

Extracts from interviews, summer 2012

Dame Margaret Weston: We were amazingly productive, but that wasn't due to me, that was due to my splendid staff. I helped where I could, but they were amazingly productive. There is a reason for this: it was one period of the greatest change in science and technology, and it had to be covered.

Dr Brian Bracegirdle: He was a new broom because he wanted things done differently. He wanted, what I suppose is now the model, many more people doing PR or that kind of thing, than conservators. I think when I was chief of that side there must have been 120 curators, but I think that was going to fall quite dramatically under his directorship. It took some time to establish it of course. And it's no secret to say that he and I did not get on, on a number of things, because I thought we needed curators more than PR people.

Colin Ford: A colleague of mine and I went to the Museums Association conference in Brighton, and we went down on the train and we had the first leaflets for the Museum. She and I went all down the train just giving one to everybody. And on the way back to our seats I heard somebody say, put a national museum in Bradford? What a bloody silly idea! Well, we proved them wrong, didn't we? And that's something that never fails to give me pleasure.

Greg Hobson: So we had curators painting, drilling holes in walls, and so on, doing light fittings, everything else that was necessary to get the Museum opened, which was refreshing. I'm not quite sure I'd want to do it now, but at the time it was a very exciting thing to be involved in, and the energy and the teamwork that existed

around that was a great driver. I think everybody became very close friends, inevitably, and it did feel like a remarkably focused team.

John Durant: So, for example, I certainly thought that one should take the process of communication seriously. Which meant that you weren't just preoccupied with what you the Museum wanted to say, and thought was important to say, you wanted to also take account of what the visitors might think or feel when they walked in, what they might be interested in hearing about and the extent to which they did or did not get or enjoy whatever it was you were doing.

Heather Mayfield: And to be quite honest, when I first worked here I don't think we thought about visitors at all. We thought a lot about ourselves and the things that we could do and the things that would further our careers – and now it's about what can we do for visitors, what would visitors enjoy, what would really work for them? So it's a really different feeling.

David Wright: I couldn't have been more fortunate. There is nothing I would rather have done than work for the NMSI doing the sort of jobs that I did. Yeah, it was great. I wouldn't, overall, despite the fact I moan a bit, have changed any of it. I was jolly lucky and I'm very grateful.

An Oral History of the Science Museum Group, 1973-2000