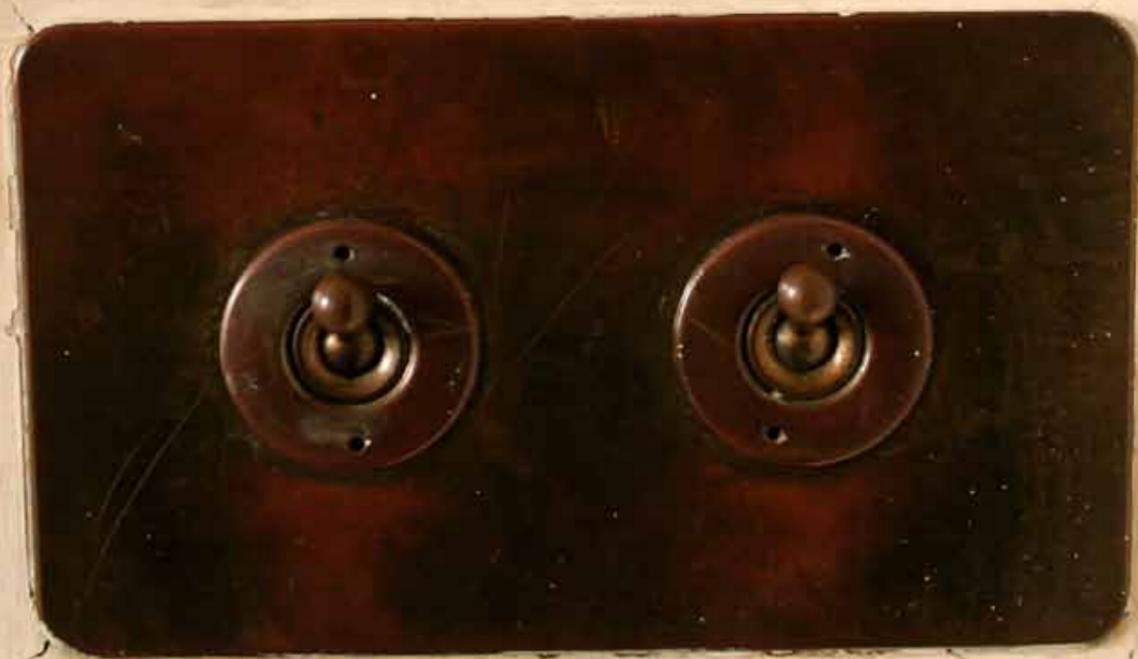




from morning till night

Have you switched  
off the light?



**from morning till night**

photographs of Snibston Discovery Museum

Brendan Jackson

Snibston Discovery Museum, Coalville, is part of Leicestershire County Museums Service









**Do you have a favourite part of Snibston?**

The fishpond screen (an interactive in the gallery)...

The eastern pit bank, looking down over the sports field...

The woodland in the top glade...

The Century Theatre – I love the history of it...

The ‘butty barge’ by the children’s playground...

It has to be the Fashion Gallery...

The Whitwick Hearse. One of my distant relations helped search for the bodies in the pit disaster of 1898...

Moodys Wheelwright Workshop. On site we call it Sheepy Magna, the village it came from. It has some lovely stories and the fact we have those rare bats living there is quite sweet...

A place that has to be full. The play area. It’s great to hear the kids screaming and having fun. That’s why I enjoy doing school bookings, I like to fill it...

I like to see the seasonal changes, getting ready for Christmas or when the new programmes are here...

My favourite bit of the site is on top of the mezzanine in the foyer, just looking out of the front window. That’s quite nice...

The lamp room, because I’m a ghost-hunter. I’ve been to a lot of places and there’s nothing really. But the lamp room here, I’ve had some experiences there. I put my lamp down and then I find it’s moved, and I’m the only one in there on a Saturday. I’ve even had a Victorian penny tossed at me...

The Steiff teddy bears...

The Gimson horizontal engine - because it does what it says on the tin...

The old workshop...

The colliery buildings, as they represent what this place once was...









### **What would you like to be kept for posterity?**

A fountain pen. This is the first one I bought - Mont Blanc, German - something to pass on to my daughters that I used. When my Father passed away, he left nothing of sentimental value behind. His glasses perhaps, but my Mother had those. So I collect fountain pens...

My bookshelf, full of environmental books...

My family tree, done by my brother, because it goes back a long way...

Photographs of my family...

The only things I'd give a monkey's about are my old Imp and VW camper...

A bible given by Dame Elizabeth Cadbury to every child that was born in the village...

I haven't got anything that I would cherish that much. Would I save the most expensive and precious thing or the thing that I had the most emotional attachment to? I don't know...

A book of memories that my Mom wrote...

I gave away my Meccano set and I wished I hadn't. I gave it to my nephews and they rang up and said, Where are the instructions? I thought, that's not going to get played with. You're supposed to be creative, just make it...

My box of magic tricks, my Apple Mac...

My designer handbags. I had a cupboard at home made for them. They're still in their packing. The oldest one is quite modern, only about seven years old, it's a cream Dior one - with matching shoes...

My great Grandfather's silver police whistle...

My Cher and Tina Turner costumes, made specially by a dressmaker...

My Mom's wedding ring...

I have an old record player. Not sure if it works anymore. Maybe a Beatles record? Yes, that would be good to keep...

I'm a throwaway person. I can't think of anything I'd like to really keep...

A catalogue for Next Directory 1984-94. I used to work for them...

A Tressy doll I had as a child. My Mother sat and made all the little outfits for it and she sewed them onto cardboard, covered them in cellophane, so I thought they were shop-bought...

A lump of coal, because without that none of this would be here, none of the technology, the steam or the railways...































## Afterword - A Day and Night at the Museum

In the 2006 film 'A Night at the Museum', a hapless security guard played by Ben Stiller finds out that the exhibits are brought to life after hours by a magical Egyptian artefact. I experienced nothing quite like this at Snibston Discovery Museum, though I did attend the ghost watch at the paranormal night – and it is a little spooky to be there at 1am in the morning, despite the normality of strong coffee and tasty shortbreads.

Have you noticed the way those mannequins in the Fashion Gallery follow your movements?

There is indeed a hidden life to a museum, the behind the scenes operations that happen day in and day out (or well into the night), which is not at all obvious to the visitor. There are vast floor areas to be cleaned before a visitor steps through the door, exhibits to be powered up, items to be repaired and restored, studio areas to be heated for visiting groups, team meetings to check checklists – *'Stenson and Ellis Rooms. Projector and screen needed. 6 tables to be set up with four chairs around each, facing the front. 50 chairs to be set up theatre style behind the tables (See separate diagram).'* In the reception of the administration block - in what was once the old colliery offices facing onto Ashby Road – there is a constant stream of telephone enquiries and bookings for events. There are educational outreach activities, talks and presentations given by curators and the learning team, workshops for school parties on 'Forces' and 'Rock Detectives'. There is a team of scientists from Loughborough University working with pupils from three secondary schools as part of a Maths event. In the evening, in what looks like a large blue scout hut, there's a workshop for young people on woodcraft – they're carving their own knives and forks and they will be using them when they go off to forage in the countryside on a residential course. I watch carefully; this is a skill that may come in handy.

There are volunteer programmes to manage – I find some volunteers making bird boxes with the Rangers, some more tidying up the stores and a film crew documenting it. Others are helping replace the sleepers on the railway track where it approaches the road junction of Belvoir Street and Jackson Street in Coalville. There are colliery tours, given by former miners and some of these same miners are putting the finishing touches to 'an underground experience' they've constructed in the undercroft below the Cable Shop. The model pit pony is far too big for the space, so they've taken nearly a foot off the legs – it's still touching the roof. With the lights out, you won't notice, but you will get a feel for the cold and claustrophobia of a mining tunnel. On the surface, there are objects to be preserved, protected, taken out, put away, catalogued – with computer systems that never seem to quite work the way you want them to. There's the pleasure and pride invested in preserving elements of the past for future generations. Wood, metal, wool will last – *'though watch out for insect infestation'* – paper even. Twentieth century objects are more problematic. There is, I am told, a special ward for the Action Man amputees, as experimental plastics used in their making simply disintegrate and melt away.

These photographs were made over just a few days, to get a sense of the place and who worked there, as a starting point for my residency – and though I've learned a great deal about the collections and their maintenance, I didn't plan on staying overnight, in case there is some magical artefact hidden in there somewhere. So I'd like to say thank you to the Ranger who finally let me out the back door, rather later than intended...

**Brendan Jackson, Coalville, May 2011**

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