

Team spirit: Greg Hobson, 21 August 2012

It was pretty much an 'all hands on deck' team, so everybody did everything, and nobody was particularly concerned about the amount of hours they were working to get the job done. 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.

It was a slightly odd opening, but inspired at the same time. Lord Snowdon was one of our guests of honour, and Dame Margaret Weston was here as well, obviously, and Colin [Ford] had this rather interesting idea to have fish and chips and Guinness and champagne at the opening. And because we did have a very small staff, and in the spirit of lots of people doing lots of things, I remember being involved somehow. I can't quite remember the exact details of it, but [I did go] in one of the vans to pick up probably 50 servings of fish and chips from Harry Ramsden's fish shop in Guiseley to bring them back here, but I think people found it really quite entertaining.

We still have an autocue display upstairs and it is one of our most popular exhibits, just because it plays on people's love of seeing themselves being played back in a recording. But at the time [it was] absolutely cutting edge, and at a time when people still associated museums with didactic displays of objects in cases, it was something unheard of in the context of museum display; now it seems entirely normal.

We had a curious display of a projection microscope. Somebody had decided that it would be quite fun to have living daphnia – little water fleas – and of course the thing got so hot during the day that these poor water fleas used to expand and basically explode. So we had to keep in the fridge a box of living water fleas. We got a week's supply each time from a vet's suppliers, and had to each morning change the little glass container and put fresh water fleas in, only [for them] to pop under the heat during the course of the following day.

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