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Fiona Candlin, Toby Butler, and Jake Watts. *Stories from Small Museums* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022, 205 pp., pbk, ISBN 978-1-5261-6688-3).

At a time when the reports of museum closures seem a depressingly regular feature in newspapers, this volume from Fiona Candlin, Toby Butler, and Jake Watts, is both timely and, in so many ways, welcome. The product of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Funded ‘Mapping Museums’ project, *Stories from Small Museums* is based primarily on a series of interviews conducted by Candlin and Butler across the British Isles with Watts joining to provide further in-depth research. As such it stands as a remarkable testament to small museums across Britain at what can best be described as a crossroads. In turns funny, erudite, and moving, it is both sweeping in scope and awash with intimate, carefully researched, and respectfully presented details.

Small or micro-museums have a special place in the heritage landscape. The authors point particularly to the work of the cultural historian Raphael Samuel, whose *Theatres of Memory* published in 1994 shaped much of the debate about the evolving heritage landscape in post-industrial Britain. Samuel mapped out a vibrant and growing heritage world in a post-war

Britain where government, whilst involved, took a backseat to ‘public agitation and voluntary action’ and the definition of what heritage entailed expanded across ‘environments and artefacts which in the past would have been regarded as falling beneath the dignity of history’ (Samuel [1994] 2012: 208–10). For Samuel, the authors note (pp 14–15), the boom in micro-museums was a welcome democratization of the historical narrative with those founders contributing to new and powerful Unofficial Histories as he termed them. Although subsequent research has fleshed out our understanding of the heritage landscape in modern Britain, through regional and temporal case studies, there has been no study of the founding figures of that wave of small museums despite the ‘strong bearing’ such motivations have on how we conceive of those museums. It was this question of personal motives that drove Candlin, Butler and Watts to their project, with Candlin and Butler travelling the country to interview founders and successors in museums across Britain, and Watts contributing follow-up research in detail.

Stories from Small Museums is divided up into four chapters bookended by an introduction and a conclusion. Three of these chapters are grouped by type of museum, a methodology that emerged as the authors found that each visit to a small museum inevitably saw them sent onwards to two or three other, similar sites by recommendations from the enthusiastic staff. The clusters that emerged from their work were 'Transport museums', 'War and conflict museums', and 'Local history museums', with the fourth chapter being specifically focused on the museum founders themselves. Given the sheer variety of the micro museums across Britain, and the enthusiasm of their founders and supporters, it is inevitable that other examples outside of those focal areas infiltrate the text, and the first few pages record visits to the Bakelite Museum, the Cartoon Museum, and the Museum of Classic Sci-fi (pp. 1–3). The thematic structure, however, lends itself well to organizing this mass of information and, as the authors uncover in their analysis of the interviews and museum histories they collect, there are plenty of shared experiences and patterns in how these museums were founded and continue to operate.

Of the three clusters of case studies that form the core of this volume, the transport museums covered, ranging from heritage railways and commercial vehicle museums to vintage bus collections and general museums of transport, have founding stories that accord perhaps most closely with the post-industrial decline narrative the authors seek to complicate. Formed in the aftermath of declining services, technological changes, or industry 'rationalisations' (including most famously the Beeching cuts to Britain's railways), these were communities of passionate enthusiasts often with a desire to restore and operate their collections (Beeching, 1963). But there are important complications to

the accepted wisdom here. Some were set up by the industry itself, others by unconnected but passionate fans. Many, the authors note, did not set out to build museums but rather came to that process gradually. The founding stories here reflected the chaotic and uncertain nature of change in Britain's transport industry more, perhaps, than any one decisive moment of de-industrialisation.

It is a story shared with the second cluster of museums examined here: museums of war and peace. Interestingly here the authors defend their pairing of regimental and military-site museums with anti-war institutions like Bradford's Peace Museum by observing that all conflict museums are products of the stability and reflection that only times of peace bring, but also of the uncertain place of the military in post-war society (pp. 98–99). The authors are careful here to mark out how each museum, regardless of type, speaks to issues of identity. This was particularly important for founders, as museums are places that house not just objects but the strong attachments people have to those objects—be those to specific regiments, conflicts, or, most often, human memories of sacrifice and tragedy. In discussing the Black Watch Museum, the authors put it best: in sites such as these 'the stories of the soldiers, the founder, and their families are all closely intertwined' (p. 87).

Local history museums stand slightly apart from the other two clusters in Candlin, Butler, and Watts's work. Whilst there are obvious similarities—a deep connection to community and the dedicated agency of those who founded them to tell disappearing stories—there are also important distinctions. Women tend to be more prominent in the founding of local museums, they note, and whilst female founders and staff were highlighted in the previous sections, it is here that the text really focuses on them. The vital, but

under-recorded, work of women in finding sites, sourcing objects, recording stories, and lobbying local authorities to preserve local ways of life as far apart as Cornwall, Wales, and the Yorkshire Dales is given due prominence in this section. But so too is their important work in saving for posterity the work and lives of *historical* women, dovetailing very closely with the growth of women's history in both popular and academic discourse at the time. These case studies show the local museum as a site of community remembering and engagement, both for long-term residents and newcomers. It is a nice return to one of the early examples of the book: the absorbing story of Elizabeth Cameron, one of the founders of the Laidhay Croft Museum in Caithness on the far tip of Scotland, who began opening the eighteenth-century croft as a museum almost as soon as she and her husband bought the property in 1968 and continues to relish taking passing visitors around (pp. 22–24). The value these museums have, and continue to have, for founders, communities, and visitors comes very clearly in the candid quotations of those interviewed. In many ways this was the most engaging of the chapters, and one which at the same time could have been expanded into its own volume.

Turning, finally, to the subject of founding figures allows the authors to take a step back and engage in a broader analytic survey. It is here where the real challenge to the accepted wisdom of Raphael Samuel's thesis is to be found, for whilst Candlin, Butler, and Watts note the importance of his inclusive vision of heritage over the past few decades, they point out that his vision of small museums as being a democratic expression of how 'the people' were mapping out their own histories needs significant qualification. There are surprising insights here. That so many of the micro museums of the 1960s

onwards opened in the south-east of England, for example, suggests that they cannot all be seen as communities responding to the shock of deindustrialisation. Another pertinent observation of the authors is that the demographic profile of founders was almost exclusively White. Indeed, identifying anyone from a Black or Asian background involved in establishing a micro-museum was a major challenge, and those few museums that they were able to investigate, such as the Criterion Heritage Centre and the Asian Music Circuit Museum, told of particular difficulties around funding and recognition (pp. 142–51). In short, their work is an important reconsideration of the prevailing wisdom surrounding the post-war museums boom.

The utility of this book extends far beyond what it has to say about Samuel's work. It is a well-timed intervention, as the founders of small museums age and retire, leaving their creations in the hands of others, but also as shifts in the cultural and financial landscape of Britain affect how staff, supporters, and visitors understand these sites. One of the themes that runs through the volume is the connection between identity and purpose; so many founders seem to have discovered a strong calling to commemorate or memorialise a moment, place, or industry that they felt was both of broad social significance and of personal importance to them. Stories herein of transport museums saving vehicles from scrapheaps or migrants to Cornwall putting down their own roots in a community through helping establish local history museums are fascinating insights into an evolving heritage landscape that can be both culturally significant and deeply personal at the same time.

There is very little room for improvement in this book. It is a slim and well-written volume that moves from topic to topic with ease without losing sight of its

focus on the experiences of founders. That focus on founders does, perhaps, mean it overlooks, or simply cannot include, the obvious follow-on question about what might be called ‘inheritors’. Throughout I found myself wondering about the second generation of small museum managers, those who inherited an established (but often ongoing) vision but now find themselves in a financially austere heritage landscape in twenty-first century Britain. With so many of these museums under threat of closure, and so many already closed, it seemed a shame not to reflect more upon this in the conclusion.

In summary, I cannot recommend this book highly enough. I can scarcely remember a book that I discussed more frequently with colleagues in the museum, often a group who struggle to find time for reading museum studies. It is an important intervention in the field, one that reflects on a critical part of the heritage landscape and enhances our understanding of how small museums are established and how different individuals are drawn into the heritage sector. As such

it is of particular use to students and researchers interested in contemporary debates about museums, localism, community engagement, and widening participation in our island stories. But it is also, crucially, a reminder for those of us already working in the sector of why we do what we do, and how special it can be for those who participate. It is a book that has reinvigorated my love of museums at a time of considerable upheaval for the sector; I recommend it highly.

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Paul Everill and Karen Burnell, eds. *Archaeology, Heritage and Wellbeing: Authentic, Powerful and Therapeutic Engagement with the Past*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2022, xvii and 283 pp., 31 b/w figs, 11 tables, hbk, ISBN: 978-1-032-01265-2).

The last fifteen years has seen the swift emergence and development of heritage and wellbeing studies, most especially within the last five years with the production of numerous reports (e.g., Heritage Alliance, 2020; Reilly et al., 2018), systematic reviews (e.g., Pennington et al., 2018) and practice-based studies (e.g., Darvill et al., 2019). *Archaeology, Heritage and Wellbeing: Authentic, Powerful, and Therapeutic Engagement with the Past*, the latest collection of heritage-based

wellbeing studies, demonstrates just how far the field has come in such a short space of time and offers discerning guidance on how it might progress in the future.

Archaeology, Heritage and Wellbeing brings together contributions from a group of renowned heritage and mental health scholars with the intention of assisting archaeologists and heritage professionals to refine their modes of assessment, while also presenting to health practitioners the