

## Northern Museum Volunteer Pass Scheme

### ‘My Favourite Object’

All participating museums are sent a quarterly newsletter with information about the museums involved in the scheme based on a theme, for example domestic heritage. A regular feature of the newsletter is the ‘My Favourite Object’ article which is written by volunteers.

### My Favourite Object in Sewerby Hall, Bridlington, East Yorkshire by Jackie Piccos

Jackie is a volunteer at the museum. Here she tells the story of the vintage pram.

I volunteer at Sewerby Hall in East Yorkshire and enjoy dressing as the children’s Nanny and introducing our younger visitors to the traditional toys in the Nursery. The absolute highlight of my week has to be pushing the vintage pram around the beautiful gardens there and taking in the sea air. I really can convince myself that I have stepped back in time! The pram is the most impressive and striking coach-built affair, complete with porcelain baby doll and embroidered Victorian coverlet.

We have yet to establish confidently how old it is, but it certainly looks the epitome of Edwardian elegance, and has a basket weave parasol holder, a footwell for toddlers and their shoes, a working brake, and the most impressive suspension. It’s greatest asset, however, is the way everyone stops to stare and chat. The pram prompts such lovely memories from everyone, who love to reminisce about their own babies and prams, and how child-rearing practices have changed over the years. All ages have something to contribute- and usually can’t resist a photo opportunity and giving the parasol a twirl! Bring on the sunshine and another season of halcyon days!



Jackie Piccos and Charlotte Chester, volunteers at Sewerby Hall taking the vintage pram out for a stroll in the grounds at Sewerby Hall. The Edwardian costumes featured in this image were made by Jackie Piccos. Photo Credit: Jenni White.

## **My Favourite Object in the National Coal Mining Museum, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, by Roger Morton**

Roger Morton is a volunteer at the museum. He shares the story of the darning mushroom.



As a volunteer at the National Coal Mining Museum, I find listening to the visitors stories the most rewarding. I like to circulate around the various sites at the museum and enjoy promoting conversations with our visitors by explaining the various unusual artefacts especially those whose immediate purpose is not obvious. In one of our display cabinets in Parkinson's Yard, in The Hub, is a small black mushroom shaped object made of bakelite (who remembers bakelite?). It is in the cabinet with artefacts related to sewing and knitting. Baby boomers, those born between 1945 and 1952, and older people, almost always know

what the object is, especially the ladies. To start a conversation, I usually ask visitors if they know what it is and invite them to have a guess. If I am speaking to a family group that includes grandma and granddad this usually promotes reminiscences which as a historian (retired) I find adds to the oral history of society and mining in particular.

The object is a darning mushroom which was used to repair holes in woollen garments especially children's socks and elbows of school jumpers. Of course, from the 1960s onwards clothes were manufactured with man-made fibres which increased their durability. It also made clothes cheaper and not worth the effort of domestic repair.

Image - Wooden Darning Mushroom. Courtesy of the National Coal Mining Museum.

A sock would be stretched over the curved top of the mushroom and gathered tightly around the stalk to hold it in place for darning (sewing). The sewing would weave in and out in different directions to match the weave of the material.

## My Favourite Object in Cliffe Castle, Keighley, West Yorkshire, by Deborah Rehmat

Deborah Rehmat is a Cliffe Castle Support Group Volunteer. She reflects on the objects that she has sketched in the museum.

Over the years I've gazed admiringly, lovingly, with curiosity and fascination at hundreds of objects in Cliffe Castle Museum, and I've filled sketchbooks with drawings. Every single visit I find something different depending on how I'm feeling and what I need. If I want to reflect on my own smallness and the immensity of geological history, I'll go and look at an ammonite or a fossil. If I feel like some comic relief, I'll seek out a curiosity like the gooseberry scales. If it's charm I'm seeking I might look at Staffordshire pottery, or if I want to study birds or animals (which I very often do) I'll head for the natural history gallery. And if I want comfort, for me there's nothing better than the collections of old woodworking tools that been loved and lovingly used to create other beautiful things, and which are simply lovely things in their own right.



Image - Deborah's sketches of various objects.