

Debs I'd like to start about your background because part of the PhD is about curator design and visitors but quite importantly it is about the individuals themselves and how an interpretation gets to be what the visitor wants it to be from start to finish with all the external and internal influences. So, for instance, you might have an interest in cars; so you might bias something towards cars of a particular age because that is your interest, do you see what I mean when you come up with a concept if you were a designer curator? So it is those kind of things that hopefully finding out a little bit about your background will help me with, is that okay?

Jon Yes, no problem. So is it things I've done workwise before?

Debs Yes and how you came to be where you are now really?

Jon Well I started off working at the Historic Ships in Portsmouth as a 16-year old, so that was my summer job and I quite liked it. I started off at university doing a Business degree with IT and concluded that I didn't like that actually and as I was doing a summer job where I was working in the tourism industry I decided to do a Hospitality degree with tourism aspects so I did that. All the time still working at the dockyard and very quickly was made up from the dockyard to being a supervisor and one of the duty managers.

I was all sorts of things really at the dockyards; site service manager for quite some time and then I was the Special Projects Manager. So for two years I looked at the different projects they wanted to come up with, which was interesting but the projects weren't that meaty to be honest with you. So that was from 16 to 26, well 25 really and I thought, 'Well ten years I've been here, I'm probably due to go somewhere else.' The job at Beaulieu came up and I thought it was a

similar sort of thing to what I'd been doing organising aspects of visitor services at the dockyards so I decided to give it a go.

I've been here now eight years; so my working career, as part of my degree I had to do a year in industry but I actually worked doing the Whitbread Trainee Manager's Scheme so I learned about running pubs and restaurants for a year. So I had a year's experience of running a pub and doing their restaurant training but primarily I've been involved with the dockyard and here really.

Debs Right, so it is quite appropriate really.

Jon Yeah, exactly, so I've seen most aspects of what a visitor attraction encounters from day-to-day, which there's not much that I haven't seen or got involved with similarly in either the dockyard or here really in things that come up.

Debs What does your role here include really?

Jon Well I'm the Visitor Services Manager, which basically means I look after the day-to-day management of the attraction from a customer point of view, a visitor point of view. That is managing about 120 people on the front of house team and their line manager and just really the day-to-day stuff of getting the visitors in and looking after them. Anything that is visitor facing comes under me basically.

I've got another manager who works for me, Maureen, who you know, and she is a duty manager and Louise is a duty manager as well so there are three duty managers and one of us will always be duty manager. If I'm here it is generally me and that is the person responsible for the day-to-day running of the place. It is up to me to look at the things we do for the visitors and to look at things the

visitors would like and fit in with Russell who is the MD and Steve who is the commercial director and with what they want and what the family want and just make sure it happens.

Part of it is the day-to-day care so within my job description it will say, should walk around the site several times a day. So part of the job is just to wander about making sure everything is perfect and management by walking around takes a fair chunk of that. Anything to do with the visitor and anybody who works face-to-face with the visitor will be ultimately working for me so it is quite a wide and varied role really. It's good fun and I'm very lucky.

I must admit I don't get massively involved with the curatorial side in the museum; I manage the front of house stuff for the museum such as the hosts and the guides but again I'm not the guy who picks the cars that go in there if you see what I mean. There are a whole host of other people who do that and then we've got Doug who is the head engineer and manager of the museums, so he looks after those aspects as well. But I have an overview of the visitor centres leading into that.

Debs So where does the Abbey sit within that because the museum I know, this museum and the motor museum is massive and needs someone to overlook it completely as you said, does anyone do that with the Abbey?

Jon The Abbey comes under our department for sure and Maureen in particular will take a lead in the historic end of the complex such as Paris House and the Abbey. She gets involved with a fair chunk of that. But in terms of day-to-day running of them it is an unmanned building so I'll go in there a couple of times a day and my team open it up and that sort of stuff but my role is really to go in there and see

if anything needs a bit of tidying up or a bit of maintenance and that sort of stuff.

Mary is looking at the exhibition in terms of what we do in the future so I'd get involved in that in terms of what would be interesting and also I am the access auditor for the site, so when we talk about how people get in and out of a building it is me who is writing the access audit for the building, which is quite an in-depth thing so I would be involved in some of that for sure. Ultimately I will present ideas to the family and then they will make their mind up from there or the senior management team will go with whatever they think is best.

Debs Okay, that's rather nice to be able to have a handle on that.

Jon Yes, it is certainly involved and I think we are very lucky in that the family and the senior management team are keen to listen and find out what is involved. I think we probably have a bit more influence in things like the Abbey and obviously the house is very close to the family's heart but the museum and the Trustees are involved in decisions in there. So I'd like to think as a Visitor Services Manager I'm a champion for the visitors if you like I have some input into those things, which has proved to be the case.

Debs In knowing about the visitor have you done further training from your degree in visitor services or the audience or anything like that to understand the visitor? Have you done anything more or is it just a gut thing?

Jon What I tend to do is, I've done lots of different little, little things in different areas. So for example a lot of the access auditing I will go and do that by doing a four-week residential course on that and

then learn about what people with disabilities want. So I do more focussed smaller training sessions as they come up really just to keep my eye in if you like. I do an awful lot of talking to other attractions as well. I find out what they do by visiting attractions and going from there.

So I wouldn't say I have had any formal extra training specifically for what the visitor would want, only obviously from my degree. I mean we do a lot of customer care training ourselves and I mean I take the Welcome Host courses for our staff so within that there is a lot of information that comes out from the Tourist Board for what we should be delivering within the course and I think that keeps me pretty much up to speed because they release new information all the time. I think it is just a case of being interested and getting out there and finding out what is there.

Debs Yeah, because I very sneakily did a search on your name and came up with, there's lots of Jon Tees, I think.

Jon It is an amazingly popular name!

Debs Lots of Jonathan Tees and there is a paper you wrote about visitors, or it might just have been a report and I think I downloaded it, it is probably on my hard drive, I'll send it to you.

Jon That must have been a long time ago, I don't remember that.

Debs It would have been about 2000 but I think it was more statistically driven.

Jon Yes, I did an awful lot of the statistics on the, God 2000, how many years is that, I'd have been 22 when I wrote that.

Debs Well maybe you were just looking back at those figures?

Jon Possibly, yes, who knows? I don't remember that to be perfectly honest with you.

Debs Okay I'll send it to you if I can find it again.

Jon Obviously with this sort of thing I've had to write lots of different papers about lots of different things to do with customer services and yes, I guess most of it is just experience and what I think about it. I would be interested to see that. That must have been in my dockyard days a long time ago.

Debs But it is definitely about Beaulieu, yes, and Beaulieu figures.

Jon Oh right, so it must have been more recent then.

Debs I just saw some figures, 96 to 2000 on one part that I looked at and that is with everything else that I've been looking at.

Jon So where was that published on the web then? I don't know how that gets to there.

Debs I think it must have been cited somewhere so someone, when you do a search these things come up quite quickly.

Jon I wasn't aware of that, how interesting.

Debs You'll go back to the office now.

Jon I've never Googled myself to be perfectly honest. I'd be scared what would come up. How interesting.

Debs So yes, the visitors kind of aspect is the bit that, as a designer, I find is the most important because although the creation is also

important, so every element is important but it must be really difficult for you to understand the wide range of visitors that you get here and what they want to see.

Jon And it is very difficult to not look at things through your own eyes. I mean I've just had children, I've got two toddlers at the moment, so in fact my understanding of what they want has been obviously greatly improved so I've started looking at things very differently. I almost have to stop myself and think, we're not a theme park, we're not Alton so we can't do that.

So yeah you are right. But it is very difficult not to look at things through your own eyes and think what you would like for sure and you have to sort of stop yourself and step back. I think for me the best thing for me, and I think our management team are quite good at this, Russell Anstey. I spend big chunks of my day finding out what they want and I personally believe, from a curatorial side people really want the human story.

I'm a bit, I'm not necessarily a purist, I am very much about bums on seats and getting people in and I think people really want to know the human story, they want to know who has died in that car and all that sort of thing. If we are talking about vehicles it's those, its about the people who have driven them rather than the actual cars and I think that is something when we do the museum redevelopment, which again is something that maybe I'm not particularly involved with really, although I have been consulted over the years, I would like to see those stories brought to life a bit more I think. And also it helps to make that contact with the artefacts if you like. That is my view on it for sure.

- Debs Well it has certainly been my perspective, hence the Talking Walls really, the human perspective of you've got a building and that building wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the people that built it or lived there. So it is quite interesting.
- Jon Maybe that might be a slight reflection on the fact that I can't put myself, it is hard to put yourself in the position of other people, because I am not a petrol head; I am not worried about the technical side of it. So when I look at any sort of display I am not interested in the engine size, I am interested in the clothes that someone would have worn while driving and that sort of stuff. So yes, you do have to get that balance right don't you?
- Debs So on that point then, what are your interests? Do you have hobbies and things that you would like to tell me about?
- Jon More sporting I'd say. I'm a lot more of a sports fan; it is not something. I mean I'll be truthful a big chunk of my job isn't about giving talks about that sort of stuff. It isn't really about that. Those guys know all that information and I know enough to get me by but I wouldn't really put myself out there to do a tour of the cars.
- So no, I'm not really massively interested in that but then I wasn't really massively in ships either when I worked with historic ships. So I don't think you necessarily need to be, to be honest. No but I'm more into football and ((0:13:38.1?)) and all that sort of stuff. So I would say, and then my family are very much a child-led family, we do things the kids want to do really. I will admit to that.
- Debs How old are they?
- Jon Three and a half and eleven months so they are all -
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- Debs A bit young.
- Jon It's amazing though I mean Rebecca absolutely adores the museum. We used to live on the complex and we'd come over here every time we had a day off and for her as a three year old all she wanted to do – I would think she would not like the museum, I would think it would be boring for her, but she just wanted to come to the different booths, press all the buttons. Anything that could be lit up and absolutely loved it from start to finish so I think I've developed a better understanding of what it is like for families with kids of that age. So really some of the things you can put on can be very simple and that is enough to capture the youngsters' imagination for sure.
- Debs So have you found that the moving image attracts more than the static image?
- Jon Definitely, definitely, yes and that is something we can definitely improve in the Motor Museum for sure. Anything that catches your eye and if you go into the museum, we display a lot of the cars with the A4 bit of paper caption, which is really what we are looking to move away from. Having said that I think that is down to the development within there. I mean that wouldn't interest me let alone my three year old to be honest.
- Debs I think that is why I started the Talking Walls in the first place or something similar to that because I used to go to heritage sites with my daughter, who is Rebecca, and -
- Jon Is she Rebecca as well?
- Debs Yes, and I used to get so frustrated, I was saying to somebody this morning, I used to get so frustrated with either not being able to get
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to that or not having a long enough time to stand at that because daughter was off or something or it was the wrong information. It was not what I was interested in. I was interested in something else. So that is why and also watching my daughter and how she did things. As you've just said, it's what things, okay so you know, we've got all this information about this property but how do we get it out in the right format? And how do we get the people to interact with it?

Jon Yes, it's definitely that and I think there are changing methods now aren't there? I think more than ever there is a world of possibility out there now. I mean I've looked at, for the Motor Museum I've always looked at listening ones and things like that. I've always felt it was just a bit dated. Whatever we did and whatever was the latest thing was a bit dated already and I've always felt slightly behind. So we never really made that leap; we've always come to the decision to stick with the people delivering the information, the guides talking to people.

So even now we are still behind and I think that is quite difficult for museums deciding what is the right thing to put in is and not end up looking dated, particularly with the audio-visual things and all of that.

Debs So Buckler's Hard has just been done; do you think the way that has been done is the way that maybe the Abbey will follow or maybe the Museum?

Jon Certainly the Abbey because the Abbey of course is very much, it is going to be very similar to how Buckler's Hard progressed really. So yes, I am hoping that will be good for sure. I don't know about the

museum because there are quite a lot of people involved in the museum so it will be interesting to see how that does progress.

But definitely, I mean I think that Buckler's Hard has worked really well.

Debs Oh gosh, yes, it's really nice. My conversation with Mary was, and that is what this conversation is about, is opening my eyes to how other people perceive things because I thought, 'Oh no, back, back.' Because when I first approached Mary and Stephen was, the fact that the Talking Walls should be on mobile devices and that people would go round with mobile devices and that they could walk down to the Infirmary and imagine how it was by putting their phone up. Almost like augmented reality. I thought that would be good but the concern was that people would go off with phones or servicing those phones and it was a whole new security area to think about and be concerned about so hence the kiosk.

Jon But within the last three years that has changed hasn't it? It is unbelievable. So you were ahead of the game there really weren't you? Isn't that amazing how just that is really shaping what we do from selling tickets, because obviously people can just do all sorts to buy tickets now. The number of Internet tickets we sell now compared to before is unbelievable.

Debs Really?

Jon Yes, you are talking £400 in February 2011 to £40,000 in 2012.

Debs Really so it has really worked?

Jon It's a massive difference. And that is the other side of it; you have to think of the audience. Now I ask this question because I am doing a

lot of lectures for the University students when they come in as part of their Leisure and Tourism courses. They come and talk to me and I think we don't engage very well with their generation and these are the guys who have grown up with this sort of thing. So how do we engage with those guys? And I think that is something that we need to think about and I think we've now got Wi-Fi in this building, which we've only had for a month or so and we will very soon have Wi-Fi in the Abbey hopefully so it does give us quite a few options really.

Debs I think one of my, I don't know if I suggested it back then, probably not, but one of my thoughts when I first started coming up with the designs, was that there would be kiosks up at the main reception which you could go in, say who you were, your age, and you could then choose your character and choose areas of information that you want to look at on your journey around the site. And then it would be blue-toothed or whatever to your phone or device, which you could either hire from here or have your own, so you don't have to look at it. You don't have to stare at it but it's there if you want to and then if you see something, you can think, 'Oh yes, I'll just, I could do a little bit more.' So with the technology that you are putting in something like that might be feasible perhaps?

Jon Definitely, definitely, it is very interesting. Even just the simple audio tour on our website at the moment, they've got 1) we don't promote it very well and 2) they've not got a way of getting it when you are down there. So it does open up a world of possibilities and I think this year in terms of budgeting we've just set aside some money to start thinking about it and maybe, who knows what we will do in the future. But again I think it is for me to lead; I've got to get my finger out and find out what will work best.

I think in the Abbey, the particular problem I find in the Abbey is that people don't understand the sheer scale of it so we don't create that message really very well and I think whatever we do needs to convey that. As you say with the history where you look at an old picture against where you are currently as you said, that sort of thing you could easily created couldn't you, where you could look at the Abbey as it was. There is definitely lots we can do on that score. Yes, that certainly is my role to get involved there. Not massively my field of expertise but again that is just stuff that I've picked up on.

Debs So you would go round to other similar sites perhaps and look to see how they are doing?

Jon Yes, definitely and things come up all the time whether it's the Museums Association or ALVA or any of the attractions; they have a lot of conferences and seminars and the Visitor Attraction Conference we go to and they are really good actually. Because you go and they have talks and the attractions tell you what they are doing. I mean the last Visitor Attraction Conference was fantastic. It was really good because it was again talking about all these things that other people are doing so there are plenty of resources out there if you've got a mind to go and look and so that is what we tend to do.

I mean the danger is it is very nice to be set in a certain time and I wonder whether the audience do appreciate that but not all the audience do so if we are looking to target other people then maybe we need to be aware of what they use and how they use it.

Debs So are you looking to target other people?

Jon I guess so, yes, definitely. I think it is difficult to buck a trend isn't it? I mean getting people to come in the winter is not easy; they just don't come. Holidaymakers come but certainly attracting other generations.

Debs So it is very seasonal? You don't get very many people coming over the winter?

Jon Less people; I mean most of our visitors come in the holiday periods and to events actually. The events programme has worked really quite well. We tend to have something going on every weekend and that has brought in lots of extra people.

I think in terms of, in terms of for Beaulieu, what we've got is a lot of people are aware of Beaulieu but it's finding something that tips them over the edge. So Stephen is really good at finding those big brands that make them say, "We'll go and see that." So Top Gear works really well, Bond works really well. It is enough to bring in that extra 25% of visitors, which is just what we need really. So I think it is quite a challenge really finding the next big thing?

I think having what is, one of the things is, the thing about the Abbey is that you could spend an awful lot of money on the Abbey and it would be nice and it would have a benefit on the day but is it going to translate into more visitors in the future? That is the question isn't it? Is it going to be enough for people to go away and tell all their friends they must come? Obviously it is some of the past, it is bringing everything up and keeping everything moving forward but sometimes it's probably those big headline things that bring people in rather than having – so something like the Talking Walls would have been a great addition while it was here but it's probably not going to bring so many extra people in but it would

certainly be enough to make people talk about how well that area is presented. ((Interrupted by a loud-speaker)) You get used to that. It is probably very loud on your recorder that.

Debs Yeah, they'll cut it out I'm sure. I've only found out recently that we can get funding to get our PhD things transcribed. I hope I can!
((laughs))

Jon So are you doing lots of these things?

Debs I've got 12 to 15 to do depending on everyone responding. You are the third person now and I think I'm down with Stephen on the 18th and Susan next week sometimes. So it was good. It is quite nice to me to come back and talk to everybody about it as well.

Jon So how long ago was it now?

Debs Gosh 2010 wasn't it that it was launched.

Jon Gosh, doesn't it go quickly?

Debs My life has just completely changed since then with the University.

Jon So what has happened with you because you were a Senior Lecturer at Winchester?

Debs Yeah, I was the Programme Leader for the Digital Media Programme and then a BA and BSc in Digital Media Design and Development so that keeps me very busy.

Jon With the MA, do you do distance learning for the MA because it is something I would be very keen one day to do because obviously I've got a degree but I thought I should maybe move something forward and it's knowing what to do as the next big thing really.

Debs Well with the MA that I run it's you coming with maybe a project or maybe if you wanted to learn some software or just even Photoshop and put it to a project, an interpretation project, for part of the site or something like that. You can actually use that project to work through your MA.

Jon Oh right, so how does it work? Is there much classroom time involved?

Debs If you were doing it part-time, it's one day a week over a couple of years and if it's full-time it's two days but it's just the hours you've got to fit in beside that.

Jon Yes, I think it is something I would be very keen to do at some stage when the kids are a bit older.

Debs I must admit I don't think I could have done my Masters when my daughter was that little. I did it when she was still young, because it's only recently that I did it really. The other thing that interests me is how you go about measuring the success of the events that you put on, including the Talking Walls kiosk perhaps? How do you go about finding out about what your visitors are thinking?

Jon We have all sorts of methods really. I think we do, we tend to do for something like something special that we put on we will tend to do a survey detail – Stephen will say the same – just focussing on that thing if you like. You do a lot of surveys but we particularly design quite a few surveys just to focus on the Top Gear or just to focus on the Bond and that type of thing and get some really good feedback that way. We do actually use those to make business decisions. For example, the appeal of Top Gear, we did some quite good research

on that in terms of whether it still had the appeal as we were hoping it would and we got some good information about that.

Debs So were they surveys where they were e-mailed or Facebook or -?

Jon No, they would be done on site really. I think, I'm actually reviewing all of our feedback now; it's a thing we are doing because I think we probably feel that we have lots of channels that the feedback comes in on but I think that is something we are considering how we could do that slightly better and again with the changing world of social media and all that sort of stuff are we tapping into that enough?

But generally when we want to know specifically how well something has gone, what we will do is do the survey there and then and capture people as they are here and we'll do that. We do that with written ((0:28:12.5?)) the questions and we'll sit down and write some information about what he wants to know. Yes, it comes back and gives us some useful feedback. A lot of it is talking to people; it's anecdotal. We do, as I say, I walk round the complex several times a day so we just stop and talk to people and find out what they like. I still find that the best way really.

Debs And you don't find the visitors mind talking?

Jon It depends on who it is and I suppose that is something isn't it?

Debs Are they going to be biased, you know, especially if they see the Beaulieu badge?

Jon I don't know. I think because I've got Manager on my badge they are quite happy to tell me how it is if you see what I mean? I think in truth they are less inclined to want to say anything to the guides in their uniform because they just think it's their job whereas for me

it's my responsibility. So I think they are fine and people will sit and open up to me. We have lots and lots of forms they fill in if they want to leave us information that they come and fill in.

We do get lots of information e-mailed from an information e-mail that people fill in and give us some feedback on. I think we do, we really on Facebook and things want to solicit the feedback a bit in more detail; we want to make it a bit more in your face. For example, we wouldn't put on the front page of our website, leave your feedback on Facebook here with a big banner but perhaps we should, we should be confident to do that. So yes, there are things we want to move forwards on.

Debs So I haven't checked, I should have done before I came, but do you have a Facebook page?

Jon ((0:29:44.4?)) and Twitter and all that sort of stuff. I find Trip Advisor quite handy nowadays. We always get relatively good feedback on Trip Advisor, which is something I am always surprised about because I thought people went on Trip Advisor to moan but I think that is quite honest feedback sometimes and it can be quite detailed as well. What I like to do on the feedback is to be able to say and Russell again is very keen, is to be able to say, "What is the one thing you really liked and the one thing you didn't like? Those are then the things we improve.

So for example the sound in the SoE Exhibition is a bit conflicting so we've improved that and we are going to improve it again actually but that was something that appeared with some regularity. So that small question of what one thing could we improve worked really well because people will tell you. They will tell you how great everything is but they will also tell you, you could do that better and

when we start seeing those trends we start doing something about it.

And again some of the parts, so for example we got a lot of comments about it being not particularly friendly for push chairs a couple of years ago, which I was always surprised about. So we took two simple steps: we let pushchairs go on the veteran bus and we let pushchairs into Top Gear. Prior to that they hadn't been because of the fire risk assessments meant we couldn't allow them in. But I talked to the guys who are fathers and said, "I honestly believe this isn't a risk, we could change it." And we made those two adjustments and I never get any comments about us being – not one now – and we used to get several through the course of a season. So yeah, I find that is really valuable to get that actual detail of what we could improve.

Debs Yes, because when you see all the paths that are around they are all completely smooth and clear and no rubbish or anything on them and no trip hazards so for buggies it is ideal isn't it?

Jon Yes, it's just the stairs where the buildings are so old there are the stairs.

Debs Yes, I suppose upstairs in the Abbey as well.

Jon Yes, and the house when we let people into the house so that plus being turned away from Top Gear, being turned away from the bus, it was getting too much. Now we've removed those barriers if you like it's not so bad and people are quite happy about it really. So yes, I find that very, very helpful, the real detail about what they like.

We have all sorts because we do surveys and questionnaires to death and we belong to ALVA, the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions and they come here and do thousands of surveys and then they do thousands of surveys elsewhere as well so we get a feel for how we compare to other organisations and we always come out slightly on top. So for me I think it is just a case of keeping polishing and polishing and polishing.

Debs Because you've won quite a few awards haven't you I think?

Jon Yes, we've won the Large Visitor Attraction of the Year with Visit England last year, which is like the best one you can win really so we were quite pleased about that. And I think it is because we are all quite critical. I will sit here and I will look at several things that I see as wrong. That car shouldn't be there for a start, why is that car there? We are all like that so we just keep doing it and doing it and doing it.

Debs So do you want to go and ask now do you?

Jon Yes, I want to find out who that car belongs to and ask, "What are you doing there? That's not a car park." So that type of thing we are keen to do. I just think I am conscious that people in this day and age really need to feel that they've got good value for money because it is a lot of money coming here. If you've come on a camping trip to the forest and this is your one big day out you want it to be brilliant so I am quite conscious of that and I truly believe the product is good but it's not the product that they will remember. It's the people really and I know that sounds a little bit clichéd but it is the God's honest truth.

If they stand in the Motor Museum and look at a car and think, 'That's a nice car,' and move on to the next car and think, 'That's a nice car.' After eight cars they've had enough but if somebody comes and drops a little conversation starter in and says, "Do you remember that one from your youth?" or something like that then it really brightens their day and that is what they'll remember.

Debs Yes, I came here with my other half and my father and his other half and he's not been into the Motor Museum for many, many years and he was looking at the Lanchester I think, was it? I don't know but he was looking at one or two cars and one of the guys came over and we went on and had coffee and they were still talking when we came back.

Jon You can overdo it! You've got to get the balance right.

Debs I mean they were very, very good and it really made my Dad's day the fact that somebody had taken the time out to -

Jon Well we did some research, we paid for a company called Shopper Anonymous and they do mystery visits. I organise a mystery visit every month from an industry professional but from someone we know in the industry but we also paid these people to come and do it. They identified that a lot of what we do it good and people like it. But while our staff were really approachable they weren't doing any approaching so if you stopped and asked somebody you got a mine of information and it was brilliant. But if you didn't do that then you didn't get anything. So we've really made a bit of a push this year to get onto the next level to try and find ways that we can start conversations and then if people aren't interested they aren't interested and you move on with it.

We are quite lucky in terms of where we are as a catchment area for staff; we get a lot of semi-retired people who have just come to the end of their career and want a couple of days a week. So there are a couple of policemen in there and a couple of people who have worked near so have local knowledge and that sort of stuff. So for them it is a really nice job and they are really capable of doing it and equally we get a lot of students and they come from families; some of them are very young. Some of them have never really talked to any other adults apart from their parents, so it is a constant thing trying to get them involved and doing but I think that is probably our strongest point really.

You could spend millions and millions of pounds here, you could decide to build this, that and the other but being realistic we haven't got those sort of funds really so we have to make the place as alive as we possibly can.

Debs If you over-fulfil you become another ((Poulton's)) Park don't you?

Jon That's the danger, yes. I mean having said that we are doing this go-kart track here, which is completely temporary and I hate it to be honest. There is so much wrong with it but we could build a proper go-kart track. So today for example I've written a business case for building a go-kart track but I know I am having to go to Ralph and say, "Can I did up a big part of your garden for you? Is that all right?" So we've got to balance the fact that we are in a National Park and the way we want the place to look as well as we know that is an attractive thing that visitors happen to like and are willing to pay extra for so you've got to get the balance right.

Debs I suppose it goes well with this also doesn't it?

Jon Exactly, it's a sort of theme isn't it? So that is something that we've identified that the younger generation need something a bit more interactive and by interactive we don't just mean touch screens and things, we mean physical as well and hands on. And they like the go-karts so it is something I'd like them to do properly but that is a bit Poulton's Park.

Debs I think that's fine. In my own opinion I think that's fine because it does tie in with the Motor Museum and it gives them the chance to get into a car even though it's a go-kart if you know what I mean.

Jon Exactly, so I don't think that is too far from us.

Debs Because you could do all kind of things with the Abbey in the sense that you could do, was it Susan or Mary that said about I can't think of the word now, where they sort of build a frontage or pillars or something of how large one portion of the Abbey was so that people can see the scale of it. But then it wouldn't look in place either if you see what I mean.

Jon But I think I said earlier on the Abbey is not necessarily going to bring extra people in but I know for a fact that a lot of the people who come here walk across the front of the Abbey and don't go in there. So if you think the average dwell time is four to five hours, which isn't bad but if you think that the Abbey was enough for them to spend half an hour or 45 minutes in there then that would really extend their day even further. So there needs to be something that does give that scale absolutely and something like that might do the trick but who knows? It's got to fit in hasn't it? But I think that Mary has some significant plans on that sort of stuff.

I am always surprised when I speak to people and they are standing outside the Abbey and they don't understand how to get in and they don't understand that there is an exhibition of any sort in there and they don't understand that the building would have been twice as big as you can see in ruins. We really do need to present that better but we are all conscious of that and I do think that if we can put that properly it could add value.

Debs It is a shame it was completely flattened wasn't it because if they had part of a wall, like they've got at Nettley, then it would have been absolutely fine wouldn't it? People would have understood that was just one small part of such a big building. I think that was, obviously I've got the full-sized model on the computer but how to replicate that out there I don't know.

Jon But maybe something like that is enough to give the idea of it. I don't know, I mean I always go with the idea, and again I'm probably thinking of my kids here, of just having a monk telling a story. Have you ever been to the Royal Marines Museum in Portsmouth?

Debs Yes, there's a Navy there, Sue McGillivray, something like that, who I know, only from doing the Talking Walls really.

Jon Well they have, I can't remember it now, some bar lady showing us a bar, and it's this hologram superimposed onto a place and I absolutely love that and we could easily do something similar with a monk couldn't you? But maybe that is a bit fun fair and not quite where we're at so I must admit I don't know the answer to that.

- Debs I don't know, maybe a workshop building a column or something like that? I don't know, with a stonemason in there and what are you doing in there?
- Jon The process for us is to ((0:40:12:1?)) to the visitors and for the visitors to say, "Oh I didn't even know that was there." And then from there they go and –
- Again for example as part of the access bit we did some research on how they entered the building, which door they go through. So again another survey and most people, pretty much a third go through one door, a third go through another door and a third go through the other door, whereas we really want them to go through the main entrance where the film is and the orientation is. So yeah, it all starts with the visitor I guess really doesn't it?
- Debs And no one visitor is the same are they?
- Jon No, that's it.
- Debs And they can come on one day and be a completely different visitor to coming the next day depending on the mood of the family.
- Jon Yes, and also things can, the classical customer care training is the first impressions and all that stuff but the fact is if you set somebody off on the right foot and then they are going to have a good day. If you do something to upset them within the first five to ten minutes then they are not going to have a good day and everything will go wrong. So it is so dependent on the people as they come in and we are really focussed on that to be honest.
- Debs That is really, really good. Just about Beaulieu Abbey and the interpretations, I don't know how many interpretations there have
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been at the Abbey. Because I know the film is there and the museum is there and the model is there, is that what has been there all the time or have there been different things?

Jon It has certainly been there in my time, yes, that's the only thing that has been there in my time. Obviously we've got the audio guide as well in year three now. I think the Abbey exhibition has been there for quite some time. The film probably came later I would say, it probably started off with the display boards because they were quite dated when I first started and we've replaced some but not all. Mary would know the detail of that but certainly in my time there hasn't been anything else so yes, it's probably due for an overhaul.

Debs Yes, I know they are thinking about it aren't they, Mary said, because they want to reuse some of the Talking Wall stuff as well I think, but not probably as a kiosk.

Jon Right, I see, so – yeah, that's -

Debs So what was your, because I know your staff had to turn it on and turn it off of an evening – did you get any feedback when you were doing your walking around with anybody using the kiosk?

Jon I saw a lot of people using it. I think the information and the way it was portrayed was fine. I think it worked quite well. It was a bit, well we know it wasn't massively robust was it. It couldn't stand up to our sort of French visitors the computer didn't like it at all.

Debs Well the computer didn't like it much.

Jon So I think the danger of anything like that is – I mean one of my friends went to the Bovington Tank Museum and the first thing he

said to me was, "Well they've got loads of audio visual but half of it didn't work." I think it can look a bit funny if a lot of the things don't work and these things do break down but I think we got over that didn't we and it was okay. So I think as a format it was fine really. I think they understood it, they did understand it, which is important because they don't always understand these things so I think that worked okay. It was just things like the French kids were getting onto the Internet and stuff like that weren't they?

Debs Yes, we managed to lock that down I think but yeah, you will get children, well they are not children are they, but they will always push how can we break this? We've got students who do that, who say, "How can we make this do something it shouldn't do?"

Jon Yes, I think we should just discount from our thoughts really because are a bit out there on their own. Watching kids on it, I mean I don't stand there all day watching it but I think the character side of it is good and that side of it appealed to the younger generation certainly.

Debs It is the story again.

Jon Yes, definitely, definitely.

Debs Because you had events going on in there as well didn't you? So upstairs or downstairs?

Jon Yes, the corporate functions and they kept wanting to move them didn't they? Yeah, but I think we got into a position in the end where it didn't need to be moved.

Debs No, I wasn't worried about that. I was wondering if anyone, was all the Abbey stuff turned on at that time?

- Jon It would be during the day but it wouldn't be in the evening, it would probably be turned off by then.
- Debs It would be really interesting to see whether that had any impact on other events but probably if it was turned off?
- Jon Probably not for the important functions, no.
- Debs So what would you like to see in there then? If you had your own way what would you like to see in there if money was no option?
- Jon I would probably think the way to go is to have some sort of wireless Internet that they could use on their smart phones with something they can download there and then, some sort of App, that they can download and just look at different bits and bobs. As I think we said, so that they could tap into what was interesting for them for one bit. I'd probably like to make it a bit more interactive in terms of silly things like dressing up clothes and that sort of stuff and maybe a monk talking to people, I think that works quite well for the younger generation.
- They have a simple thing in the motor museum – a pope car and it is constantly rammed with people just literally all you do is sit on the car put an old hat on and take a photograph and it doesn't cost anything, you just get on and do it. The museum put a donation box down and it made like £1,000 a month in donations, it's ridiculous really, but constantly in use.
- So people just like these hands on kinds of things and I think we need to display the information in a way that is going forward so lots of people will be able to get to it. I think we definitely need to
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make it a bit more interactive with things to do in there, so maybe dressing up boxes and maybe more hands on stuff like -

Debs Make their own bottle of mead?

Jon Absolutely or even just having things that you can touch and feel that they would have used – like tools on a chain or something like that. So I think there are certain simple things we could do very quickly to spread it around and make it more interesting for sure. And then I do think that conveying the information would work on the iPhones.

Debs I think it is becoming so much part of people's lives to have these things; it is a lot more acceptable format. Again I think one of Mary's earliest thoughts were the fact that looking at the screen in bright sunlight and stuff because you are going outside but I think there are, most phones have got over that. I know I've got a Galaxy S3 and sometimes you have to look, to do this, in order to see it properly.

Jon But even if its audio, I think, the MP3 description of the Abbey on the website is good, it's interesting and it brings the place to life and tells a story so again that sort of thing is, that you can easily download there and then can't you rather than, because at the moment they would probably have to download it before they came to probably having just a sign saying 'download the MP3 and it will tell you all about it' – that type of thing. So I think it is a collection of all kinds of things that just raises it up. I don't think we could rebuild the wall. It would be nice if we could but we can't.

I think certainly landscaping it so that the orientation, this is definitely Mary's idea, something so that if you see the film, you know what you are looking at and go from there.

Debs Okay, thank you, I think I've covered most things. You'll see all the questions here.

Jon So can I have the questions?

Debs Yes, have a look through.

Jon I tell you what the thing is, it is very difficult to stop and think about these things as well. I know that should be my role. I should be able to spend an afternoon where I'm just going to think about the future and plan and I know that is ideal but it is hard to do. It is very hard to do in a day, particularly this time of year, the day-to-day stuff; to actually think, 'What would really work in the Abbey? Let's go and do some more research.'

We are very lucky this year because we've got a student placement who is working in our office for 40 weeks. She is doing Leisure and Marketing at Bournemouth and I'm going to get her really out there and looking at what is about. She is quite capable so we are fortunate to have that resource this year.

Debs You say that you do get together sometimes and you do have an input to the things that you put on, the interpretation or whatever. So do visitors get included in that? Do you have something like a focus group or do you -?

Jon Not really. We do for things, so like the disabled user groups and people with certain disabilities that are giving ideas about the access and disability and the whole complex.

Debs So it is basically the Beaulieu team?

Jon Yes, pretty much. The museum re-development is slightly different; we were all consulted on that so there were big meetings and I am sure that they would have had visitors as well although I didn't see them. And yes, they just tap in from what we think, from our own experience.

Something, for example, with the go-kart track, I think it is going to work and what I should do is look at what else people of that generation who we think that will appeal to, what else they could do? So I probably need to think of a way of doing that whereas at the moment all that is really happening is that I am saying to the guys, "I like the idea of a go-kart track because I think it's great and will make us some money. Go on let me do it?" Whereas really I should be saying, "Well I've done this bit of research and it turns out that all our visitors are screaming out for a go-kart track." So I think the onus is on me to get out there and do it really.

Debs Yes, it is the research isn't it?

Jon Yes, I don't think we do, I don't think I personally do enough of that and that is my fault I should be doing that. I think probably that is one of the things that we should be doing as much of that as possible and that is something that we are all quite conscious of. So I think they are expecting me, whenever we have discussions about anything, to come fully armed with what they want.

Debs With visitor expectations?

Jon Yes, I mean we've talked about building another building and I've done a little paper on what operations would be required, it's own heating system and that sort of stuff. But again what would be put in it was one of the questions and again that is the sort of thing that

when we finally come to do that we should be going out to the market to see what people actually want rather than me just saying what I think. So I think that is an area in which I could improve.

Debs I can't begin to tell you how much research I did before creating the Talking Walls. Getting into the characters with Susan and finding out not just about the ones who were here but finding out about the other ones and what their lifestyle would have been in order to be able to write up that character in the first place. So it was quite prolonged but in all of my designing I didn't once step outside my comfort zone and ask people, you know visitors, what they would want. I asked people around me and I asked daughter and family and all this kind of thing, "What would you like to see at a blah blah?" So you kind of do that and you sit there yourself and think, "Well this is what, this is how I'd like to receive my information." But my curiosity in the my PhD is how many of us, you know, designers working with organisations like Beaulieu or even within the National Trust where you've got the design team and the curator team and everyone else, how much do you actually incorporate the visitor in those discussions or did you just come up with an idea and think, 'Well they'll love this won't they?' kind of thing?

Jon I think that's how I do it. Basically I have my conversations with visitors while they are here, so I suppose I've probably done a bit more of it than I was suggesting. We did do, last year, Stephen will be able to tell you about this, last year we did do some market research, which we changed last year to be more about what visitors would like to see and the different types. It was really quite detailed so we have got that but realistically how useable that is I don't know.

- Debs So does anyone sit down and analyse that?
- Jon Yes, we all went through that and we all came to the – I don't know what we came to in conclusion – but Stephen will be able to tell you about that. It was quite interesting and was really detailed. But I can tell you we didn't do it again this year, so I don't know what that means.
- Debs I think doing it every year is probably not such a good thing but doing it every so often is.
- Jon This was really going out and looking at the different types of people and asking those types of questions – not what they would like to see but what they were interested in? Whether it was the social history or whatever it was. So that would be quite interesting to talk through with Stephen because he's got a real handle on that I think.
- Debs He's on different panels or boards isn't he?
- Jon Yes, so he's got a world of experience in that for sure.
- Debs Thank you ever so much Jon.
- Jon That's okay and I'm forced to admit I am working on a slightly smaller scale than the whole thing so I can throw in a photo booth and if it doesn't work then it can be changed. We also do, a lot of things we do are sort of 50:50 shares so we are not even spending any money.
- For example, we've got a go-kart ride, not a go-kart ride, in the museum, which the Hayes Museum spent £30,000 on and we haven't spent any money on. We found a guy called Sean and he

had one and he takes 50% income and he takes 50% income. So we try – it's all quite low risk as well.

Debs Yes, the photo booth thing, I was just thinking, you could have a room where there were dressing up clothes and then they could take photos of themselves in photo booths rather than having a photographer on board.

Jon Yes, well that is effectively what they are doing with the car and I'd like to see more of that type of stuff and things like – again it's all based on ((0:54:45.0?)) we do a walk around sheet for families and it is very educational – to the point where it is a little bit difficult to be honest. There is nothing wrong with it, it's good but it is very educational but we have to decide whether we are an educational environment or a fun environment with education?

I would like to redo that now, particularly in the light of what I know my children are interested in and things like, so rather than say, "Find out the licence plate of this," or something a bit technical. I would say something along the lines of, "Touch the rubber on a tyre," or something like that. A bit more for the younger generation and a bit more -

Debs What does it feel like?

Jon Absolutely, more that sort of stuff. But again I don't really know that, that is only based on my experience of going to other attractions and seeing that is what they are doing. I don't really know that from my experience of the conversations again but it would be interesting to try it and see what people would think. So I think we've got that lined up as well.

- Debs It must be nice to be able to try all these things in that way without too much cost?
- Jon Well they are only small things really. The fundamentals of what we do are probably not going to change are they? We are not going to, you know, big things would be digging up a whole layer for that, but basically it is only moving the go-karts from there to there on a permanent track.
- Debs Yes, because you will need this won't you for the shows and things do you can't keep it there?
- Jon Well it's always there for the summer and we lose those big weekends, we lose the revenue. So we'll have 10 or 20,000 people and the go-karts won't whereas if you had a permanent track the go-karts could. So there is real business benefit if you like and that is something to work on.
- Debs We've done some work at Leicester University on my degree programme with INTEC and Andy Lane. Did you know Andy Lane?
- Jon Oh yeah, Winchester.
- Debs Did you know Andy Lane?
- Jon Yeah, I went to his wedding. I don't know him massively well but his wife works for us. She works for, Mandy runs our group bookings and Andy used to be heavily involved in here.
- Debs Oh yes, I know you did, because he is going to be one of the people I go and talk to.
- Jon Is he? He's a genuinely nice chap I think. It will be interesting to see what decisions and how he makes them because he was obviously
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involved with one of the Directors of the Museum so he will have an inside track on how that decision-making is made, which will be quite interesting.

Debs Yes, but what they found out at INTEC before Phil left was they put on this sports thing, you know for the Olympics and in the lead up to that, and in order to capture the 17, 18, 19 year olds so they put on various interactive sports stuff like the sort of war you do when you do F1 training and all this kind of thing. And we got out students to do a little promo App for that and stuff like that but they targeted that exhibition purely at getting a new audience in and a particular age-range audience in. I haven't been back to find out about it.

Jon That was very focussed.

Debs Yes, very, very focussed.

Jon I think we are a bit more general aren't we? I think we take, well particularly with the museum we take the mission of telling the story of British Motoring. That is it and we are going to do it, which is great but that is an interesting approach. I think we can do that to a certain extent with our booths; we've got lots of booths in the museum. So, for example, one of the guys in the Trust is running a project with Southampton University and they have designed software that are racing games but using our cars, which is quite good fun isn't it? So I reckon that might be good but again that is there to decide and the University of Cambridge is wanting to do it. So that is working quite well but I don't think it is something we sort of set out to achieve it is something that came to us.

Debs No that's good, well thank you very much.