

Great Expectations | A Portrait of the Wisbech & Fenland Museum/UK

“We have a preeminent role in making the collections accessible to all, enabling people to gain an understanding of things which are important to the social fabric of our society. And the fine balance which one has to achieve as a curator is that you present the information about an object without actually trying to detract from the object or distract from the visitors’ view of the object. – By this I mean, we want people to look at the object and not just read the label.” (David Wright, Curator Wisbech & Fenland Museum/UK)



Thomas Clarkson's chest

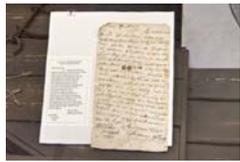


Great Expectations, the manuscript



Inside the Wisbech & Fenland Museum

My paper is an introduction to *Great Expectations*, my video and photographic portrait of the Wisbech & Fenland Museum, one of the UK's oldest purpose-built museums, which opened in 1847. Selected photographs and excerpts from the video will offer insights into the Victorian collection, which has remained virtually unchanged until today, assembling abundant objects ranging from an Egyptian mummy's hand via Oliver Cromwell's death mask to Charles Dickens' handwritten manuscript for the novel *Great Expectations*. My talk will explore the museum's history and contemporary relevance through its collections and archive, whilst curator David Wright will expound – in a video clip – on the curator's role in dealing with histories through objects. Local and imperial past merge in Wisbech born Thomas Clarkson, who was a key figure in abolishing the slave trade in the British Empire. Clarkson's chest, owned by the Wisbech Museum, was chosen by the British Museum for their *Teaching History with 100 Objects* initiative.



Great Expectations / Main project page

<http://www.sabine-buerger.de/ge.html>

Making a Difference – Thomas Clarkson, Abolitionist / A talk by Sabine Bürger

<http://www.sabine-buerger.de/clarkson.html>

Behind the Scenes at the Museum: The Wisbech & Fenland Museum / A talk by Sabine Bürger

<http://www.sabine-buerger.de/heritage.html>