

Provost Pat O'Brien  
Members' Services  
East Lothian Regional Council  
John Muir House  
HADDINGTON, Scotland EH 41 3HA

April 27<sup>th</sup> 2001

Dear Pat:

### **MURALS ACTION LINES**

I have now just completed my fourth visit to a successful Murals town – this latest one at Bowen, Queensland Australia, following 29 Palms in California, Chemainus in British Columbia and KatiKati in New Zealand. As promised, I write to share what I think I have consistently learnt from their 100 and more movers and shakers.

1. The Murals are in every case the 'vehicle' for a community based movement to enhance civic self respect and enthusiasm. They may well be good art, but essentially by basing themselves on the history of the towns concerned, and identifying whenever possible with 'known' families, they communicate and involve very widely indeed.
2. Whether any 'tourists/ additional visitors' turn up in the town to enjoy the murals and spend some time and money or not depends on how well the concept/ activity is integrated ( even branded ) and then marketed. This requires determined attention not wishful thinking. ( We have adopted the name *Prestoungrange Arts Festival Society* for our contributions. )
3. There are plenty of nay-sayers and delayers in each town, so the achievements have been gained by a dedicated core of individuals who nonetheless kept the rest of the town informed, and were willing to take all comers into the core team if they volunteered to 'do' something. The process is necessarily *inclusive*.
4. As often as possible, populist events are staged for the widest possible involvement. This includes fund raising activities but also 'Unveilings' with barbecues and prior to that 'Watch the Artists Work' days.
5. The artists employed must work to a mutually agreed specification in order that the concept remains integrated. And the artists must be 'good'. A Panel necessarily selects and co-ordinates *without becoming precious or exclusive*.

Bearing these points in mind, and following your introduction to the Prestonpans Local History Society, we are now working with them to trace good local photographs and tales about Morrison's Haven, the Brewery and the Potteries. These we have already addressed in Booklets 1-10 of the Historical Series from the Baron Courts, and when added to the recent *History of Prestonpans* which the Society is letting us re-publish on the Internet, all that is really missing are great photographs on which to base the murals – and the Museum and Local History Society have both already made an excellent start on collecting those too.

We have also now got the new beach steps in place at the bottom of Redburn Road and set to work making good the SeaWall for the artists to commence there. During May we shall be telling out the details more widely than the Prestonpans Local History Society, and from that time we are making space available at The Cockenzie Centre on the Edinburgh Road for the Society's records and meetings. ( That is where the Scottish Tartans Society is also housing its Hall of Records. )

We are not too sure where the Museum has got with its plans to create the mural on the BathHouse, but I look forward to hearing that when I am next in East Lothian - for seven days commencing May 24<sup>th</sup>. I am here in Australia/ The Orient until May 13<sup>th</sup>, but Jane Bonnar is making excellent progress and is working fulltime with us from May 1<sup>st</sup> from The Cockenzie Centre.

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Finally to report much other progress which Jane Bonnar and the team are making: (i) **Beehive Kiln** and the **Microbrewery** plans are with Paul in your Planning Department and discussions are going on with ex-brewery folk; (ii) the **Prestonpans Virtual Pottery Exhibition** is going up on the WebSite as I write; (iii) the **Teaching Resource Packs** building from the Historical Booklets are now completed and a Schools Visits Program in place working with Annette MacTavish; (iv) myriad activities for **August Marquee Week** at the Museum are being planned, including the Museum itself ( 2 days ), Burke's Landed Gentry Scotland Launch, and the Local History Society; and (v) I 'madly' agreed to a 'twinned' Arts Festivals **Burns' Night Theatre and Supper in 2003 in Chemainus**.

All in all, quite a bit really is starting to happen now after much planning, talking and contemplation.

Yours sincerely

Dr Gordon Prestoungrange  
*Baron of Prestoungrange*

cc Jane Bonnar/ Sylvia Burgess  
Baron of Dolphinstoun