum. However, regardless of the approach, the viability of these museums and their heritage craft, is contingent upon the active engagement of their individual communities of practitioners who support and sustain the learning opportunities necessary for perpetuating the intangible cultural heritage of these craft skills; as exemplified by the additional Lace Guild volunteers who have signed up to be lace making demonstrators so the Museum could increase its lace making demonstration days from one day to three days per week.

While the approaches cited above pertain primarily to practical skills knowledge transfer, it is important to acknowledge the opportunities for implicit knowledge transfer made possible by the display methods utilised by these small museums in their exhibitions, as discussed in the previous Exhibitions chapter. Interrogation of craft objects at close range, as in The Quilt Museum and The Stained Glass Museum, or multiple perspectives offered by mirrors in the Lace and Fan Museums, and the mechanical inner workings of pocket watches made possible by the Clockmakers' open-back display method all have the ability to facilitate the acquisition of conceptual knowledge related to specific craft practice and inspire future work for both practitioners and the wider public.

I have presented evidence in this chapter that, due to the heritage nature of the crafts represented by these small museums and the old-timer/newcomer hierarchy associated with their skills transfer, the informal learning opportunities offered by these organisations are equally as important, particularly for adult learners, as the 'formal' education programmes made possible by the dedicated Learning Officer at The Stained Glass Museum. While a 'formal' learning programme focused on the National Curriculum can help to raise the public profile of a museum, engage children who might not otherwise visit the museum, and generate income for the museum, it is a

complementary component of a broader array of learning opportunities. I argue that all learning opportunities that are present in these small museums are important for heritage craft regardless of whether or not they are driven by a dedicated onsite teaching professional.

The twenty-first century paradigm shift in museum sector function, away from an inward facing focus specifically on the institution to that of an outward facing focus on visitor learning and education, is pivotal for small single subject museums like those in the case studies, and heritage craft-related museums in particular. It allows for a shift of perspective on these museums from 'quirky' little regional museums to 'respected' venues for learning, and offers them an opportunity for meaningful participation in the museum sector dialogue.

## Conclusions

This study considers the primary research question, ‘how do small craft museums contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK?’ My research, that has included observation of craft specific exhibitions and activities, as well as engagement with museum ‘personnel’ and craft practitioners, has resulted in findings that are intended to contribute to a better understanding of the underrepresented small museum category in the museum sector.

The small heritage craft museums presented in this thesis offer learning experiences that contribute to the perpetuation of their specific heritage crafts as intangible cultural heritage. As these museums tend to attract visitors with a preexisting mode of engagement from which to further enhance any personal meaning they already derive from the museum’s specific craft, educational programmes are predicated primarily on reinforcing this preexisting craft relationship. The historical nature of these heritage crafts also reinforces this visitor connection by virtue of the continued transfer of craft skills and interest, facilitated by the guilds associated with these crafts, be they medieval or contemporary in origin. These connections are important for supporting the self-identity of the participating craft practitioners and the learning opportunities offered for perpetuating the necessary hand skills of each specific craft; in other words, its intangible cultural heritage.

In order to address the primary research question of the small craft museum’s contribution to the intangible cultural heritage of the UK, it was necessary to consider the additional four research questions, the conclusions for which are set out below.

### **How do small craft museums encourage and support their communities of practitioners and enthusiasts?**

‘Societies seek what they lack. We’ve become so remote from making, that it’s become a gaping hole in our souls. Individuals who want to make, for whom making is in their DNA, need to fulfill that’ (Treggiden, 2015, p. 90).

The educational legacy of the medieval craft guilds as well as the commitment of contemporary craft guilds to perpetuating their craft, provides an important context for understanding the remit and strategies of small heritage craft museums that differentiates them from the way that other museums might operate; which are also exemplified by activities that are components of UNESCO's convention for intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2015b). In this context, The Radcliffe Red List (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a), cited throughout this thesis, illustrates the importance of these heritage craft museums to their communities of practitioners for the perpetuation of their specific craft skills as well as the importance of regular access to the objects of their craft practice that are afforded by small heritage craft museums, as demonstrated by the *Quilts: 1700 – 2010* exhibition at the V&A cited in the Introduction to this thesis (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016).

I have presented evidence that these museums support and encourage their practitioner communities through access to their comprehensive collections representing both the historical and contemporary craft skill techniques of their specific crafts, inclusive of examples from current guild members in some cases. As a result, their collections act as important representative resources of heritage craft skills for their practitioners and enthusiasts, while the occasional display of work created by fellow guild members serves as encouragement and reinforces the sense of a shared community of practice. In addition, these communities of practice use the museums as a resource for various frameworks of practical and social interaction, such as academic support and peer participation activities.

This thesis argues that the direct involvement of craft practitioners in the creation of exhibitions and displays is an important aspect of the exhibition process that differentiates small craft museums from larger museums. Due to their unique position as craft practitioners themselves, they understand the needs of their practitioner audience, allowing them to help facilitate communication of the detailed characteristics and unique personality inherent

in the intangible skills of their specific craft that may otherwise go unnoticed or unappreciated.

The importance of display methodologies that facilitate visual inspection and, in turn, intangible knowledge transfer of craft practice to practitioners cannot be over emphasised. For instance, Shane Raven is a woodcarver in the UK who was profoundly affected by woodcarver David Esterly's *Grinling Gibbons* exhibition at the V&A, cited in the Introduction to this thesis (Esterly, 1998).

Here Raven explains his reaction to seeing the 'Cosimo Panel' created by Gibbons in 1682,

I found it quite emotional...Being a grown man I just wanted to cry. I just looked at this thing and I just thought my God this is phenomenal... one of the nicest things for me was actually looking to the side of the Cosimo Panel, I actually saw chisel marks. They're almost my chisel marks. I remember doing things like that [makes the physical motions of using a chisel] and thinking, yes, that's how he's done it. It's so personal. And then I connected with Grinling Gibbons, I connected with the seventeenth century and that was the moment for me that I just thought was phenomenal. It was an epiphany, literally. I carve because it's a passion.' (Raven, 2013)

My research shows that the five craft museums highlighted in this thesis share a common methodological commitment in their display practices as a means of supporting and encouraging craft practice. As stated in the Exhibition chapter of this thesis, they all place similar importance on display methodologies that facilitate visual inspection to emphasise details and techniques of the craft; for instance watches displayed with their backs open to expose the mechanism, mirrors used in displays to facilitate viewing fans and lace from various angles, and open, unprotected display of quilts and stained glass that facilitates interrogation at close at range. These opportunities to visually interrogate the constituent components of specific craft skills contribute to the perpetuation of the craft as well as the intangible cultural heritage of the associated craft skills. It is important to note here as well those small museums that allow objects from their collections to leave the museum for external interrogation, such as The Quilters' Guild's Traveling Trunk

handling collections (The Quilters' Guild Collection, 2016) and The Lace Guild Museum's unusual policy of allowing members to sign out pieces of lace for home study without any supervision required (The Lace Guild, 2017a).

My research as demonstrated that the attributes of the small craft museums cited above, makes them essential and possibly irreplaceable resources for their heritage craft practitioners and the knowledge transfer of their intangible craft skills.

### **How do small craft museums engage the wider public with their heritage craft?**

As stated earlier, these museums tend to attract visitors with a preexisting mode of engagement with the museum's specific heritage craft, while the historical nature of the craft helps to reinforce this connection. My study has demonstrated that, while they all use objects that are specific examples of their craft as a means of engagement, each of the craft museums represents an entirely different craft and is unique from the others not only for the attributes of its specific craft, but also in its location, organisation and resources that directly affects the manner in which they are able to engage the wider public with their craft.

For some, like The Clockmakers' Museum, the organisation and resources behind the Museum have not allowed for Museum-associated personnel of any kind to be available to engage with visitors in the physical space of the museum. Nor do the craft skills required make it possible to offer clock making classes or workshops. These circumstances dictate an indirect, passive approach that presents this craft in a didactic permanent display format that places the 'responsibility' for engagement on the visitor. However, this small museum is now also in the unique but challenging position of being located in the much larger Science Museum. As a consequence, while The Clockmakers' didactic approach may have been more successful in engaging visitors in its original location that would have attracted already interested members from the wider public, it can be now be understood to attract not only those visitors who are specifically interested in the subject of clock making but also those

who are visiting the Science Museum for entirely different reasons and for whom the didactic approach may not be an effective means of engagement. That being said, The Clockmakers' has one overriding attribute in its favour that offers a means of engagement for the vast majority of its visitors regardless of specific interest; the nearly universal use of clocks and watches around the world.

The same could be said of The Fan Museum in that this museum's craft subject can be understood to be relatively universal as well. In addition, The Fan Museum takes a similar didactic approach in its display format and materials as that of The Clockmakers' but does so in a series of temporary thematic exhibitions that have the potential to engage the wider public through its changing themes that could offer 'something for everyone'. Unlike The Clockmakers' however, this museum owns its location, and its organisation, resources and required craft skills have allowed it to engage the wider public in monthly fan making workshops, as well as community outreach projects and special events, such as the Street Fans project cited in the Collections and Learning chapters, for the purposes of trying to perpetuate the craft.

Still other museums, such as The Lace Guild Museum and The Quilt Museum, are similar to The Fan Museum in their offering of rotating temporary thematic exhibitions for encouraging engagement, as well as having organisations, resources and craft skill requirements that allow them to engage the wider public in their craft. However The Lace Guild Museum and Quilt Museum differ in the depth of engagement they are able to offer. The Lace Guild Museum owns its location, offers regular lace making classes for all ages and week-long lace making 'schools' for adults, and has recently increased its live lace making demonstrations in the Museum to three days a week. But the Quilt Museum was a tenant in its location, has closed both its Museum and education room for the indefinite future, and has resorted to offering temporary exhibitions on only twenty days per year as a membership scheme in an effort to keep its Collection accessible to the wider public.



The Stained Glass Museum is a museum that bears similarities to The Clockmakers' Museum in that it is a permanent exhibition that is displayed in a didactic format, located within a much larger building that is not its own, but that has the ability to put the museum's subject into context for the wider public. However, unlike The Clockmakers', this Museum's organisation, resources and craft skill requirements allow it to be the only museum in this thesis with a dedicated learning officer and schools program in addition to the classes it offers for adults.

### **How are small museums, and small craft museums in particular, represented in the literature?**

What my research shows is that, for all intents and purposes, there is no representation of small museums, much less small craft specific museums, in the literature. The small independent museum category in England traces its origins to a period of explosive expansion during the 1970's and 1980's (Middleton, 1990, p. 17; Commission, 1988, p. 10, cited in Candlin, 2016, p. 1; Hooper-Greenhill, 1988, p. 220; Lumley, 1988, p. 1). In 2018, this category accounts for the majority of the museum sector in the UK. Yet, as this study has demonstrated, nearly forty years later the sector's literature continues to exclude these organisations from the sector discourse, with the exception of their inclusion as a category in sector reports and commissioned studies (Kendall, 2013b; Evans et al., 2001; Middleton, 1990). However these are written as overarching views of the sector rather than focusing on specific small museums. With only one book that takes this museum category seriously, Dr. Fiona Candlin's *Micromuseology* (2016), any comprehensive survey of small single subject museums becomes entirely problematic. While this lack of representation speaks volumes for the parochial manner in which small museums are viewed, the current situation does nothing towards advancing knowledge about this majority sector category.

In fact, the opposite would appear to be happening. In the Literature Review chapter of this thesis, I presented evidence from a variety of sector authors demonstrating that when small museums are mentioned in the

literature at all, it is with a dismissive tone (Davies, 2010, pp. 5-6; Hein, 2000, p. 18; p. 143; Samuel, 1999, p. 27; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, p. 24), or as a brief unexplored aside (Falk and Dierking, 2013, p. 133; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, p. 98), that has the ability to discredit them from serious consideration in the relevant discussion and potentially perpetuate their continued exclusion.

As a result of this continued exclusion, research into the small museum category, and in this instance, craft specific small museums, requires a reliance on alternative sources of information such as popular media and craft guild publications. Craft museums can be found in sector literature only to the extent that they are included in sector journals as notices and reviews of exhibitions held in various museums, or in discussions of specific exhibitions held in large museums that are cited within both museum and craft sector literature; neither of which offer details regarding specific craft museums as a category of study.

I was unable to glean any definitive answers from the sector literature to account for the continued exclusion of small museums by the sector, nor was it the remit of this thesis to find answers. However, based on my own research for this thesis and my experience of visiting many of these small organisations, I can make assumptions about the factors that contribute to the sector's apparent lack of interest as a frame of reference for those who choose to research this museum category in the future. My assumptions include, but are not limited to, the challenges associated with finding the existence of these museums from the outset, due to the lack of a definitive list of small museums as well as a limited and/or inaccurate web presence; the time and financial considerations associated with visiting them, as they are dotted around the country and most are not located in city centres; that many are owned and run and/or staffed by volunteers, part-timers and non-museum professionals thus making them 'amateur' organisations; limited/seasonal opening hours are not uncommon, making visiting problematic; and the various challenges faced by these small organisations in meeting the criteria set for inclusion by the Museums Association (The Museums Association, 2015) and ACE (Arts Council England, 2018) that require a degree of professionalism to confer

acceptance and which are reflective of a parochial elitist attitude toward those that do not conform to the established norms of 'traditional' museums.

On this last point, the prevailing attitude chooses to disregard other forms of expertise that exist outside of the formal roles of museum practice, for instance that of experienced craft practitioners, like woodcarver David Esterly cited in the Introduction to this thesis (Esterly, 2015; 1998), and the communities of 'amateur' practitioners for whom making and perpetuating their craft are the reasons for their engagement with the museum. The implications of this statement are not intended to denigrate professional curatorial expertise, but rather to draw attention to the differences in expertise that could serve to complement and inform each other for the benefit of the sector as a whole. 'The [professional] curator may be an expert in museum theory and practice, may have a broad and sometimes deep knowledge of sources, and may be very experienced in a range of museum-applicable techniques, including artefact analysis. But the experts are the ordinary people who make history and who create and shape it' (Kavanagh, 1990, p. 82).

This applies to written sources as well. For instance Esterly wrote the exhibition book that accompanied his Victoria and Albert exhibition cited in the Introduction chapter (Esterly, 1998). As such, the 'exhibition and the book are not so much the product of an academic or a curator but of a determined perfectionist with a mission to communicate' (Thurley, 1998). For the 'amateur' craft practitioners engaged in craft museums as volunteers and part-timers, without recognised 'professional' standing in the museum sector, even if their written contributions were accepted for publication in the museum sector literature, many only have time to write for their own practitioner publications such as The Lace Guild's quarterly *Lace* publication (Lace, 2018) and The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles' quarterly publication, *The Quilter* (2018b).

While the possible factors I have offered here is not a comprehensive or detailed list, it is indicative not only of a myriad of possible factors for the exclusion of the small museum category from the sector's literature and

discourse, but also of this researcher's findings that support those offered by Candlin in *Micromuseology*.

Ultimately, for the museum sector, and those individuals involved in museum studies, the ramifications of these circumstances that see the largest category in the sector all but ignored in the sector literature, is disturbing. It calls into question the reliability of museum studies literature that is far less than comprehensive, and in turn, the limited nature of the sector discourse, for its ability to inform a thorough valid understanding of these small organisations and their contribution to the sector.

### **What challenges do small craft museums face in realising their craft related objectives?**

The small heritage craft museums presented in this thesis face a wide range of diverse challenges while trying to realise their craft related objectives. All face what could be called 'shared' challenges, such as security from theft or the threat of fire or flood that could destroy the entire collection in these small museums. However, one of the biggest collective challenges is that of respect; respect as small museums within the museum sector, as primarily volunteer run organisations, and as heritage craft specific organisations. With the possible exception of crafts like the Clockmakers', heritage crafts seem to be thought of as inherently the nostalgic hobby of older people and therefore unimportant (a societal perspective that would be a thesis in its own right). As frustrating as it is for these organisations in wanting to be taken seriously, their remit is not to actively try to change perspectives but rather to keep the doors open and perpetuate their craft.

As stated above and illustrated by the various museums discussed in the Case Study chapter of this thesis, another huge challenge facing these small heritage craft museums is the economic reality of keeping their doors open. All five museums chosen as case studies were open viable organisations when I started the research for this thesis but, as already mentioned throughout this paper, The Clockmakers' Museum and The Quilt Museum and Gallery both had dramatic changes of circumstance during the course of my research. Like

The Stained Glass Museum, both museums were tenants in their respective locations while The Lace Guild and The Fan Museum own their buildings.

For The Clockmakers', their unique arrangement with the Science Museum allows them to remain autonomous but has otherwise radically changed both how The Clockmakers' Museum is experienced, as discussed in the Exhibition chapter, and how this Museum will operate moving forward, the ramifications of which it is too early to determine. However, based on comments from James Nye, it can be inferred that The Clockmakers' will introduce some type of educational programme aimed at school aged children as well as activities for adults such as lectures and demonstrations (Nye, 2017b; 2018f). This creates not only logistical challenges for The Clockmakers', but will also necessitate an internal organisational debate to determine its educational objectives specific to its Museum, as it did not have the resources to implement an educational programme within the Museum in its previous Guildhall location.

The situation could not be more different for The Quilt Museum and Gallery, which closed its doors in 2015 and which will remain closed for the indefinite future. As a result, The Quilt Museum faces challenges providing access to its Collection for both the its guild members and the wider public; a challenge that has a direct bearing on this Museum's accreditation status. The Museum hopes that the recent implementation of a temporary exhibition membership scheme will serve to reinstate their full accreditation status to enable them to start moving forward with other plans for Collection access.

Other challenges are more distinctive due to the unique nature of the individual organisations and their specific heritage crafts. For instance the ramifications for The Stained Glass Museum whose unique location inside the medieval Ely Cathedral presents challenges associated with collection storage space, which is nearly exhausted and will begin to effect the Museum's collecting activities going forward; as well as physical access to the Museum space due to the absence of a lift for those with mobility challenges, which curator Jasmine Allen states 'isn't acceptable in the twenty first century' (2017b). The absence of a lift also creates logistical challenges for the staff,

such as the necessity of having to carry an 80kg glass panel up the narrow circular stone staircase that provides access to the museum (Allen, 2017b).

All five museums face challenges associated with manpower to a greater or lesser degree, with most being heavily reliant on volunteer support. For example, The Lace Guild and its Museum are run entirely by volunteers with three clerical staff. The Museum has been open to the public one day a week without appointment and offering live lace making demonstrations by a volunteer on that day. The Museum Committee made the decision to increase these public open demonstration days to begin in early 2018. However, this decision required months of planning during which time additional volunteers had to be recruited and trained in proper procedures related to the Museum, and new organisational structures for volunteer scheduling had to be created before the new hours could be implemented. The Lace Museum is also reliant on its volunteers for teaching its lace making classes and workshops.

There are also logistical challenges facing the museums that are located outside of central London that would like to participate in opportunities for community and sector engagement in London. For instance, The Stain Glass Museum has participated in the past in the Glaziers' Art Fair that is open to the public at Glaziers' Hall in Central London (The Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass, 2015; 2016). The Fair had been held over two consecutive days but has plans to increase this to five days in 2018. Curator Jasmine Allen states, that while it is important to have a presence at these types of activities, the logistics required means the Museum will be unable to participate in the new format. Allen says the coordination required to ensure the Museum is properly staffed as well as finding people to man the Fair stall presents its own challenges, particularly as the Museum cannot afford to put people in up in a hotel for the week. In addition, Allen cites the challenges associated with the necessity of bringing objects for the Fair into London by train because the Museum cannot afford the parking for five days (2017b).

The small museums highlighted in the case studies, as well as those included in the shortlist in the Case Study chapter, are a microcosm that illustrate only a few of the myriad challenges facing these small heritage craft

museums in trying to remain viable and accessible in order to realise their craft related objectives. They reflect the serious economic issues currently facing the sector as a whole, and a crisis for small independent museums in particular, and demonstrate the tenacity with which these small heritage organisations strive to perpetuate their equally fragile heritage craft skills.

Throughout the course of research for this paper, when discussing my topic with others, I was consistently asked for my opinion as to why heritage craft is marginalised and to offer possible solutions to address the issue, as well as that of the survival of small craft specific museums. As previously discussed in this chapter, it was not the remit of this thesis to find answers. Nor were there any solutions to the complexities of these questions readily apparent during the course of my research. Therefore I would not presume to have the answers. Ultimately all I can do is offer my opinion based on my research and experiences.

While some might say that the activities and circumstances of the case study museums themselves offer some possible solutions I would say that true solutions will be slow in coming until such time as the skills associated with handcraft are accorded a level of respect similar to that of art and design, and distinctions between amateur and professional are less polarised. As art collector Stefan Edlis states in the film *The Price of Everything*, 'there are a lot of people who know the price of everything and the value of nothing' (2018).

In terms of shifting the marginalisation of craft, a useful start would be a willingness to recognise the importance of craft in our daily lives and to entertain flexible perspectives on craft's applications in other activities and professions; as in the example set by vascular surgeon Dr. Roger Kneebone at Imperial College London in training medical students (Crafts Council, 2019; All Party Parliamentary Group for Craft, 2018a; Weaver, 2018). However this requires an initial awareness of the various handcrafts and television series such as BBC2's *The Great Pottery Throw Down* and *The Great British Sewing Bee*, supported by occasional programmes such as BBC4's *Handmade: By Royal Appointment*, would appear to be making some inroads in raising the

profile of craft in the UK (The Great Pottery Throw Down, 2017; 2015; The Great British Sewing Bee, 2016; 2015; 2014; 2013; Handmade: By Royal Appointment, 2016). In addition, BBC4's 2011/2012 year long series *Handmade in Britain*, that profiled the decorative arts, is to be followed in 2019 by BBC2's series *Made in Great Britain* that will tell 'the story of how the craft and manufacturing skills have shaped the country's towns and cities and built modern Great Britain' (*Made in Great Britain*, 2019; *Handmade in Britain*, 2011). Continued programming of these types of series, ones that demonstrate the skill processes involved in making, could go a long way towards increasing respect for the importance of heritage craft.

While effective outreach by these small craft museums is a useful solution for raising awareness and perpetuating the individual crafts, any type of activity (such as offsite workshops and school visits), or outside participation (such as craft fairs), presents a variety of challenges, including volunteer organisation and participation, as well as funding for things like entry fees, transportation and craft materials. As cited in the Exhibitions chapter of this paper, The Fan Museum had to crowd source £13 thousand pounds for its outreach activities to raise awareness of its endangered craft while the Stained Glass Museum, as cited earlier in this chapter, has chosen to stop participating in the Glaziers Fair because it had become too problematic to organise and finance.

Membership in the Heritage Craft Association is yet another way to support ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the importance of handcraft and its benefits, as well as support makers. As the advocacy group for craft in the UK, the HCA has recently organised the All Party Parliamentary Group for Craft and continues to try to find creative solutions for helping makers to perpetuate their heritage craft. However the HCA is, like the case study museums, an organisation run primarily by volunteers, with a handful of part-timers, many of whom are also practicing crafts people that, without access to the same types of funding as contemporary craft and the UK's built heritage, face challenges in keeping the organisation running.



As for solutions to maintain the viability of small museums I would suggest that, for a variety of reasons, residence in a larger institution, like the Clockmakers' in the Science Museum, should not be considered an option unless faced with imminent closure. If the small museum is fortunate enough to retain its small independent status within the larger organisational context, it nonetheless ceases to exist as a separate entity in the experience of the visitor, particularly if the visitor had not visited its previous stand-alone location. The small museum becomes yet one more gallery of objects in an already overwhelming sensory environment. Furthermore, this environment creates challenges for those specialists/practitioners who come specifically for the small craft museum, as they now have to navigate a very large, very busy, public space to access the exhibition.

Being embedded in a larger institution would also be problematic for those case study museums that have collections requiring revolving temporary exhibitions for conservation reasons. The Clockmakers' is a permanent exhibition that only has to close briefly twice a year for the Keeper to change the time on all the clocks for daylight savings time. Constantly revolving exhibitions could prove to be far more complicated logistically and would require proper onsite storage facilities. Logistics could also prove challenging for hosting special events out of hours as well as for craft specific classes and workshops, as these educational offerings would have to happen within the larger institution's during its opening hours, rather than during a flexible schedule of evening classes for students and employed adults.

'Living museums' such as Colonial Williamsburg in the US and Beamish in the UK, both cited earlier in this paper, offer live heritage craft 'demonstrations' such as printing and pottery making (Beamish, 2019; Colonial Williamsburg, 2019). Beamish is similar to Williamsburg in that it offers an immersive experience in authentically recreated period environments. However, while all live heritage craft demonstrations have the ability to inform and inspire, the in situ 'working' heritage craft demonstrations offered on an ongoing daily basis at Beamish are more limited in scope than in Williamsburg (Beamish, 2019; Colonial Williamsburg, 2019). It should also be

stated that the use of heritage crafts practitioners to build and maintain these authentic period environments, in addition to their use as daily demonstrators, has the added benefit of supporting practitioners and possibly perpetuating the craft.

Would embedding small heritage craft museums in an organisation like Beamish be a solution as with the discussion in the previous paragraph? While placing it in an environment that could give it context it, once again, becomes problematic for a variety of reasons. First and foremost it would do a disservice to the craft museum and its specific handcraft to be 'labeled' as belonging only to a specific time period rather than being of universal importance. Offering period-related demonstrations is one thing, an entire museum is something else. The same variety of logistical challenges as those cited earlier would also apply in terms of temporary exhibitions, special events, regular classes, and so on.

The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts (Heritage Craft Association, 2017a) illustrates the importance of perpetuating the intangible cultural heritage of heritage crafts in the UK. As this thesis has demonstrated, the heritage craft museums presented here offer an important avenue for the continuous transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge between craft practitioners and non-practitioners of all ages and skill levels and an important resource for practical and social interaction through their communities of practice. The five museums presented in this thesis are united in their desire to celebrate and support their respective heritage crafts, practitioners and enthusiasts, as well as hoping to inspire the public to join their ranks. Regardless of whether these museums take a passive indirect approach to knowledge transfer by offering educational funding opportunities, or a direct approach by offering hands-on classes and workshops conducted by craft practitioners, the continued viability of these museums and their heritage crafts is contingent upon inspiring future generations to actively engage in perpetuating the intangible cultural heritage of these heritage crafts.

## Appendix A

### List of Interviewees:

Ajoku, Victoria: Interview with the author. Greenwich, London, 4 July 2017.

Alexander, H  l  ne: Email correspondence with the author. 22 March 2018

Allen, Jasmine: Email interview with the author. 11 June 2013.

Conversation with the author. Ely, 31 July 2013.

Email interview with the author. 19 August 2013.

Conversation with the author. London, 23 December 2016.

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## **Appendix B**

### **List of Lace Guild Museum Committee meetings attended:**

The Lace Guild Museum Committee meeting: 30 May 2013  
The Lace Guild, The Hollies, Stourbridge.

The Lace Guild Museum Committee meeting: 5 January 2017  
The Lace Guild, The Hollies, Stourbridge.

The Lace Guild Museum Committee meeting: 27 April 2017  
The Lace Guild, The Hollies, Stourbridge.

The Lace Guild Museum Committee meeting: 31 August 2017  
The Lace Guild, The Hollies, Stourbridge.

The Lace Guild Museum Committee meeting: 2 November 2017  
The Lace Guild, The Hollies, Stourbridge.

The Lace Guild Museum Committee meeting: 4 January 2018  
The Lace Guild, The Hollies, Stourbridge.

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**Note: The AIM Bulletin is edited by Diana Zeuner and the vast majority of it is also written by her with occasional articles attributed to outside authors. As such, for the purposes of this bibliography and related references I have chosen to cite articles in this publication as only the AIM Bulletin unless another author was specifically attributed.**

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