

Museums n'That series 2 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 that 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)

Meg: Do you like my ladder?

Sara: Yeah I do, it looks very DIY behind you.

Meg: Yeah I know.

Sara: There's a bag and stuff, and a ladder, and a bit of a Hoover?

Meg: Yeah. Do you want to tell everyone what happened because it's still a bit raw for me.

Sara: What happened was we were all set up to do the podcast and we were nice and limber, and ready, and prepared. We got chatting quite nicely, quite naturally, for 10 minutes. You know, sometimes it takes a bit of a warm up but it was alright. A dog was featured. We actually had quite good things to talk about, and then Meg dropped the bombshell that she wasn't recording any of it.

Meg: Yeah. I've only just been able to come to terms with that, like literally 5 days later we're re-recording this. That was tough. I feel like that's the most eloquent I've ever been. About anything.

(laughing)

Sara: Yeah that's fair.

Meg: Shall we re-enact what happened with John? You be John, right.

Sara: Right ok, yeah.

Meg: So basically, this was the funnest bit right. So I was like 'oh, John. John's in the waiting room for Zoom, I should let him in'. Let John in, and he was lovely and charming and a sweet boy, and then, heard a bark. And John was like...

Sara: 'Er, yes - I can't do a Scottish accent - yes it was, it was the dog'

Meg: And I was like, oh wow, show me the dog, what's it called? And he was like...

Sara: 'Oh, come, Alex come bring Meg over. Meg is the dog.'

Meg: Yeah. His dog's called Meg everyone. Literally worked with John for 3 years and he's never bought that up. And then he put Meg on the camera. The thing about zoom as well - we're recording these on zoom - is that it's extra awkward anyway, and it was so good. It was so relaxed. And then it just went back didn't it. So poor John!

Sara: And he did really well considering he thought he was coming on to some semi-professional outfit. But we shot that straight away.

Meg: Halfway through as well, just to make matters worse, my internet cut out didn't it.

Sara: It did yeah. Which is kind of karma. Maybe there were too many Meg items in there and it was interfering.

Meg: Yeah that's probably true. Too many Megs in one place. Uh, I've got an itchy armpit, do you ever get that?

Sara: Yeah. Sometimes.

Meg: Ughh. God it's a nightmare.

Sara: It's like when you have an itchy bottom of your foot. That's really annoying.

Meg: (*laughing*) I thought you were going to say itchy bottom then, I was like 'hun'.

Sara: Yeah you go to the doctor about that if it's regular... Get yourself some worming tablets. (Meg laughing) I don't think we should joke about that - that's like a real, serious problem for certain people. Err so right, what happened - apart from the palava earlier on this week - what's happened in your week that's been good?

Meg; In many ways I'm glad this is being re-recorded, because my answer for this when we recorded this originally was that I sat in nutella. That was my thing. Because I was really struggling, been a bad time, been a bad couple of weeks. Since then, I've remembered that I saw something really good on twitter that's been making me laugh - have you seen that thing where it's like Gen Z's talking about and making fun of millennials on Tik Tok?

Sara: Oh yeah! Yeah I know I am so embarrassed for myself, it made me feel really old because it's so correct.

Meg: I felt so exposed. It was like - 'ooh, I'm a millennial and ooh, I'm definitely a gryffindor'.

(laughing)

Meg: and also, I've been listening to the Harry Potter audio books as well.

Sara: Wow. Then you've put yourself right in that category haven't you.

Meg: Anyway that made me laugh, that was a good thing. And probably better than sitting in nutella actually.

Sara: Yeah. Definitely better than sitting in nutella because you initially thought it was poo. Also. And also how did you know it was nutella?

Meg: Because - no no - it was on my finger. I put my hand down to press myself up off... not doing press ups, I don't do press ups. (*laughing*) Do you know I can do 4 press ups now to be fair.

Sara: Can you? I can't. I can only do them on my knees. I've been doing this 7 minute workout app and they do press ups all the time and you can put like a thumbs up or a thumbs down next to each activity and I put thumbs down every time. They still bring it back, I don't know what's the point of thumbs down if they keep making me do it?

Meg: What about you? You had a really good one so I hope you say it again.

Sara: It's still the week, so it's fine. It's Dimple's birthday! She was 5. We got her a new toy which is like a soft fluffy ball bird thing. And it's her new treat for playing outside with and she absolutely loves it.

Meg: I saw you posted a video of it on your instagram and she looks like she's got a very strong tail.

Sara: Yeah very waggy. Very good, very happy dog. So, pleased with that. And the other thing that happened, it didn't happen to me it just happened in Leeds and it's kind of something that we've been thinking about a lot and talking about a lot - it was the Black Lives Matter, I wouldn't call it a protest, it was more of a gathering. And it seemed to be from the photos that I saw, it seemed to be really well done, well organised, respectful. Social distancing was in place, and it was just a group of people coming together that were passionate about the Black Lives Matter movement. And as much as I wanted to be there I live kind of far away and it would have meant 2 lots of public transport and I didn't feel comfortable with that, but it's been really brilliant to see Leeds come together and proactively try and move forward and try and make some changes. So that's great. And it's really nice to be part of a city that's so open to that.

Meg: Greatest city in the world.

Sara: Yeah. Definitely.

Meg: So it was at this point on Monday that I was super eloquent and I got my point across really well and I know that I'm not going to do this very well now. Yeah so in that same vein, I'm not sure how many of you listening now listen all the way through to the end - er, fair play, we waffle a lot - but at the end it's when we do the kind of admin bits. But this is important to both Sara and I and Leeds Museums & Galleries really so I'll say it now just in case any of you drop out. We've said a few times on the podcast that if you'd like to be a guest on the show to get in touch and we have all our contact details at the end. But I think in light of everything that's happening at the moment with Black Lives Matter and museums recognising that we need to take responsibility for representing black stories and our black audiences better, we would just like to really prioritise and encourage anyone being a guest who is a black museum professional, a placement student, a volunteer, or maybe you're doing a museum studies masters. So please if that's you, drop us a line, basically. Is what we're saying.

Sara: We'd be really delighted to speak to you, have you on. Oh, you've frozen! Don't do this! Oh no... Meg's frozen.

Meg: Did that seriously just happen again then?

Sara: Yes it did.

Meg: Ohhhhh god. Yeah our internet just cut out again so uhhhh. Death. Right, who have we got on today Smez?

Sara: We have John McGoldrick. He is our curator of Industrial History, and he primarily works at Leeds Industrial Museum, but he looks after that whole collection. I don't know how much is in it, there's a lot of stuff.

Meg: Trains and looms and that.

Sara: Yeah bits of trains.

Meg: So we're talking about inventions today. John's got an exhibition on at the moment that you can't see, because we're closed.

Sara: It's online!

Meg: It's online! Yeah it is online actually. And it's about great inventions that have come from the great city of Leeds. So we're going to find out about that. Because of the mess of this

episode and the problems with the internet, we should probably get John on in person a bit later on in the year. Do you reckon?

Sara: Probably, yeah. I think it's only fair. Ply him with very safe, pre packed cake. And stuff. It is difficult to record remotely regardless, but when technology lets you down, you kind of lose your flow a little bit. And I don't know if anyone else finds this but it takes a lot of energy to be on zoom, or any form of video call. Rather than in person.

Meg: Yeah. Let's crack on then. This is sweet lovely John McGoldrick's episode of Museums n'That.

Sara: Enjoy.

(theme music)

Sara: Oh, have you not been pressing recording?

Meg: I've not been recording, no.

Sara: Great. Wonderful. So we've just done that intro for no reason at all. Brilliant.

John: Aww.

Meg: UGH. Meg. Honestly. I consistently hate myself. John after that absolutely tragic beginning there...

John: It didn't happen.

(laughing)

Meg: Welcome to the pod. Thank you for coming on.

John: Thank you for having me.

Meg: Can you tell everyone who you are?

John: I am the curator of Industrial History at Leeds Industrial Museum. I've been there for 7 years now. It's like a lifet- no, cut that out!

(laughing)

Meg: As if you've been there for 7 years I didn't know that.

John: It's not 7 years actually, I'm making that up. It's actually 5.

Meg: 5 years is a stint. What's changed at Armley in 5 years?

John: Lots of things for the better. There's been new staff, a new team, lots happening.

Meg: I love Armley. We had Chris on the podcast for series 1 and he did Armley proud I reckon.

John: Good. As it should be.

Meg: So John, me and Sara have got a few questions that we've written down for you - but they're all kind of around the exhibition that you've got on at the moment, which no-one can go and see, annoyingly, because we're in lockdown. Do you want to just tell us a little bit about that?

John: Yeah. Leeds to Innovation is something that we've been thinking about doing for quite some time. Firstly I have to apologise for the bad pun, but I am fond of a good pun, or even a bad pun. And it's really an attempt to try and catch some of the most important inventions in Leeds, and some of the quirkiest too. We've got some things like the Jelly Tots that were invented by Brian Boffey, but we've also got more serious stuff like John Smeaton's lighthouse model and another model by Matthew Murray. Both of whom are known as the fathers of their industries. Very male dominated iconography. So yeah, it's a mixture of serious heavyweight but also more informal and a bit of fun as well.

Sara: So I was having a look at this earlier and having a think about the questions that we would go through. And I was like, inventions are just such a massive thing - and then I kind of just went for the stereotype of trains 'cause, you know, trains are really good. They're my preferred method of transport. And I wanted to find out what your favourite invention was. Is it trains? If so, which is the best one? It doesn't have to be trains.

Meg: It doesn't have to be from Leeds either this can be general worldwide invention.

John: Well, in some senses you could say that Leeds invented the wheel. Well, reinvented the wheel... because a Leeds engineer, Frederick Kitson came up with a new wheel for railway locomotives - it's called a weldless iron wheel. Lots of trains had been crashing because lots of tyres that surrounded the wheel had basically fallen apart, and trains were just coming off the line and killing lots of people. So he came up with this great invention which reinvented the wheel. And we've done a bit of a pun on that in the gallery and we've got a large wooden locomotive wheel cast, like a sort of pattern for casting iron wheels. So we've got that in the exhibition. So yeah, I think railways are pretty central to changing our lives. Probably most of us travel on a train to get to work - before lockdown - so I think, yeah. Probably railways are the best.

Meg: John if you could pick one train - you know like at the National Railway Museum they've got, like, loads of trains? - if you could pick one train, what would it be?

John: Ahhh! That's a really hard question. That's a good question. Wow. Favourite train. I would probably have to say it's Salamanca, by Matthew Murray, because it was actually invented in Leeds, and that was the first commercially successful railway locomotive. It came after a couple of false starts by other inventors who had designed locomotives that went round in circles, but Matthew Murray's Salamanca was the first one that was kind of, put to work, pulling coal wagons from Middleton Colliery to take them down to the river at Leeds. So that's the one that paved the way for everything else that came after it.

Sara: Very cool name, isn't it. It doesn't sound very British I suppose, for want to stereotyping. It sounds quite exotic.

Meg: Yeah why's it called that?

John: It's because there was a battle in the Napoleonic wars that Britain won. Salamanca is in Portugal or Spain, so it was really to celebrate the British victory. It's a bit like some towns and villages were renamed Waterloo after Waterloo. Like Nelson up in Lancashire used to be called Marsden, but then they renamed it Nelson after the general. So there was a lot of that happening at the time.

Meg: Do we have stuff about Matthew Murray in the exhibition? What's his background? Was he from Leeds?

John: Well, he came to Leeds. He was actually born in the North East. The legend is that he walked down with a napsack on his back, a bit like Dick Whittington, all the way on foot down to Leeds without having anywhere to stay or a job to go to. And he basically rocked up at John Marshall's - who was an industrialist - and basically said I'm really cool, I'm a great engineer, hire me. And he did. And he just went on to dominate locomotive building and engine building in Leeds and beyond.

Meg: I was talking to Kitty - so Kitty's our curator of Social History - and she was telling me about the Temple Works building in Leeds, which is quite an iconic Leeds building, was a mill owned by John Marshall, right? So is that where Matthew Murray would have worked or did he have other mills?

John: He did have other mills - it was a smaller mill that Murray turned up to slightly out of town. Temple Works was slightly later, and Marshall was involved in flax manufacturing, which was quite a big deal. People get this cliché that it was all about wool in Leeds, but it wasn't entirely. One of Murray's invention for that industry was a heckling machine. Which can cause constant amusement. Some people call it hackling, some people call it heckling, which is basically straightening the fibres of flax before you spin it, because it's quite a kind of curly fibre, so you

have to straighten it out. And he invented a way of doing that by machine, rather than by hand, so it speeded it up a notch and made it more efficient, and a lot of people think he single handedly saved the flax industry in Britain.

Sara: Wow. So he effectively invented the first ever hair straighteners?

John: (*laughing*) Yeah. He did really, yeah. Flax hair. If you've got flax for hair, then yeah.

Meg: I read - I feel like loads of people in Leeds know this or have heard about this - but I read that on the roof of Temple Works (apparently I'm Temple Works' biggest fan today) on the roof of Temple Works they had grass, and they had sheep to graze on the grass. Because they needed the grass to keep the factory humid. Or something, is that right?

John: That is a true thing. It was one of the biggest buildings in the country as well, so it was quite a feat of engineering and yeah, they had sheep just to add to the fun.

Meg: That is so good isn't it.

Sara: Were they fenced in, the sheep? Were there any sheep casualties?

John: It probably needs more research that, I haven't looked into that - sheep casualties on Temple Works - but I think there's possibly a PhD in that one.

Meg: John, you mentioned John Smeaton earlier, when we were talking about the exhibition. So my favourite thing about the exhibition is that I learnt that he is in a song by the Kaiser Chiefs.

John: He is yeah. I predict a riot. Can you tell me which lines it is?

Meg: Oh, you know when you've got to sing a song to know the words. Would never have happened to Smeaton, an old Leodensian.

John: A friend of a friend he got beaten. Yeah. They went to the Leeds Grammar, and I think a couple of them were in John Smeaton House, a bit like Slytherin in Harry Potter. That was their house, so they were aware of his works. But yeah, Smeaton is obviously 'the' father of civil engineering. In the Victorian age they were all male, which needs re-writing. But, when he designed the Eddystone Lighthouse, he actually made a model of the lighthouse and it was such a wonder that the public kept coming to his house to actually see the model. He got his wife to actually show it to visitors because he was busy on other projects, so yeah, they were the first Lighthouse Family.

Sara: God, brilliant.

Meg: Unbelievable.

Sara: No, don't apologise!

Meg: You're at home here John.

Sara: It's ironic that they were the first Lighthouse family and we are so far from the sea.

John: Well this is it, there's a possible project to try and rebuild Smeaton's lighthouse in Leeds, and obviously it's a long way from the Irish Sea, and the North Sea, but Leeds is still officially a port city because it was connected by the River Aire, the Calder navigation, so it is a port still. So it makes sense.

Sara: Ok right I don't feel so bad about missing the seaside now, because I can be like 'well Leeds is technically a port'.

John: That's it.

Meg: Do you know what as well, Leeds has just got everything hasn't it. You know, greatest city in the world and also now it's a port as well. Brilliant.

John: It has everything that makes life worth living.

(laughing)

Meg: That should be our tagline.

Sara: Yeah.

John: I should actually move there.

Meg: So you mentioned at the beginning about how a lot of the inventors that we think about are traditionally men. Are there any female inventors that come from Leeds, or any female businesswomen or...

John: Yep. We've got Emily Cummings. She was studying at Leeds University and in the early 200s she invented the solar powered fridge. Which is especially useful in third world countries where they don't have access to a power supply. And it's great for storing things like medicines and keeping those cool. Basically it's like 2 containers, and you fill the in between bit of the two containers with water and that keeps whatever you're trying to refrigerate cool. And she's won all sorts of awards for that.

Sara: That's wicked - like, because it's just such a simple idea and it hadn't been done before. And it obviously makes life so much easier for people who don't have access to electricity and that's just mad that no one did it earlier I suppose.

John: This is true and some of the best inventions are the simplest, I think it just takes an ability to think outside the box and take a step back. But she had an engineering background. When she was a young girl, her grandfather had an inventor's shed and used to let her in and tinker with the various things she was working on and she always talks about that. She's done TED talks and talks about her grandfather's influence in her becoming an inventor. One of the scientists that we worked with for Queens of Industry - a woman called Priya Subramanian - she's from India originally, and until a couple of years ago, was at the University of Leeds. She was literally a rocket scientist. She got into engineering through a relative of hers inviting her to an air force base and allowing her to sit in the cockpit of an air fighter when the engine started up, and this completely blew her mind and that's when she decided she wanted to become an engineer. And that got her involved in eventually doing a PHD, studying basically the behaviour of flames in rockets. So literally a rocket scientist.

Sara: Imagine though, having the chance to sit in a jet fighter as it started up, and then going 'do you know what, yeah, I'm about this, I want to do more of this, this is good'.

Meg: That is literally the coolest. Imagine that just being your job title.

John: It is cool. A lot of hard work involved, but yeah. It would be cool once you've done it.

Sara: I think that's my problem. Had plenty of inspiring experiences as a young child. Just couldn't be bothered.

Meg: Brilliant.

John: It's interesting that she talks about that - she's really good at inspiring, you know, school students to basically follow their dream. And she was basically saying, don't compare yourself to others, compare yourself to yourself. Can I be better today than I was yesterday? It's really simple and it sounds slightly trite, but it's back on. Don't compare yourself to other people, just try and improve incrementally and that's obviously what she's done, and it's worked for her.

Meg: I think it's really nice as well to have women like that in that field, because it can be quite intimidating for young girls. Traditionally it's always been quite an intimidating thing and it's so important to get young women into that. And I know - have you been working with Izzy on, like, coding and stuff like that?

John: Yeah. She's done a lot at the industrial museum. And she's a role model - the younger people that she gets involved with, they see her as a role model. And there are things like women STEM ambassadors. There's a list of people who work in science, or they might work for the railways, and they volunteer their time to go into schools and talk to girls about what it's like working in their industry. And companies like network rail, they're really active in promoting

women to get involved in the industry, because that is one of the archetypally male industries. So hopefully people like that are making it easier.

Meg: Yeah for sure. You know how we were saying earlier that when someone invents something, you're like 'oh my god, that's so simple, why hasn't someone thought of that before' or 'that's such a good idea'. Have you ever had an idea that someone else has invented and you're like, 'for god's sake, why haven't I done it first?'

John: Well I did have a silly idea a while back, just one - that was for an iPad holder, to clamp onto bike handlebars. Not for when you're riding out on the street, but for when you're indoors cycling on a turbo trainer. And this was 5,6 years, possibly more ago. And I thought, why don't I do that? And with the explosion of things like Strava and Zwift is the main platform that everyone's doing virtual cycling on - that's the thing, it's application as well as inspiration isn't it.

Sara: Yeah, and I think it's having that mindset as well. Because you've got to be a level of a salesperson in order to go, right this is worth my time. Unless you're minted and you can play around with stuff, like iron man, but most people aren't like that. So it's just having a bit of faith in what you're doing is the right thing and that it'll be marketable at the end of it. And I imagine there are so many inventions out there that have been made. And then someone else made them slightly differently and spoke to the right person and they came about. My dad claims that he has one or more ideas that he is not telling anyone about, even his family, for fear that we'll take them off him and do them. Or something.

John: Yeah, he needs to get them out there. That is a worry, because often people who can think outside the box and come up with these great ideas aren't always the most kind of hard headed people and there is always that danger of people stealing your ideas. Look at Louis Le Prince who shot some of the first moving images in the world in Leeds. Some people think it was other people who started moving images, but he didn't really nail selling his idea, getting it patented. He took out quite a lot of patents, but it ended up being Thomas Edison who became acknowledged as the father of cinema. And that's because he was particularly hard headed, and there are conspiracy theories about what Edison did: why did Le Prince disappear so mysteriously? No one's ever got to the bottom of it, so we can't really say.

Meg: What, so sorry - do people think that Edison bumped him off? Like Edison was like, the Tony Soprano back in the day?

Sara: Like a murder mystery.

John: Well, I couldn't possibly comment in case any of his relations are still around, but there are conspiracy theories knocking about along those lines... I suppose the message is really, make sure you patent your inventions! And actually do the PR as well, because he's kind of a forgotten figure, unless you live in Leeds and know about him.

Meg: Gotta get an audience development team haven't you John.

Sara: Yep, key.

John: You do.

Meg: I was actually talking about this with Emii - so Emii's our Assistant Registrar. Fellow Scot! - and she was telling me about this amazing idea she had for, you know like, milkmen. Like milkmen are kind of like - I don't know if they're... they kind of just died out. Not that they died, but like...

Sara: No, there's loads of people that get glass bottles of milk around here!

Meg: Well this is the thing. So her ideas was that obviously now, lots of people are going to alternative milks and dairy free alternatives for things. So she was really really obsessed with the idea of doing glass bottle oat milk deliveries, and anyway yesterday I had a knock on the door opened it and there was this man standing there, and he was like 'I've got this new thing, it's called the modern milkman and it's oat milk deliveries in glass bottles'.

John; Eek.

Meg: How sad for Emii. I haven't actually told her about it yet, I think she'll be too upset. I don't want to break it to her.

John: Oh no.

Sara: I read an article the other day about a girl that transformed the way that their business works based on this situation. So, you know, as awful as it is, there have been some positives because people have had to adapt, and I reckon there will have been a big surge in people inventing things, or even just people reinventing ideas, during this period that may never have come about other ways, because people have been forced to change the way that they operate in order to survive effectively. You know, whether it's their business or they live in a rural community, or however - but I think that's what's interesting about small scale inventing. Because, it impacts people and then you know it's done the right thing. It's really nice to see. And I think the rise of the reuse and the refill, that ethos that's kind of taken off in the past few years...

Meg: I was thinking this the other day - you know the refill shops. I can't believe that that never used to be a thing. I feel like my grandchildren are going to be like 'hey, what was it like during lockdown' and 'hey, what was it like back in the day' and I'll be like, well we used to go to Sainsburys and go out with 15 plastic bags and you'd just buy loads of plastic and stuff. And they'll be like, 'what, that's absolutely insane'. I don't know, it's just mad isn't it?

John: It is, yeah. Because I mean, when I was a kid, kids just use to come to the door asking for your used lemonade bottles. We used to call them ginger in the bottles in Scotland. And they used to get like 2 pence a bottle, so there would just be bags and bags of glass bottles and they'd make a decent bit of pocket money by collecting them. But yeah, just to go back to that reacting to sea changes and changes in circumstances, Matthew Murray did that with Salamanca, the locomotive. See, it all goes back to railways, because that was just after the Napoleonic wars. The price of hay had just gone up dramatically, because there were so many horses in the wars that shoved the price of hay up, and that was making it uneconomical to use horses to pull the coal wagons on the railway. So they thought, let's find a way of getting around this. So they made a commercially viable steam engine, so he reacted to the circumstances of the time.

Meg: Very smart. That's why he's going to be remembered and literally I'm just going to be remembered for eating a lot of hummus probably. And just like, rubbish editing of podcasts I'm sure.

John: *(laughing)* I was going to say, you'll be remembered for podcasts really.

Meg: So John, for every episode we ask our guests 2 questions. The first one is an easy one: what's been your favourite day at work?

Sara: You say this is an easy one but it isn't an easy one.

Meg: It is an easy one!

Sara: Is it though?

Meg: To be fair, one of my favourite days at work - I don't know whether you remember this John - but the first time I went to Leeds Industrial Museum you took me on a tour and you showed me the loco shed. And it was just after the floods. And you were showing me where the water had gone, and all the things in the shed, and I was like 'wow, this is really cool. Cool job'.

Sara: One of your favourite days at work, was probably one of John's worst. Just reenacting the awful floods that we had and just generally terrible.

Meg: No that wasn't the good part of it! The good part of it was being given a behind the scenes tour...

Sara: I'm excited to see you get out of this.

Meg: John talking me through it all, I was like 'wow this is great'. Not because of all the destruction ok.

Sara: Fine, ok. So one of your favourite days at work was spending time with John. I think that's a nicer way to put it isn't it.

Meg: That's exactly it.

John: Aw.

Sara: Oh she's frozen in a really unattractive...

John: It's a Meg statue.

Sara: Meg you're in a really funny pose like this. Oh, no she's still unhappy.

(laughing)

Sara: I can just see her in the background having a right paddy about this. Oh, Meg's messaged me and said that her internet's completely dropped out. So go for it, favourite day at work!

John: So many to choose from. Probably one of them is when we had a surprise visit from a lady called Doreen Kerfoot. We were actually having a private view for another exhibition, and I saw this lady talking to Amy, who's our Assistant Curator. And she was going through this album of photographs and I kept looking, thinking 'who's that'? It was really only after the lady had gone that Amy said that we'd just had a visit from the Yorkshire Wool Queen from 1946.

Sara: Oh that's so nice!

John: Yeah, and it was almost like a sort of visitation from the past. It was like several generations ago and it was like that living history - you've got that woman sitting in front of you, a bit like that moment in the Titanic where Kate Winslet's older version is looking at the wreck of the ship. She was showing me pictures of herself as a 20 year old, or whatever, and she's sat there in front of you like an 80 year old woman. And it's just like - how do these two work?

Sara: Yeah, totally different worlds, different times...

John: Yeah. It was a lovely moment, and we filmed her for the exhibition and interviewed her and unfortunately she died just before the exhibition opened, but her family all attended the private view. She's a singer, and we played a recording of one of her songs at the private view, and her family were all there and they were all in tears because it had only been a couple of days since she'd died. It's all about people, I think that's the thing. One of the things we try to do is to make the museum about people, rather than just about, you know, technology and machines.

Sara: I totally think that about the industrial museum. You definitely make it about people and whenever I've spoken to people about it that maybe didn't know about the museum, they're always really surprised and I think that's really nice. It's really nice for me to say that I can be part of that.

John: Good, that's what we want to hear! It's that thing - you know, at the end of the day, objects and machines are just things, they're just stuff. Without people to bring them alive and make sense of them at the end of the day it's still stuff. Industrial museums have been a little bit slow off the mark really to embrace that, and there are lots of good examples of industrial museums that are ahead of the curve but a lot of us in that sector, a lot of us are still very obsessed with how many revolutions per minute, and how many horse power an object has, and it's like, look a bit wider. It's great, these companies in Leeds were so big and so advanced at breaking new ground, but they're selling locomotives and wagons to Africa and what was going on in Africa? What were the conditions? Colonialism. And it's just fallen with the tale.

Sara: Yeah, and I think that's the case more widely as well. And we can only go on what we know and therefore now is the time where we go, 'right, well we need to look back at that' and like you said earlier, be rewriting it and saying it wasn't good enough, and we need to be telling a more holistic picture. Meg's now popped up on skype and made a big noise in my ears. Uhhhh, right.

John: On skype?

Sara: Yeah, she can go away. Plus there's a big swear in there so I can't say that recording. Uhhh god.

John: It's nice to see you've both got a very healthy, frank working relationship. *(laughing)*

Sara: Oh yeah, yeah. That hasn't changed in lockdown.

John: Good.

Sara: I think if anything, everyone's had to work more closely together, because you can't just nip over to someone's desk or overhear a conversation and ultimately, when you work in museums, you like the tactile nature of things so it is difficult. Right, I'll ask you our last question, and then if Meg wants to come and re-ask you it that's fine. This is the best question as far as I'm concerned, because it's food related. From everything that we've talked about today, what would you say is the biggest takeaway for our listeners? Sort of a round up of information from what we've discussed. What would you want people to know?

John: I think there's something about Leeds that has really fostered a culture of innovation. If you look back as far as John Smeaton in the 1700s - people like Matthew Murray, Brian Boffey inventing the jelly tots. There just seems to be enough kind of, different industries, different

crafts and skills, mixtures of artists and engineers, to make Leeds almost constantly bubbling up. You've got the university there as well, that's been a really important part of the culture, and that's obviously something that continues today with things like - whether you like it or not! - Grand Theft Auto and videogames like that are produced in Leeds. You know, it's just a constant ongoing innovation, and the healthy-ness of the digital sector. Leeds is pretty good for that really.

Sara: Perfect! So, by natural extension, we'll talk about actual takeaways. What's your actual favourite takeaway?

John: Uhh. Um. I think it probably has to be chicken jalfrezi from our local tandoori. It's been going for years, it's so good.

Sara: What are your sides? Poppadoms? Naan?

John: Yes. All of them.

Sara: (laughing) yeah that's a good answer actually.

John: We've been making the mistake of watching - oh, what's his name... Antony?...

Sara: Oh Antony Bordain! Yeah, we've been watching that, it's really interesting.

John: Ah, so good. We've been watching at 10 o'clock at night and it's been making us ravenous, so... it's a dangerous thing to do.

Sara: I just love his attitude towards it, like he goes to places and he'll ask those questions that are maybe a bit uncomfortable, or... because he's just interested. And he's just like, 'well, if I don't ask then no-one else is going to learn'.

John: Food is a uniting thing isn't it? People are really at ease aren't they, it's a good way of making a connection. Any food - it's the first thing I look at when I've got a holiday planned.

Sara: Um, right, we've digressed as always. Thank you ever so much for your time John, I really appreciate it. I'm sorry for the technical difficulties that Meg experienced. I am a bit smug about that because I've had so many technical difficulties.

John: Yeah, it's usually me!

Sara: Well, between us we've done alright and we live in the relative countryside so, there we are.

John: Say hi to Meg if you speak to her (*laughing*).

Sara: Yeah, I'll find her...

(theme music)

Meg: Hello I'm back, it's me.

Sara: *(laughing)* yeah because you went off. You couldn't be bothered at the end. So you disappeared so I held the fort.

Meg: Do you know what, I just thought I know this all already so I'm just going to head off.

Sara: Oh right ok. I thought you were going to give me a compliment there but nope. Had every opportunity to say 'you know what, Sara's more than capable of doing this', but no.

Meg: It was a metaphor. So that was good wasn't it apart from all the mess that was my internet. That was lovely to have John on. I feel like he's another one with a really lovely voice.

Sara: Yeah he's got a really relaxing voice. It's very calming. I associate industrial history with lots of clanging and banging and metal things but John is a very calming influence.

Meg: I feel like I want him to read me bedtime stories. You know like on Cbeebies.

Sara: Ok yeah. Yeah yeah.

Sara: So, episode. What was your favourite bit, what did you learn? What were your best learns?

Meg: Right, my best bit was that bit that we didn't record when he showed us his dog called Meg. The other best part, I reckon, was when he told us about the sheep on top of the roof at Temple Works.

Sara: Yeah, I love the whole Temple Works history, because the building's still there, it's a bit of a mess and needs a bit of work. There was supposedly a big fashion house going to come in and get it back up to top notch working order but they don't want to work there. So that's fine.

Meg: Smez, what was your best bit? It was the bit when I wasn't there, I know.

Sara: That was a particular highlight. I really enjoyed finding out about people that are imminently more clever than I will ever be. The rocket scientist - because she got to sit in a jet fighter plane and then thought 'do you know what, I'm going to do something with this, gonna learn about it, then I'm going to give back to the world with my knowledge'. So she's pretty great.

Meg: I'm always so impressed with people that can be bothered. Who's got the time? Where do you fit that in?

Sara: No idea, but brilliant and really great association with Leeds. But I think just generally the diversity that's come out of Leeds and is continuing to, because I think now we still do inventions, albeit on a smaller scale, but we're so good at like - independent businesses, and making and creating. I know I have a lot of talented friends who run their own businesses and I'm equally amazed how they are bothered to do it.

Meg: Well done to every one of those people. Also, well done to everyone who's made it this far in this episode.

Sara: Yeah absolutely.

Meg: So, as per usj - I don't know, can you shorten usual? *(laughing)*

Sara: Erm it's a fairly short word anyway, and I feel like this is going back to the whole Generation Z/taking the mick out of millennials thing. Shortening words. Unnecessary.

Meg: Well, ta very much anyway to Tim Bentley off of the theme tune March of the Moths very good still love that. Thank you to Al Finney, off of doing the cover artwork. God, I feel like I haven't done this in ages. Do you?

Sara: I know, yeah.

Meg: I think it's because I made you do this last time. Anyway, Alex Finney, thanks very much, you're very great. Um, subscribe...

(laughing)

Jesus christ, this has been a rollercoaster.

Sara: Are you sure you only had tea earlier?

Meg: I know. Uh, Christ. Right, subscribe and leave us a review please, that will be really nice because Apple will like us a lot.

Sara: Yeah also I still have some Museums n'That badges so if anyone does get this far in this podcast, and wants a badge, let us know.

Meg: We've got transcripts on the website, and then Smez - where can they find us?

Sara: So you can find us on Twitter, we're @LeedsMuseums, or Meg has a good one it's @MuseumMeg and I have a less good one it's @SaraMerritt.

Meg: This is the part where we're normally like, who's coming up next time, but literally it could be - I don't know who that's going to be mate. We've got people lined up but I don't know what order they're going to be in. So..

Sara: No, because people are doing stuff and they're at home. And the thing is, there's any number of things that you could be doing rather than this, and we can't force their hand because they're not in the building with us. So... we'll have to wait and see.

Meg: Dunno, it'll be a surprise to you AND us. But yeah, thanks for tuning in, and we'll see you - see you later. Bye.

Sara: Yeah see you in a bit.

Meg: Bye.

Sara: Bye.

Meg: Byeeee! That's like every phonecall you have. You're gearing up to end and you're like 'alright, cool, see you later, ok, right, bye! Every single one'.

(theme music)