

**DIPLOMA IN ARTS TOURISM
SET 1**

ASSIGNMENT 1
By Adele Conn 28 July 2004

Once upon a time ... I consciously quoted "My what long legs you have!" These were my initial thoughts on my first encounter with the Baron of Prestoungrange. Little did I know that this one brief meeting would lead to me working on my dream job.

One thing has to be said, my mother is the greatest PR person anyone could wish to have. Most people comment on my confidence and bubbly personality, and yet one thing I cannot do, is market myself. I'd say I was a good artist and a bad businesswoman. Totalling contradicting that which I have chosen as a career.

The events leading up to the fairytale like comment on the opening lines of this brief unfold as follows: Kate Hunter, now on board as our muralist for The Prestoungrange Arts Festival, was in the process of painting Morison's Haven on the beach wall. Each morning at 8am I'd take a slow stroll along the seawall admiring Kate's progress, then make a mad dash across the road to catch the bus to Edinburgh. This was my only "contact" with Kate. My PR Executive was working behind the scenes – talking to Kate about murals and her client, also an artist! And most probably bribing her with offerings of hot tea to ward off a case of hypothermia for Kate as the cold winds swept off the Forth.

Soon after Kate's completion of this mural, Kate wanted to meet me and discuss the possibility of painting a mural on our staircase. The idea for this mural was to commemorate the Lord Mayor's visit to Prestoungrange Gothenburg in July of 2003 and to depict the trade links between Sweden and Scotland. As this mural would be situated on the John Muir Trail, it was also only fitting that we honoured John Muir, another famous Scot.

This was a godsend for me. Ever since arriving in Scotland from South Africa, I had been trying to join an art class hoping to keep those creative juices flowing. The two art classes I had attempted to join all had rather archaic teaching methods with flowers as the main subject matter – definitely not for me. I didn't need taught, not with a Diploma in Commercial Art to my name, having owned an Art Gallery and was sole proprietor of a sign writing/murals business. But what I did need was an outlet where I had complete freedom of expression and where my paintbrush could once again become an extension of my hand.

Unfortunately, the painting of this mural didn't allow for this. Kate showed great teacher-like qualities but she was not willing to compromise her art direction and it became a battle of techniques, me with my big bold brash brushstrokes and Kate with beautiful delicate fragile strokes. The end result was successful and it did provide me with many future open doors and opportunities. Plus a newfound admiration for other muralists work! Murals were not a huge movement in South Africa 8 years ago and I was never exposed to this art form, it was just a passion of mine that I chose to follow. In my world there was no right or wrong but there was also no words of advise, encouragement or criticism from fellow muralists!

And so the fairytale began. Kate walked in (the muralist distinguishable by her vivacious nature and artistic clothing), followed by Sylvia (later learning that she fills the role of Baron Sergeant) and then Gordon...as he eased himself into the sofa and crossed his legs, I was transported back to my childhood stories of Little Red Riding Hood ... "my what long legs you have!" All the better to lead you with. The only difference being, Gordon was no wolf!

I think that I sat in complete bewilderment for the duration and really still never quite grasped who or what Gordon was/represented. It was agreed – Kate Hunter would paint a mural with assistance for myself. I worked during the day in Edinburgh as a Marketing Communications Account Executive; I only managed a couple of hours in the evenings. I felt like I wasn't contributing much as Kate moved at a fast pace. What little I did contribute, I am thankful for and proud to have been involved.

Done and dusted! Or so I thought

Along came the invite to unveil the mural on Wednesday 23rd July. Kate was away on holiday and so I thought that it would be wise to be a representative of the mural on that day. I didn't handle it well at all, ducking the limelight to the extent of excusing myself from the celebration luncheon in the afternoon. In hindsight, it was a very silly thing to have done, but I am a great believer in that all things happen for a reason...perhaps it just wasn't the right time.

And so once again, I thought that this was the end of the road.

A couple of months down the line the number one marketing communications agency that I worked for in Edinburgh provided us with some shocking news – we were all being made redundant. The Edinburgh office was closing after 10 years of brilliant service and having won and worked on some of the most famous Scottish alcoholic brands – Tennents, Famous Grouse, Ballentynes including aiding in the invention of the concept behind the festivals of T in the Park and Guinness Witness Festival.

The Scottish marketing economy was in bad shape with 5 top agencies closing in the last 5 months. Most of our larger companies/clients were starting to take their marketing on-board and establishing an in-house department thus doing away completely with external agencies and the extortionate fees. And so it was that on the 30th October 2003 for the first time in my life, through no choice of my own, I faced tomorrow without a job!

I bounded into the job marketplace full of enthusiasm, looking on the positive side that this was a great opportunity to move on and up in the marketing field; to work on some fantastic new Scottish/UK brands and to make a name for myself. By the end of November, 35 interviews later, 2 versions of my CV circulating in cyber and numerous recruitment agencies desks, later...I was no further forward. The market was bleak. With the statistics stacked against me – 5 marketing agencies closed within the last 5 months equating to approximately 400 marketers out of work; Christmas closing in fast; vacancies would more than likely only arise in early January to middle February.

This is where my life changed – the moment I stuck a stamp on my CV addressed to the Baron Courts, something inside lit up, that long black tunnel had an ending.

Trivial events in your life sometimes have the greatest impact and this is where I thank technology and the fact that it breaks down. I had to copy my CV to send off for what seemed my 333rd job application attempt. With the library closed and Prestonpans not having an abundance of printing shops, I decided to cross the road and approach Anne asking to use the photocopier.

During the copying and general chitchat Anne mentioned that I should contact Gordon. She knew that within the next couple of months they would be looking for a marketing person but she was not sure in what capacity and when. I said I'd think about it. On returning home, I found myself drafting a letter to his PA, Sylvia. I never managed to apply for that other intended job.

I still didn't know exactly what the Goth/Baron was about and new little or nothing about the Prestoungrange Arts Festival and how they all fitted into the larger picture. I truly wanted to work alongside Anne; she came across as such a wonderful, friendly character, extremely down to earth. This was a refreshing change from all the plastic people I had worked with in the marketing/advertising industry previously.

At this moment, I smiled for the first time in a long while and it was great. The optimism was back. I felt a flood of good emotions lasting a whole 30 seconds and then it all came hitting back with a mighty thud – I was still jobless!

Fingers crossed, I whispered to myself as the gapping mouth of the letterbox swallowed another hopeful.

End of November and I was left in my house on my own, with mother flying off to sunnier climes of South Africa. Empty house, empty fridge. Loneliness is a frightening emotion. This was the first time that I had been on my own in over 4 years. It would have been all too easy to climb under the duvet covers – my comfort blanket and cocoon myself from the ugliness of the world. Luckily, I'm strong willed and refused to climb on that sleepy train to nowhere. From time to time, I give myself a pep talk and this was a time when I needed one. Facing myself in the mirror, I had a fascinating chat with my reflection, concentrating only on the positive aspects of my life and myself. Pep talks are great things – you get laugh at yourself at the end of it all, you re-evaluate you life and take stock of what you have.

It worked! A phone call from Sylvia. The Baron wanted to meet me. The interview was fascinating – all 5 minutes of it. Sometimes you just know! After my job offer, I calmly returned home then let the façade fall. I jumped for joy – not knowing whether to scream, cry, laugh – but all this to an empty home. I placed a call to South Africa.

My new working life started on 8th December 2003. 8 months down the line, I feel like I have been here forever.

Initially, my induction was to learn, understand and fully grasp the concept of what the Prestoungrange Arts Festival and The Prestoungrange Gothenburg are trying to achieve. Gordon threw big words around like economic regeneration, arts tourism and emergent roles. Baffled I was to say the least but scared – not in the slightest.

It was a vast amount to take in and digest, even now I understand a little more everyday and have learnt to apply it to various aspects of my job. To read something on paper or to hear someone's ideas is one thing – it is very one-dimensional. But to have to implement them, to have to carry them forth and take them to fruition, mixing them with your own insight and input, totally upsets the original recipe. But as long as the reasons for doing it and the overall aim remains the same – the journey merely becomes irrelevant and it's put down as a learning curve.

In previous workplaces, I have always had a senior member of staff to hold my hand in times of uncertainty, as they themselves had tread the same path some years previous and were able to offer me guidance or criticism. There was always a right way to do something – the concept was tried and tested we just adjusted and re-applied, the paperwork always followed correct procedures and was in on time, business etiquette was always used in the correct context and although these are wonderful attributes to carry throughout my marketing career, it all becomes routine.

Actually accepting the role as Montjoye at The Prestoungrange Gothenburg was one of the scariest career moves I have ever made. The Prestoungrange Arts Festival and The Prestoungrange Gothenburg are complete new ventures with no correct procedures to follow, no-one's previous footsteps to fall into. This is complete virgin territory into the unknown. Coming from a marketing background, you are taught to read and rely on market trends, budgets and case studies. There is nothing in place here. We still have to create a market, spend money to understand if we are over or under spending then adjust accordingly. Only in a couple of years from now will we be able to read and attempt to rely on market trends that we set for ourselves. We can of course do much reading on similar establishments, new ventures in the same field but the only thing that stands in our way is that we are an extremely unique venture. Sure there are numerous places that are practising what we do here but only a couple of aspects at a time. So there is no blueprint. We are the ones that will be writing our own history.

The opportunities are endless with Gordon and Anne at the helm, being extremely open and approachable individuals even with those off-the-wall bizarre ideas. They are able to see your vision and are not scared of dreams. Every idea is a good idea. Every single idea will lead to the sparking of a better idea, which could lead to THE idea that works.

It's great to be carving out the future of this business venture. There are many things to learn as we discover what does and doesn't work – all part of the teething process. I'm sure that we will falter at some stage but as long as we have work colleagues that encourage each other to keep going and help remind us of our strengths, the only direction for the Prestoungrange Arts Festival and The Prestoungrange Gothenburg is forward.

At first it was hard to understand where I fitted into this picture, but I work for the Baron Courts on all matters of marketing covering the various brands within the Baron Courts – The Prestoungrange Gothenburg, East of Scotland Public House, Fowler's Ales and The Prestoungrange Arts Festival. My official title is Montjoye – one who rallies the people to victory. Marketing by definition is to: find out what your customer wants and how to give it to them. My job is much more multi-faceted than that. With no advertising material in place, my copy skills have vastly improved and maybe it's the consulting with the Thesaurus that should take the credit. My interest in history has been raised again and to be able to relate to the stories and tales of the Pans that I was told as a kid. When the older generation come by the office for a chat, I can now visualise where and what they are talking about. Many provide photographs that transport you back to what would be a lifetime for some. For me, part of my job is to help reminisce the old Goth for those that know the Goth and help create new ones for the younger generation.

My marketing skills have taught me to break down the information into "target audiences" to aid me to communicate more effectively within my market. One needs to identify ways to measure results so you know whether or not you achieved your objectives. I have learnt that for all this vital information can help us build our database and provide us with the demographics to help us target our marketing more efficiently, Prestonpans and the Goth is not something that one can dissect easily. The Goth is an institution. Stories of the Goth have been handed down from generation to generation because families never seem to actually detach themselves from the Pans. They either remain here all their lives and build their families lives here or there is always a relative that has remained from the days past that still keeps in touch with those that have made a move. Family traditions and history are important to this little town that is why the murals have made such a great impact.

These feelings of unity and solidarity in this community are things that are not up for sale. I need to ditch my up-town up-market big shot money grabbing marketing jargon and get back to the basic values of marketing an establishment that is for the people run by the people. The Goth is a household name and it's my job to make sure that is where it remains.

The Prestoungrange Arts Festival is where my passion lies and this is truly the underlying reason that we are here. The inspiration behind this, with the way Chemainus built on its murals and Arts and Tourism is awesome. Being a painter myself I know the intense work behind them as well as the pleasure one receives when someone admires the completed work. I truly believe that every person young and old, have a creative spirit within them – some are able to discover this and use it wisely, others, their talent lies dormant and some never discovered. We should all be given the opportunity and encouragement to find it. We will all express it in different ways and this is what keeps the soul alive.

I know that The Prestoungrange Gothenburg with its implementation of the Gothenburg principles will go on to aid the Prestoungrange Arts Festival in a great capacity (as long as I continue to do my job right and we all work together as a team).

The standard of the murals is high but I am concerned that we are struggling to find new suitable talent so that the murals don't become stale with artwork from only 3-4 muralists. I am sure that over time we will conquer this through excellent advertising and the greatest marketing tool ever – word of mouth! The murals speak for themselves – advertising billboards that make people stop and stare. Lets hope that they stare long enough to become hungry and thirsty and pay a visit to the Goth to quench their appetites.

And lets hope that the marketing tools we have in place make them fully aware that they are funding a greater cause and helping economic regeneration of the local community through arts. And as they leave the Goth being satisfied in both body, mind and spirit, they'll greet me on the corner where the old Redburn Dairy once stood, as I once again dip my paintbrush into the pot of paint paying homage to my ancestors!