

MUSEUM MATTERS

Northwick is a very special bear. He lives with a boy called Frank and his family. Both Northwick and Frank have nystagmus.

It was a rainbow day at the allotments Autumn Fayre. Rainbow colours on a t-shirt, rainbow coloured balloons and of course a red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet rainbow in the sky. Frank couldn't always see rainbows, but this rainbow was set against dark clouds which made it very bright.

Right now, though, a rainbow was heading towards him. Rainbow coloured words on a woman's t-shirt. She stopped in front of him, smiling broadly and said: "I think I know you. You're Frank, aren't you? I'm Laura. We met when your class came to the museum to see some of the exhibits we keep stored away."





Frank clutched his father's hand tightly. He could remember the day he and his classmates had visited the museum. He had really enjoyed the visit. Unlike most museums, he had been able to get up close to look at, and even touch, some things. But he couldn't remember this woman. So, the first thing that came into his head came out of his mouth: "What does that writing on your t-shirt say?"

Laura laughed. "It's a joke! It says 'Museum Nerd'. It's a silly way of telling people how much I love my job."

Changing ways

Frank looked confused, so Laura turned to his father and explained how she'd met Frank. It was the day his class had helped with an idea she and her colleagues at the museum were working on. The idea – or project as Laura called it – was about encouraging more people to visit museums and make them friendlier places.

Turning back to Frank, Laura said: "I remember you in particular, because you came up with the best comment of the day."

Frank looked a bit flustered and embarrassed on hearing this. He wasn't usually best at anything. And he certainly didn't like being the centre of attention as he was now. Even though he knew from Laura's voice that she was being very kind and positive.

Thankfully, Northwick stepped in to save the day. "I was at the museum visit too. It was a great day, with cakes at the end as well. But I don't remember Frank saying anything very special?" the bear said, adding a question mark at the end of his sentence.

"But Frank did say something special and very important," replied Laura, emphasising the words did and very important. "I wrote it down and put it in my report. Frank said that the best part of the day was being able to touch and feel so many things in the museum."

"Now we're using what Frank said to persuade our bosses to make all museums more accessible. Among other things, that means letting people touch and feel more of the items on display." Laura added that many exhibits were fragile or very old, so they had to stay behind glass. But that still left quite a few things that museums could let people touch.

"Especially the big things we showed you and your classmates, like the cars, trains, buses, boats and old carriages," she went on. "We just needed the evidence to persuade our bosses. They can sometimes be a bit cautious, you know. So, Frank, yours really was the best comment of the day. And it's helping to change the way we do things."





Cakes of many colours

With that, Laura said she must go and see if her purple beetroot had won the ugliest vegetable competition. In a flash of colour, her rainbow t-shirt had vanished, leaving Frank, his father and Northwick a little stunned.

The rainbow in the sky, though, was still there. And, Northwick noticed that this rainbow very nicely framed the cake stall. Towards which he had been gently steering Frank and his father before Laura's arrival.

The stall offered a truly magnificent choice of cakes in many colours. Although not quite as many colours as in the rainbow. Which was just as well, because in Northwick's expert opinion, blue and green for example were not generally good colours for cakes.

"Oh look, here we are at the cake stall!" said the bear, perhaps a little too keenly, "The best comment of the day certainly deserves a prize. How about a piece – or two -- of those delicious looking cakes?"

Later that evening, as Frank was drifting off to sleep, Laura's words kept coming back to him: "the best comment of the day ... changing how we do things at the museum". What a strange world it was. Never before had Frank imagined that anything he said or did could matter that much.