

Museums n'That Episode 3 Transcript

Meg: Welcome to the Museums n'That podcast, where each episode we have a chinwag and serve you the steaming hot tea on the things museum people love the most. We're your hosts, Meg and Sara from Leeds Museums & Galleries, and we get to know the people behind the objects, by asking them the questions that you really want to know.

(Theme music)

Sara: Hello hello.

Meg: You're rustling.

Sara: I'm sorry.

Meg: That's really annoying. Stop rustling! (sighs) Right. Hello everyone it's us.

Sara: Hello!

Meg: Right so basically - we went back and listened to the introduction that we did for this episode, which was like before Christmas wasn't it?

Sara: Mmm hmm.

Meg: And it was bad.

(laughing)

Sara: Yeah we were a little bit disjointed, and as I put it earlier, not our usual chirpy selves.

Meg: Yeah I think it was at the end of the day and maybe we'd had a bit too much..

Sara: Mince pie action.

Meg: Bit too much mince pies.

Sara: Yeah.

Meg: That doesn't make sense does it?

Sara: No.

Meg: Bit too many. Bit too much.

Sara: Not a bit too many either. A few too many.

(laughing)

Meg: God. Like this is going to be so much better. Brilliant. So... but that also means that this is going to really mess up the timeline.

(laughing)

Sara: Yeah. Because lots of things have happened now.

Meg: Sara's done a marriage.

Sara: Yep, I did a marriage.

Meg: That was good. We've got 1000 listeners!

Sara: Over 1000.

Meg: That's well good isn't it. Can you believe that 1000 people have listened to this?

Sara: Last time we checked on our 4th bus of the day, we had 1007.

Meg: Sara made me get the bus it was really annoying.

Sara: Well... yeah I did.

Meg: Also, we've got tea this time! Listen to this. *(slurping)*

Sara: *(laughing)* no one wants to listen to that!

Meg: They might do. ASMR.

Sara: That is not ASMR.

Meg: Yeah it is! Yeah people having a little drink. *(laughing)*

Sara: Is it?

Meg: Yeah? *(slurping)*

Sara: You don't drink like that! Ooh it's very annoying.

Meg: My Grandad does. Shoutout to Ken.

(laughing)

Meg: Anyway, what's been happening? Oh yeah, by the way we watched Crufts.

Sara: Yes we watched Crufts. And we've asked everyone else in the office and apparently no one else watched it, so Meg and I have exhausted ourselves by talking about it to each other.

Meg: So if anyone wants to talk to us about Crufts please can you let us know because we are really desperate to talk about it. Talk to us about Maisie who did a poop.

Sara: Yeah and the Red Setter, and whichever one else was your favourite out of the finals.

Meg: Sucks to be literally anyone listening to this that doesn't care about Crufts, but there you go. Museums!

Sara: Oh yeah.

Meg: Who have we got on today? Slash, not today, it was ages ago.

Sara: *(laughing)* It was ages ago. Chris Sharp!

Meg: Actually, you know how we have done a disclaimer for literally every episode so far?

Sara: Yeah.

Meg: The disclaimer for this one...

Sara: Chris has got a really good radio voice.

Meg: Yeah it's very deep. So on his spotify playlist we've actually put on quite a lot of Barry White. And I think that says it all. I'll leave it there. So what can you expect from today? Smez?

Sara: Today, we talk about Leeds Industrial Museum. At Armley.

(slurping)

Meg: God, that tea is going down so nice.

Sara: Stop interrupting me! Chris is the assistant community curator at there and Thwaite Watermill.

Meg: Yeah he basically does loads of really gorgeous lovely things. And he talks a lot about how... just bloody lovely he is. And he also talks a bit about Nandos.

Sara: Yes.

Meg: Yorkshire.

Sara: Yeah. The Midlands.

Meg: The Midlands. What else do we talk about? Oh yeah. Potatoes.

Sara: Oh yeah, we do talk about potatoes. Controversial, we'll do a poll on it. I think always more. I think more is best when it comes to potatoes.

Meg: Sara loves mashed potatoes - in fact, at Sara's wedding we had mashed potatoes! In this episode actually I literally say Sara loves mashed potatoes and then at her wedding I was sat there, got my plate of food and it was mashed potatoes!

(laughing)

Sara: Couldn't bear it. I just couldn't look at her.

Meg: God, it was wild. Anyway, I'm really glad that we've recorded this because it's so much better than the one we had before...

Sara: Yeah it's such a massive improvement...

Meg: Yeah sorry about this everyone. But yeah basically, thanks for listening, all 1007 of you.

Sara: Yeah, carry on.

Meg: Yeah crack on.

(laughing)

Meg: Brilliant, right - so Chris Sharp's episode of Museums n'That. Enjoy.

(theme music)

Meg: Me and Sara have to share a microphone and I feel like we have to get really close. It's a bit weird and yesterday we shared a mezze platter - it was very garlicky - before we did the podcast.

Chris: You're getting to know each other really well from doing this, I can tell.

(banging noise)

Meg: Um, I heard a bang then who was that?

Sara: Sorry that was my fault.

Meg: That was you? You are literally *(sighs)*

Sara: I am the worst, I'm not allowed to wear the headphones anymore because I'm too lazy basically.

Meg: Yeah. So welcome to the podcast Chris Sharp, aka @TallMr.

Chris: @TallMr. That's a handle I need to get rid of.

Meg: No, I love it. How tall is @TallMr?

Chris: Mr Tall was already taken - um, Tall Mr is about 6 foot 6. That's exaggerating a bit.

Meg: What's it like up there?

Chris: It's cold, and windy. That's the most common comment.

Meg: Is it? It's Leeds isn't it. Greatest city in the world.

Sara: Every podcast we have to get this in that Leeds is the greatest city in the world.

Meg: But I do think it's the greatest city in the world. What do you think, like Derby or something? Where are you both from?

Chris: Derby? *(laughing)*

Sara: No.

Chris: I'm from Trowell.

Sara: Nearer Nottingham. So Nottingham's going to be the bigger city.

Chris: Nottingham being the best city in the world.

Sara: And also actually we were a bit well to do there, because no one calls it Nottingham. It's Nott'nham.

Chris: Nott'nham. And I'm from Traaall. I'm not really from Trowell at all, I'm from Traaall.

Sara: Drop all your vowels and basically mush all your letters together and then you've got a midlands accent.

Meg: Am I going to need to translate everything that you say?

Sara: Very possibly we might go really thick midlands.

Meg: So how long have you been in Leeds?

Chris: About 6 or 7 years?

Meg: And do you find that you keep saying, like, Leeds things?

Chris: A little bit. But I lived in Lancaster before that did I just say that?

(gasping)

Sara: Controversial.

Meg: Get out.

Chris: And Peterborough as well, so I've moved around a lot. No I ended up in Leeds and stopped working for Peterborough City Council and yeah, moved to Leeds in about 2012.

Sara: Were you just working your way around the city councils?

Chris: No no that was a complete accident.

Meg: Do you love local government Chris?

Chris: So one of my stock stories is that I used to work for HMV. That's my professional background.

Meg: RIP.

Chris: No not quite, it's still going.

Meg: Oh god.

Chris: They have made me redundant twice so far.

Sara: What? How did they not blackmark you the first time?

Chris: I'm just a bad penny. But no, so I came to Leeds and they took me back, they took pity, and I was a Christmas temp in the Leeds HMV for a year.

Sara: We probably crossed paths at some point when we were looking through the posters. Who buys posters anymore? You buy prints don't you now. Posters aren't cool.

Meg: What posters did you buy?

Sara: Band posters.

Meg: Good Charlotte.

Sara: No, probably Avril Lavigne.

Meg: So Chris tell us who you are and what you do in a museum context.

Chris: So I'm an assistant community curator which always needs some explanation.

Meg: And also that's a long title.

Chris: Yeah so my official title is assistant community curator at Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills and Thwaite Watermill. Which is a bit of a mouthful. That doesn't fit on my badge. That's my official job title.

Meg: I doubt that anyone in the world has a longer one.

Chris: It takes the whole first page of any powerpoint presentation, and my job is - well I think - my job is to make sure people can engage with the museum service on their own terms.

Sara: That's lovely! What a great way of putting it!

Chris: It's a really good job, that's my elevator pitch. I try and make sure that people who might not otherwise come into a museum can come into a museum and have a great time.

Sara: Great. I think that is what we should be all across the board.

Meg: I'm pulling my 'I love that face'. Yeah which is really good for radio. Meg and Smez FM. So tell us a little bit about Leeds Industrial Museum then if that's the place you work the most, because I've been lost in there so many times. Have you ever been lost there?

Chris: Err, yes. And I've worked there for about 3 and a half years now and there are still rooms I haven't been in. So it is a big old building.

Meg: What's in them?

Chris: Oh I daren't even ask, there's attic spaces - so yeah you can ask some of my colleagues about ghosts and you might get a more fun response than the one you'll get from me because I'm a bit of a cynic, but...

Sara: ...it's probably just dusty stuff?

Chris: It might just be dusty stuff. But the building that the museum is in now was built in 1805 so it is getting on a bit. It's coming up to 220 years old.

Meg: When did it stop being a mill?

Chris: 1971.

Meg: So do you work with a lot of people that come and they're like 'oh I used to work here'?

Chris: Sometimes. More often than not they tell me that they broke in and played when they were kids when it was derelict briefly in the 1980s.

Meg: Legends.

(laughing)

Chris: But yeah so quite often we find people that might have worked there when they were much younger.

Sara: Yeah I think that's what makes it quite unique in terms of the rest of our sites because, well, apart from the country houses of which I don't know that anyone's still alive that used to work in them, it still has that connection with the past for local people and that's incredible.

Chris: I don't know about the country houses, I suspect if anybody is still alive that used to work in them, we might find out after this! That would be great!

Sara: Yeah please please write in.

Meg: Have you ever been just wandering around minding your own business and stumbled on something weird?

Chris: Apart from colleagues?

(laughing)

Sara: Because you're 6 foot 6.

Chris: So that's a problem in old buildings because standard door frames are about 6 foot 6. I exaggerated before, I'm just over 6 foot 5, so normally I fit into a room quite easily. But in old buildings where the doors might be 6 foot 1 or 6 foot 2, they look the same but I hit my head a lot.

Meg: Do you find that all 6 foot 5 of you comes in handy when you're doing gardening?

Chris: It does - it certainly helps in the store room because there's a lot of stuff stored on high shelves. I think that's how I got the job... but yeah...

Meg: Do you think that's how you got the job? They were like 'we don't need a ladder'.

Chris: 'We need someone that can reach things 2 metres off the ground'. But yeah every week I help to run a gardening group, so a load of volunteers come...

Meg: Wait sorry. An award-winning gardening group.

Chris: An award winning gardening group! We're currently silver in the Communities Leeds in Bloom. So that was the first year we entered, obviously we didn't want to win gold.

Meg: No. Who cares about gold?

Chris: Exactly. Silver's so much cooler.

Meg: Yeah. But how lovely, so is it all volunteers?

Chris: Yeah so there's a great local charitable organisation called Hyde Park Source, and they do lots of outdoors work across the city, improving spaces or helping people improve their lives whilst improving outdoor spaces and the environment. So lots of volunteers, normally about 12 to 20 every Thursday, come and help me look after some of the gardens at Leeds Industrial Museum.

Meg: And what kind of stuff do you grow?

Chris: So the volunteers decide what we're growing. It started off growing plants that we use for dyeing fabrics.

Meg: What's the most exciting plant that you've grown?

Chris: The most exciting plant that we've grown? You'll soon find out that I'm not a gardener...

Meg: Do you grow vegetables?

Chris: Not at the moment. But we will be doing. That's the plan anyway... So in the World War Two 'dig for victory' garden we might be growing some veg in the near future.

Meg: Wartime veg. What's your best veg Chris?

Chris: My best veg? That's a topic of conversation I hadn't prepped at all.

(laughing)

Chris: So I don't know what to do with it but I quite like a mooli.

Meg & Sara: WOAHH. What?!

Chris: I have no idea if we can grow those in this country or not but I might try.

Meg: Is that that thing that's like long and white?

Chris: It's like a long white Japanese radish.

Sara: Ah. Cool.

Chris: And I just like the word mooli.

Meg: So Chris does a lot of work with Rebecca Machin and Rebecca Machin we had on in the first episode and she absolutely floored us by talking about Tibetan food. And I feel like you've just floored us a little bit by talking about mooli. I expected you to say, like, 'potato'. Or swede.

Chris: *(laughing)* I mean, I like a potato.

Meg: Yeah, who doesn't. Potatoes.

Sara: Mashed potatoes.

Meg: Sara loves mashed potatoes.

Sara: I do.

Chris: So, important question - Sunday dinner, would you have mashed potatoes and roast potatoes...

Sara: Yep.

Chris: Or would you have one or the other? This is a regional question I think.

Meg: Ok. I have actually recently gone off roast potatoes because I am so fed up of having bad ones. I go out for a Sunday roast and they're not crispy and I'm fuming about it. So I actually really like mash, and I like mash with chicken.

Chris: Creamy mash.

Meg: Creamy mash, yeah.

Sara: Mash with chicken? You mean in a chicken dinner not just mashed in chicken because that's weird.

Meg: No I like mash with chicken, you know like - ah, at Nandos, when you get chicken and you get 2 sides. 2 sides - mash, coleslaw.

Sara: Do you?! That's interesting.

Meg: Yeah, mash and chicken.

Chris: Am I the last person in the world that's never been to a Nandos?

(gasping)

Meg: Sorry what's the regional thing there, do you have both?

Chris: It just seems to be a Yorkshire thing to have either mash or roast with your dinner, but where I grew up we were wantonly having at least two sorts of potato on your dinner.

Meg: Do you have Yorkshire puddings no matter what?

Chris: Um so I'm not a massive fan of Yorkshire puddings.

Meg: Get out. Taxi for Chris. What, not even the big ones? You know when you have a big one and you have your dinner in it?

Sara: And you pour all of the gravy in it.

Meg: Like a sexy boat.

Chris: So did either of you used to have them for pudding after you'd had them for your dinner?

Meg: No.

Sara: No.

Chris: And your parents would just give you a yorkshire pudding with a spoonful of jam in it after you'd just had yorkshire pudding with a spoonful of gravy in the middle.

Sara: I feel like this is a traumatic story.

Chris: I think that's why I'm not a big fan.

Meg: I feel sick and weird.

Chris: Yeah, it's just too many yorkshire puddings.

Sara: Yeah no I get that.

Chris: You can't have like a 2 yorkshire pudding course meal, surely.

Sara: No it's lazy, and also it's very confusing for your brain! You've gone savoury and you've gone sweet with the same thing.

Chris: No that's fair. I can't believe you just called my mum lazy. But um...

Sara: I apologise Chris Sharp's mum. We love you.

Chris: We'll tag her in.

Sara: I'm sure your yorkshire puddings were absolutely marvellous and your son is a heathen for not liking them. There we go. Fixed it.

Meg: Amazing. So if you grow vegetables, are you saying what you'll do is make us a roast dinner with the vegetables and lots of potatoes?

Chris: I could give it a bash if you want.

Sara: Yeah.

Meg: Yeah, that would be good. Thank you for the kind invite there.

Chris: Ok, you are duly invited to a roast dinner at Armley Mills.

Meg: Brilliant. So tell us a bit more about the people you work with then. Who are they?

Chris: So the gardening project I mentioned, people who are at risk of or are living with mental health problems. Which is all of us, anybody that has a brain is at risk of having mental health problems, so I think that's everybody. Certainly everybody I work with. So I get to work with lots of different people.

Meg: There must be some challenges though with dealing with or working so closely with people that have mental health issues, what's your role there with them?

Chris: So it's about providing a positive and constructive venue for people to enjoy themselves, to learn, to change, to feel better about themselves. So sometimes I'm going out to dementia cafes - so there's lots of great organisations in Leeds that run cafes for older people that are living with dementia. I was at one yesterday morning which is run by the royal voluntary service over in Chapel Allerton. They're great - they're just really nice places where people can come together and share their difficulties and hopefully have a bit of a break from what's a really tough condition to be living with.

Meg: Sorry to interrupt - how do you manage that yourself though? So I remember when I first started my job and I came along with you on outreach to a dementia cafe...

Chris: ...I'd forgotten that. I feel really bad, I feel awful.

(Sara laughing)

Meg: Chris! Was it that unmemorable? Yeah we went to the dementia cafe in Horsforth.

Chris: Sounds very plausible.

Meg: So we took some of our collections and spent a couple of hours just talking to older people and people suffering with dementia and their carers come with them and have a little break and a tea and coffee or whatever. It was literally one time that I went with you and I had conversations with people there that left me with - well, it was quite draining. And sad, some of the conversations that I had with people. There was a woman who was getting quite visibly

upset and had to leave and I just found it quite draining myself and that was me just going once. So I was just wondering how you, I guess, deal with that.

Chris: It's really hard sometimes, because you do inevitably take some work home with you - you can't switch on and off. Generally speaking, it's a really positive experience for me as much as it is for the people I'm visiting - and I say that a little bit selfishly because I quite enjoy talking to groups. You mentioned taking museum objects, I quite often - because I work in an industrial museum - take really robust objects with me, things like flying shuttles from textile mills, lots of things that people might have a personal connection to, either through work or through their parents work. And we just hold them and talk about them and I listen as much as the group listens and it's just a really positive experience largely. Things aren't always perfect, some people's lives are complicated, everybody's lives are complicated, and you just have to rely on the support of your colleagues. You're listening, you're spending time with people who have really hard complicated lives. Some of that rubs off on you, and there isn't an easy answer to that except knowing that you're hopefully helping people is a really positive thing to be doing. It's nice after having worked in a shop for so many years to do something that's really quite positive and help.

Sara: And I think that's an amazing part of it for me, and the thing that I've always enjoyed about museums, is that cathartic element. You know, I am fortunate enough to not have felt the need to go to support groups but when I first came up here to university I was completely on my own and I always remember coming to Leeds Art Gallery and Leeds City Museum and just wandering around and thinking 'what the hell am I doing' - but I feel safe in here, but that's a very black and white way of looking at it but that's the first entry point usually for people going and accessing these spaces. But what you guys do by doing the outreach is just breaking down that barrier, and I think that's so important because there is a massive barrier in museums for people to access knowledge and information and the spaces can be quite intimidating. And to take that away and say 'no, it's just one person talking to another person, and we can talk about anything' - that's fantastic.

Chris: It's great to hear people like yourselves who work for Leeds Museums & Galleries but not necessarily delivering all the time to the community think like that. And I know that goes all the way through the organisation which is great. There is a perception that museums aren't for everybody and I fundamentally believe that museums are for everybody and there should be something in a museum that speaks to anybody that might come through the door, and there isn't always and that's part of my job as well: to make sure the museums reflect the people coming in. But also just to make people aware that we are there, and if you come in you're probably going to find it really interesting. You might not like all of it, but you'll probably find something that you'll really relate to or engage with. So yeah the flip side of that is I was with Armley Helping Hands - shout out to Armley Helping Hands! - they're a great community organisation.

Meg: Woop woop!

Chris: I was there yesterday afternoon with Rebecca Machin, the famous Rebecca Machin. And yesterday I was confronted with someone in the group who told me, when she found out which museum I came from, that industrial museums were just boring buildings filled with machines.

Meg: *(buzzer sound)*

Chris: Well they are buildings and they do tend to have some machines in them, and I would like to have the chance to convince that person that they were perhaps underestimating what they were going to find inside the museum. That leaves me wide open though to her coming in and not enjoying it and her telling me that it is just a building full of machines.

Sara: Don't worry. Leave it to us. That was a bit threatening wasn't it.

Meg: I think though that even with Leeds Industrial Museum especially - in fact, and Thwaite Watermill - even if industrial history isn't your thing, they are such beautiful buildings. I remember when I first went into Leeds Industrial Museums and I was like 'it's just an instagram dream isn't it'. Like in summer it's just so beautiful. Like with the - I wanna say - chimney? Is it a chimney?

Chris: There is a great big chimney.

Meg: Yeah but it's like a proper big chimney. Like you can see it from far away.

Sara: From the sky.

Meg: Yeah. From t'sky. But yeah it's just so lovely.

Chris: Yeah I think of both Thwaite Mills and Armley Mills as oases in Leeds, because they are ex-industrial sites, they are in fairly built up areas, they're not stuck out in the countryside. But both sit within their own grounds and they're just beautiful places to be. With the colour garden, we do grow plants for dyeing textiles as things like woad, that the celts would have used for painting their faces blue hundreds of years ago. We're still growing that at Armley.

Meg: Have you ever been tempted to paint your face blue?

Chris: No, but we have used it with the garden volunteers to dye some sheeps wool blue which is a very magical experience.

Sara: Wow.

Meg: We should get in touch with the Blue Man Group. Off of Arrested Development.

Sara: Yeah.

Meg: Tobias Funke.

(Sara laughing)

Meg: So, sheep.

Chris: Sheep.

Meg: Mad.

Chris: Well, sheep or alpacas.

Meg: I learnt by the way, alpacas.

Chris: Mmm.

Meg: Is that right? Like, most of the wool was from alpacas?

Chris: Er, some of the wool might have been from alpacas. I believe most of the wool came from sheep.

Meg: Oh.

Chris: I think because the current mill was built in 1805, at the time most of the wool that they were processing was coming from Yorkshire. And I don't think there were massive herds of alpacas in Yorkshire at the time?

Meg: God's own country. Oh I just had this wonderful vision of alpacas just roaming the streets of Armley, and going to Wilsons and getting a pie.

Chris: Alpacas in jumpers, I don't know why but yeah I can see that.

(laughing)

Chris: We do have alpacas every year at the Wool Festival, which is the first Saturday in June, so there are alpacas at Armley. There is a link.

Meg: Also at Armley of course: Temple Donuts.

Chris: Temple Donuts. Yep. I've been back since you introduced me to Temple Donuts Meg.

Meg: Which one did you have?

Chris: Well I've only had 1 donut. I just go for coffee now.

Meg: That's mad.

Sara: I can't not.

Meg: Sara went for a meeting the other day at Abbey House and we were based at the art gallery that day, and Temple Donuts does just happen to be in between both of them. So I text her and I was like 'if you wouldn't mind picking up a big box of donuts that would be fine'. So we had a big box of donuts didn't we.

Sara: We got 6.

Meg: Yeah.

Chris: Well again, it's close enough that you can smell them sometimes just wafting over. I should confess it's because it's close to Armley Mills and Abbey House that I did meet our colleague Patrick there the other day for a meeting. A high level meeting with Pat in Temple Donuts.

Meg: Oh wonderful. We're going to get Pat on. Series 2.

Chris: The fabulous Dr. Bourne.

Meg: Pat Bourne Band.

Chris: Pat Bourne Band. You know he's in a band?

Meg: Yeah! The Pat Bourne Band!

Chris: Is it called The Pat Bourne Band?!

Meg: 100%. I'll send you a link. It's on youtube.

Chris: Wow. So yeah Pat's in a band and he's got a music exhibition coming up. Can I do a shout for another band? A local band?

Sara: Yeah, of course you can.

Chris: Biscuithead and the Biscuit Badgers.

(Sara gasps)

Meg: Yes yes and the yes yes yes. Biscuit band...

Chris: Biscuithead...

(laughing)

Chris: He's the lead singer. And the Biscuit Badgers.

Meg: Do they sing about biscuits and badgers?

Chris: Um they sing about David Attenborough, that's my favourite song. There's a song called David Attenborough.

Meg: I nearly swore then. Did you see it?

Sara: You held it in.

Meg: I went fffffff... What? Wow!

Chris: Yeah I know the lead singer, he volunteers on the gardening project but also his band came and shot their latest video in the museum recently.

Sara: That's cool!

Meg: Chris this is actually very convenient because we're going to have a spotify playlist for every episode of this podcast. So perhaps...

Sara: ...that might be a starting track.

Meg: Yeah. Track number 1.

Sara: So that will be coming.

Meg: Yeah. Be excited. So what has been your favourite day at work?

Chris: My favourite day ever at work?

Sara: At this work.

Meg: Apart from that time that me and you went to the dementia cafe.

Sara: That you remember so fondly.

Chris: That I do remember! In Horsforth I think it was...

Meg: You cheeky mare.

Chris: I know. So before I had this job, before I'd ever worked in a museum, I somehow got interested in printing and I thought that might come up today...

Meg: I was going to ask you about printing!

Chris: I thought I'd get in there first. So yeah, I'm a real bore about 3 topics: gardens, printing and maybe that's just 2 topics.

Meg: I thought photography? I had photography.

Chris: Ahh I'd like to be better.

Meg: You had like a really old camera from the collection?

Chris: Yeah so I somehow got permission from our colleagues in the registrar team to take one of the cameras from the collection out and about in Leeds a couple of years ago. So I was walking around town with a 1950s Leeds camera.

Meg: Do we have those pictures? Do you still have them?

Chris: I do, I take them with me so I can show people the pictures with the camera.

Meg: Can we have them? So that we can share them with everyone listening?

Chris: If you want a terrible picture of Leeds Town Hall.

Sara: Yes always.

Chris: If you want a terrible picture of the Black Horse Statue.

Meg: 100%.

Chris: And an even worse picture of the Corn Exchange. Yeah I can do that.

Sara: We can get everyone to rate them on terribleness.

Chris: So yeah, photography, I'm not very good at. Printing, I quite enjoy in my spare time.

Meg: And you are very good at.

Chris: I think probably my favourite day, there was a moment at Armley Mills when I realised I was working in a building that had printing presses. And it took about 2 weeks for that penny to drop after I'd taken the job that I was in a building with printing presses, and the possibilities that that might lead on to. Yeah so we've got a couple of presses that are in working order that I get to use. So that's one of the favourite things I get to do at work.

Meg: So how old are they?

Chris: Oh so there's a Columbian press from 1845 which I use very rarely with community groups.

Meg: Sorry, from Columbia?

Chris: Ah so it was designed in America by a gentleman called George Clymer in the 1820s. Correct me if I'm wrong listeners, by the way.

Meg: That's mad isn't it - sorry, so you're using something from 1845.

Chris: So that's from 1845 and it's working life ended in Bramley, where I now live, that's my chosen residence in Leeds.

Meg: Named after the apple of course.

Chris: Well actually, controversially, bramley apples are from Nottinghamshire. Just wanted to throw that in there.

Meg: Oh for god's sake.

Sara: Yes yes yes yes.

Meg: Good.

Chris: I think Nottingham won that one. I hope so. Partisan crowd.

Meg: I've never been. I've never even been. I get off the M1 at Nottingham. How does that make you feel?

Sara: Terrible. Offended.

Chris: At Trowell service station. It's the finest service station in the land.

Meg: Is it? Has it got a Little Chef?

Chris: I doubt it? It had a Burger King the last time I passed through.

Meg: Oh, I don't like Burger King.

Chris: Oh. I've completely lost what we were talking about.

Meg: Yeah I know, same. This happens quite a lot.

Sara: Printing!

Meg: Printing! Yep! So you get to work on a printing press from 1845.

Chris: There's a printing press from 1845 that printed the Bramley Advertiser. That's where I was going with that. So it printed a newspaper, a local newspaper in Leeds. And the one I use more often is from 1850, and was built in London.

Sara: Good year.

Chris: Was it a good year? Well I don't know what happened in 1850?

Meg: What happened in 1850?

Sara: Printing press.

Chris: That printing press was made.

Meg: What else happened in 1850 though? Chris?

Chris: Don't talk to me like I work in a museum. I don't know things.

Sara: I'm going to google it.

Meg: If anyone listening has anything good that happened in 1850, please let us know. Chris.

Chris: Well no, really anecdotally I was told when I started working at Armley Mills that during the American Civil War, they made uniforms for both sides. And shipped them back to the States. So the Northern soldiers were wearing blue coats and the confederates were wearing grey coats and they were all being manufactured in Armley Mills and sold to America. And that would have been about 1850 but that's not my area of expertise.

Sara: That's still a great fact.

Meg: That's a really good fact.

Chris: Northern troops had more money so they could dye their overcoats blue.

Sara: Wow.

Meg: Oh you left a gap there so I was like 'they had more money so they could die there'. So they could come to Armley Mills to die.

Sara: Blue.

(laughing)

Meg: So was your favourite day at work the day you discovered that?

Chris: So probably the day I discovered that. And that there's loads of letterpress which I think is exciting stuff you can cover in ink and you can put in a printing press and if only someone could invent a machine that you could just type straight into and click print.

Meg: When are they going to do that?

Sara: That sounds boring.

Chris: I think so. So yeah I print like 2 pages an hour. I think that's efficient.

Sara: I think that's enough work for 1 hour.

Chris: More than enough. So yeah I went from having previously carved my own letters out of lino to now having wonderful historical printing equipment that I can use and share with the community groups - people like Pyramid of Arts, who support and work with artists with learning disabilities. They come and play with me sometimes printing in the museum which is great fun.

Meg: I want to do it.

Sara: Well go and do it.

Chris: Come along!

Meg: Can I? But the thing is, will I come along and will you then forget about it?

(laughing)

Sara: You are not going to live that down.

Chris: Only afterwards.

Sara: So we ask guests this question. There are actually 2 questions in it, it's a lie - everyone gets the same one. We want to find out what's the big takeaway for our listeners from what we've talked about today. What's the one thing that you would want everyone to know.

Chris: The one thing everyone should know? I feel like I've been put on the spot.

Sara: Yeah it is a little bit.

Chris: Very much.

Sara: It doesn't have to be anything serious. It doesn't even have to be anything work related. Errin's wasn't.

Meg: What was Errin's?

Sara: That she'd want to go out on a date with Bruce Springsteen and that if anyone knew him could they put her in touch.

Meg: And she wants to sort out his archive. Which is not a euphemism.
(laughing)

Chris: I wasn't even going there. Come to Armley Mills, it's great. We have a great exhibition on for 2020, which opened at the end of 2019 called Leeds to Innovation. Which is all about different innovations and inventions that have come from our great city of Leeds.

Meg: What's your best one?

Chris: My best one. So I mentioned Pyramid of Arts before I was lucky enough to feature those in the exhibition as an innovative organisation. They grew out of what was called the 'colony for the mentally deficient' at Meanwood Park Hospital, which was one of the biggest of such colonies in the country. And having gone from such dark beginnings they're a really joyous, wonderful organisation. So being able to feature those was great. But also, a chap lots of people haven't heard of called Washington Teesdale.

Meg: Sick name.

Chris: It's a great name. Mr Teesdale. Washington to his friends. From Headingley - was chair of the Leeds Astronomical Society in the 1880s, and we're featuring what might be, a bit

playfully, Leeds' oldest selfie which he took using the cyanotype method in about 1880, in front of the beautiful Kirkstall Abbey.

Sara: And it's taken from the back isn't it, and he's so cool about it.

Chris: It is, I need to find our Curator of Archaeology because she knows - Kat - knows the site so well.

Meg: She's coming on season 2!

Chris: Wahey. Well hopefully we're going to recreate the selfie from the same point it was taken 140 years ago. Watch out Museum Selfie day.

Meg: January? February?

Chris: I think January? Maybe?

Meg: Nice. Lets pray I get this out in time.

Chris: And also I'm making it sound like I just have fun at work, but it's a serious job for serious people.

Sara: Yeah very serious.

Meg: Very serious, very tall people. By natural extension then Chris. We would also like to find out what your favourite takeaway is.

Chris: Nice. Um my favourite takeaway... So recently there was a Japanese takeaway that opened in Armley and that's the last takeaway I ordered I think.

Meg: Are you being sponsored by Armley today?

Chris: I am. Cash in hand. Non declared. Don't audit me.

(laughing)

Chris: Yeah so I really enjoyed that Japanese takeaway.

Meg: Sorry, what was it called?

Chris: Oh I have no idea. Google Japanese takeaway in Armley, I'd be surprised if there's lots.

Meg: What is your takeaway order?

Chris: Ah so - gyoza (*pronounced wrong*). And um...

Meg: Gyoza (*pronounced wrong*)? As in... gyoza?

Chris: Am I saying that right? Gyoza? Do we say gyoza round here?

Meg: I don't know, am I saying that wrong?

Sara: Don't know. Do you prefer the fried ones or the soft ones?

Chris: Fried. But I like a pierogi as well, I'm sure I'm offending lots of people by comparing Polish cuisine with Japanese cuisine but I like a fried pierogi rather than a boiled pierogi.

Meg: I don't know what that is. But I want it.

Chris: Like a dumpling with... with... (*mouth noise*) delicious. But yeah. Not that fancy, so pizza also.

Meg: Ok wait wait wait. Pineapple on a pizza?

Chris: Yes.

Sara: No!

Chris: Ok, what about fish on a pizza?

Sara: Yes.

Chris: No.

Meg: No. Absolutely chuffing not.

Sara: Give me those anchovies. Once I ordered a pizza - this was a massive faux pas - and it had anchovies and capers on and a really hard cheese and it was so salty I thought my mouth was going to fall off my face.

Meg: I love that. When you eat something and then an hour later you're like - there's not enough water in the world to rehydrate me.

Sara: 'My body is dry'.

Meg: I had that after my mezze. Halloumi. Feta. Olives. Salty.

Sara: Oh it was salty, but delicious.

Meg: So Chris thank you so much for coming on our podcast. You've been a great guest.

Sara: Yeah, it's been really lovely talking to you and finding out about all of the brilliant things that you do. And yeah, just a joy to talk to you. And fellow midlands-er!

Chris: Well, you know, midland takeover.

Meg: Brilliant. Leeds is still the greatest city in the world. I can't wait for you to forget this as soon as you walk out the door.

(laughing and theme music)

Meg: I can't believe I finally got to find out how tall @TallMr is.

Sara: Yeah, it's incredible. And he claimed he wasn't even that tall.

Meg: Can you believe that. He claimed he was 6 foot 6. You're not 6 foot 6. You're 6 foot 5, you just said.

Sara: You're a liar.

Meg: Yeah, tall man though. Must get to see some good things. What was your best learn from that?

Sara: I really enjoyed the Japanese vegetable that is Chris' favourite.

Meg: Mooli.

Sara: Yeah. It sounds like, off of the moomins. A bit.

Meg: Ooh yeah. My favourite thing actually was also the Japanese takeaway in Armley which I'm going to look up now. He said lots of gorgeous things that were really meaningful and lovely, but my main takeaway was the takeaway.

Sara: Yeah. Maybe because it's lunchtime and we're actually quite hungry.

Meg: Yeah. By the way if you are a mooli, please can you tweet us @LeedsMuseums to tell us how you like to be cooked because I don't know.

Sara: Yeah. That would be really helpful.

Meg: Any mooli's.

Sara: And then we'll go buy some from somewhere.

(mouth noise)

Meg: So as always a big thank you to Chris for coming on our podcast. That was lovely. And a huge thank you to Tim Bentley who does our theme tune for us and a great big thank you to Alex Finney for doing our cover artwork for us.

Sara: So if you enjoyed the episode which we hope you did, please subscribe, leave us a review.

Meg: Only if it's nice.

Sara: Only nice ones.

Meg: Don't leave bad.

Sara: Only 5 stars, nothing less.

Meg: 10 stars.

Sara: If you can find 10, great. You can follow us on socials on Leeds (pronounced wrong)

(laughing)

Meg: What was that? I'm going to leave that in.

Sara: Follow us on socials @LeedsMuseums *(laughing)*.... I can't do it!

Meg: @LeedsMuseums.

Sara: I don't remember my handle, I never do...

Meg: *(sighing)* @SaraLMerritt. Mine is @MuseumMeg so please feel free to tweet me about how annoying Sara is about that.

Sara: And who's coming up next? Meg?

Meg: Oh we've got Adam Jaffer. Adam the Jaffs.

Sara: Who is he? What does he do?

Meg: He is our World Cultures curator.

Sara: So for that one, we're going to find out more about Japan. So we can ask him about how to cook those vegetables.

Meg: We should get a takeaway for it!

Sara: Oh yeah.

Meg: Chris! Come back!

(laughing)

Sara: We need it! We need that number!

Meg: Get him on the blower! And also we're going to have to have jaffa cakes for obvious reasons.

Sara: But the obvious question is: will jaffa cakes go with Japanese? That's quite hard to say.

Meg: Yeah. Adam Jaffer, jaffa cakes, japanese.

Sara: Great.

Meg: Delicious. Yeah so thanks for listening.

Sara: And we'll speak to you next week.

Meg: In your ears.

Sara: Ok bye!

(Theme music)