

DIPLOMA IN ARTS TOURISM

SET 1

ASSIGNMENT 1

“FROM SMALL ACORNS LARGE OAK TREES GROW”

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since joining the Baron Courts in 1998, I have a totally new dimension to 75% of my life. The other 25% of my time is spent on Company Secretary and Bursar roles for IMCA and related companies.

Without realising it I have subconsciously moved my mindset away from the IMCA academic environment, an environment that I have loved and breathed for several years and even before IMCA was PA to the Vice Principal of University of Buckingham. Although still having two roles within IMCA to cover 25% of my time, I will continue to have a passion for IMCA and a belief in all that it does. I now accept that I have moved on. All the experiences within IMCA have been very rewarding and know that they will be called upon on many occasions in the future, as has happened already within Baron Courts. With the launch of the Diploma in Arts Tourism I know my academic intelligence will be very valuable to me during the Programme. I am in the position of being able to be involved in all aspects of the Baron Courts. Rather mind blowing at times but having all the pieces of the jigsaw, it is just a case of putting them all together.

When Gordon first acquired his Barony he asked me if I would like to work 50% of my time on getting involved with fulfilling his vision in Scotland. In particular improving the quality of life for the people of Prestonpans (locally called Panners) through Arts Tourism. I thought about this for a few seconds and replied that I would be honoured to take on the challenge and the role of Baron Sergeant, but thought consideration should be given to the fact that I was “advised” to give up history at school! I had a total lack of interest in history and geography at school. Gordon being one to like a challenge, agreed to give me the opportunity and our first trip to Scotland was my initiation test.

The Baron always being able to spot an opportunity had the foresight to link his vision for Prestonpans with that vision Karl Schutz had for Chemainus i.e. to bring

Arts Tourism to a Town, which would benefit both economically, socially and culturally through the Arts.

Conventions of the Baronage of Scotland

The first Convention of the Baronage of Scotland was the initiation visit. It was a remarkable experience. I was socialising with Lords and Ladies and Barons and their families. It was not a world I had ever been involved in. After initial apprehension, I found the Convention absolutely fascinating. I particularly enjoyed visiting the different Stately homes, some more endearing than others. Some rather musty and antiquated whereas others gave an air of homeliness and “lived in”.

After a few more Conventions I feel more comfortable with the surroundings.

There have been several challenges over the last five years. One of the most memorable was to attend a Convention with Julian Wills, Baron of Dolphinstoun, in Gordon’s absence abroad. We were told to drive to Scotland with the Baron’s regalia and a pair of buffalo horns, which had been carefully transported from Malaysia by Gordon and Avril. Wanting to save time Julian and I decided to fly Easyjet –not a wise move! All went well and the horns arrived safely in Edinburgh and transported to the Convention for display. One participant was intrigued by the horns and asked if Gordon was off shooting and so was unable to attend the Convention. The gentleman also remarked “Did he shoot it”. Trying to suppress the laughter we assured the gentleman that he had not shot it! On packing up the regalia for the journey home we lost one of the eyes of the engraved dragon onto a multi-patterned, thread bear carpet. Not really being the place to grovel around on our hands and knees we left without the missing eye and thought we could contact a local taxidermist on our return home. This was still not the end of the fate of the horns. On return to Luton airport the carefully packed horns appeared on the carousel in a partially collapsed box. One lesson learned here is never take anything out of the ordinary on Easyjet!

Following this it was decided the horns should be put in a safe casing. Of course, we couldn't find any where in Edinburgh to make things easy it had to be in Banff one of the most northern parts of Scotland. Luckily or not, we travelled back via Cullen, well known for its Cullen Skink soups – not something I could stomach myself but was assured it was very pleasant.

Not phased by any of these challenges as had been well equipped with past experiences of shipping car windows to Italy, freighting vehicles to Canada. No challenge too big or too small cannot be conquered.

Search for offices

Early trips to Scotland involved a search for suitable office accommodation for the Baron Courts. Our first recruit was Jane Bonnar, employed as Project Director, who worked from home, and she conducted tours at the Prestoungrange Heritage Museum. It was on one of the Tours that Gordon was inspired by Jane's enthusiasm for history and asked her to join the Baron Courts. Jane was a graduate with a history degree and an excellent network, which was proved to be very beneficial.

It was necessary for us to have a base and a presence in or near to Prestonpans. All our activities were to be concentrated on Prestonpans and the history of the Town so the locality was important to us. We travelled non-stop for a week around the locality in a minibus, with a mobile phone as a Godsend, and with Karl Schutz as our guest of honour. After several phone calls to property agents as we flashed by their boards on prospective premises, we spotted purely by accident the Cockenzie Business Centre, an old School in Cockenzie/Port Seton. We called in on-speck and viewed Unit 3, which was a barn of a place, no heating, no carpet and a sink with a piece of worktop in a small kitchenette, but the building had character from the outside. Within a few minutes the Lease was signed on two units. There was an urgency to acquiring suitable premises because Baron Courts had agreed to house the memorabilia of the Scottish Tartan Society, which was due to have a "dawn raid" to relocate it from Pitlocherie. Unfortunately, the President of the Society was a very difficult individual to communicate with and after much animosity and several tantrums by

him meant that the partnership was short lived and a legal issue arose and is still ongoing. That is another story to be told!

Furnishings had to be acquired and refurbishment put in place. Having been there before with the renovations of three premises in Buckingham and one in Oxford it was not a daunting prospect. The only drawback was the 700 mile round trip and trying to manage the project from this distance and only going to Scotland one week in every month. As usual no obstacle too big we set about the refurbishments. Builders had to be found and not knowing the area or having a network to call upon, I called on my newfound friend Anne Taylor, Manager of the George Hotel where we used to stay. Anne gave me some contacts and we commissioned "Bob the Builder" to do the work. He won the job because he was half the price of the others and did a fine job.

It wasn't long before we realised we needed a General Manager on the ground in Scotland. I placed an advertisement in the local newspaper and casually mentioned one day to Anne that we were looking for someone. I already had in mind that she would be an ideal candidate but could not be seen to poach the staff of the George Hotel. I was delighted when she asked if she could apply. Music to my ears and although we still interviewed others, in my mind Anne would be perfect. She had the contacts and the local knowledge. As I was not working there all the time it was important that Jane Bonnar had the final word with whom she wanted to work.

In these early days there was a vision but exactly how to accomplish the goal was not completely known.

Purchase of the Gothenburg

Again by chance and through Jane's network we found out that the owners, Scot Murray a well known rugby player and his father, of the Gothenburg in High Street, Prestonpans were keen to sell. On first inspection I could not see further than the dilapidation of the premises. Of course, Gordon saw further than this and the purchase was finalised in November 2000. Again builders had to be found for the

renovations and through Anne's good network Bill Robertson and his craftsmen were found and they all set to work.

2. RELATIONSHIPS

Teams

Over the years we have extended the Team and ensured social inclusion for them all. We have tried not to make it a closed culture but have opened the doors to all those who want to join in.

The Team has matured from just Gordon and Sylvia racing around the countryside, with Karl Schutz helping us to model the Mural Project in Prestonpans (as long as we ensured Karl had his apple pies every two hours and a few crisp new Scottish notes in his pocket) and Jane looking for everything possible from the archives on Prestonpans and Anne suffering hypothermia in Cockenzie keeping everything on track.

Since those early days the Team has increased to include our founder muralist team of Kate Hunter, Andrew Crummy and Jim Cursiter. Their expertise, talent and commitment to the cause is overwhelming and a very valuable asset to the Baron Courts. It is amazing just how much talent and expertise we have accumulated in the Baron Courts. Other founder members are Jim Forster, who has a wealth of local and historical knowledge. I have learned so much from them all and am really quite envious of their historical knowledge in their area. I feel I have missed a lot by not taking more of an interest in my own local history.

Through Jane we were introduced to Annemarie, who is also a historian and writer of some of our own historical series booklets. Through Annemarie's network we found Kristine Cunningham whom we welcomed to the Team as our PR Executive. Even in such a short time Kristine's expertise in journalism has opened so many doors for the Baron Courts and her writing style has put across to the public the message we want to portray.

Not least, and as valuable, are the other members of the Team:

- Stephen Larcombe, who has been handling our planning issues with the Local Council and designed the new Gothenburg, whilst keeping its historical beauty.
- Bill, who is managing The Gothenburg renovations, with his own craftsmen.
- George Tompson and Iain Turnbull who are managing the installation and running of the Microbrewery and the School of Brewing.
- Richard Powell, who has renovated the fine bar to its original splendour and the fireplaces.
- Robert Atherton, who has restored all the stained glass windows.

Of course, not to forget Tony Gillingham who is keeping us financially on track.

I think it would be interesting to see all the profiles of the Team and how we all perform as a Team and whether between us we have a balanced team.

Whilst at IMCA's Graduation event in Helsinki recently I was interested to learn from Malcolm Ballentine, a Research Fellow for 2003, said that Teams of 12-18 could be flexible together, whereas larger teams cannot be so flexible. It had been proved that smaller teams involved in the whole project could see the whole picture and productivity increased. This theory I thought was relevant to our own Teams in the Baron Courts. We are all involved in the whole picture even though we are working in small teams most of the time. Our small teams then get together at the Baron Courts meetings to bring it all together.

External Forces

Outside of our internal teams there are external forces working for and against us. We have had to overcome major frustrations from the Local Authority with planning permissions and power games. These frustrations have dogged our progress since day one, but we are not to be deterred and carry on regardless. We have achieved so much of the renovations as possible at the Gothenburg within the constraints but I cannot think how far ahead we would be and how so many people would be benefiting here and now. If nothing else we have learnt to be patient!

Also we have coped with the frustrations of the ongoing saga with the legalities and unpleasanties surrounding the Scottish Tartan Society issues. With all the good intentions to make the Baron Courts a success, and in turn to benefit so many local people, there are external forces trying to hold us back. Energies are being wasted in the legal system and local authority beaurocracy, where these energies could be put into more productive activities in developing the cause of the Baron Courts. I do not think I will ever understand it!

3. EXPERIENCES AND THE LEARNING

As mentioned above experiences and learning from those experiences can come from anywhere in our day to day lives and so often I find an experience can be related to another quite unrelated topic i.e. sitting in Helsinki relating to projects in Scotland.

I also learned that by continually adapting to circumstances I learn how to deal with the next change. The processes being to clarify values – focus – reclarify values – take action that will bring about change. During the last few years with Baron Courts this is what we have had to do as we have been presented with new challenges. We have had to take action to understand a situation and then take action to change the situation.

I have also learnt that learning is a social thing and I have learned so much from my colleagues within the Baron Courts. Another comment made in Helsinki was that Management is “tacit” knowledge – it is something that cannot always be written down for others to understand. An example given was how do you tell someone how to ride a bike? I related these comments to how can Baron Courts write down how they have been managing the projects and can only be seen by the successes we have achieved.

4. Marketing of a New Venture

Having always struggled with marketing throughout my career with IMCA and Baron Courts, I am now finding it interesting as to how we are planning to market the Gothenburg, Microbrewery, murals and historical series. These are the five major

areas to be concentrated on and I am learning the different approaches required for each one.

Marketing The Gothenburg, Microbrewery, Murals and Historical series

The future of the Baron Courts will depend on the right marketing strategy. In true Gordon style we are all encouraged to be involved in the marketing of the Baron Courts, Gothenburg, Microbrewery, Murals and Historical series activities. I think the Baron Courts culture has not been experienced by all members of the Team before and can be seen as a culture shock. Over the months it is encouraging to see how many ideas are being put forward with genuine interest and enthusiasm. So far I have learned so much about the advertising of a product as opposed to an intangible such as an IMCA programme. For me they are uncharted waters. I have an awareness that marketing has indeed been happening for a while via special events (Karl's visits, Lord Mayor's visit, Brushstrokes, leaflet drops, word of mouth)

The Gothenburg

Although the planning issues have delayed the completion of the Gothenburg our marketing strategy is well underway. The mural trail along the John Muir Way leads to Kate's mural at the top of the steps and across the road to the Gothenburg. What better place to stop for a refreshment.

Feedback is filtering through the networks of the whole Team from people interested in knowing when the Gothenburg will be open and Anne has bookings for special anniversaries.

Contact with local Tourist Offices will be another vehicle to spread the word about the facilities available for business meetings, club meetings, wedding receptions and all other special events. Together with our own Press Releases and special events advertised in Brushstrokes.

The Microbrewery & School of Brewing

For the marketing of the Microbrewery and School of Brewing there is sure to be a different mechanism for reaching a niche market. This is where the expertise of

George and Iain will be helpful. We know that anyone complaining about the beer will be put on a training course in the Microbrewery to make their own! My understanding is that we have little or no competition in the area for the School of Brewing so we should be in for a good start. I think that curiosity will also play a great part in getting visitors to the Microbrewery.

Links have already been forged with Glenkinchie for reciprocal promotional material. I feel sure that other satellite opportunities will immerge like this over the months/years ahead.

Of course the Baron Courts website is a wonderful tool for people to learn all about what we have achieved and the future development of the organisation.

Murals and Historical Series

Again I think there will be a different approach to marketing the murals. The Mural Trail and Coal Trail being only two such methods. The marketing of Andrew's Art Classes will lead to the members of the classes putting their creations into a mural. By publicising this it is hoped that funding will come through to enable us to achieve this.

With regard to the historical series, as these are all linked to murals, I feel sure that those viewing the murals may well want to purchase a booklet on the history behind each mural.

I feel sure there will be lots more ideas flowing in to encourage maximum potential tourists visiting Prestonpans.

Marketing of the Diploma in Arts Tourism

I was under the impression that going to Lindsay to the Global Arts Tourism Symposium would be an excellent forum to market the Diploma but have been advised that the participants are not likely to be those who would want to join the programme. They may of course be decision makers but I will not know until we

attend the Symposium. I will follow-up in my next Assignment my observations from the Symposium. May be those present will be, or have colleagues who are career officials, administrators, organisers of events – who knows?

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, in such a short space of time, I have learned so much in a different environment to what I have been accustomed. I have seen how many experiences in my past career can be adapted to help my decisions in my current role.

I would like to have the profiles of all the Team to see how we can work together more effectively and efficiently by understanding one another's learning styles and an appreciation of one another's strengths and weaknesses. Also how we can maximise the benefit of each other's strengths and support one another's weaknesses.

Throughout this document I have tried to demonstrate how circumstances both past and present have lead to learning and creating new experiences.

I am very excited about the future of Baron Courts and the new organisation structure (flow chart attached). I can now see how each of the elements of the Baron Courts interlink with one another. I feel sure the outcomes will be very rewarding for all concerned. A truly ingenious structure with a good basis for success. All will not be possible without the strength of a good Team behind it.

Here's to the future and may big Totem poles grow!

Sylvia Burgess
Baron Sergeand
6/10/03

