

Audio title: Rebecca Furse – 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2013

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Debs            Thank you for agreeing to do this; it's really good. First of all I'd like to start by asking you about your role as a designer, and I've got here environmental psychologist, with DK Architects.

Rebecca        A general overview?

Debs            Yes.

Rebecca        I started with DK six and a half years ago as an architectural assistant. It was my first design job after having completed my design degree. Since then my role has developed; I'm still not what I would call a senior member of staff but I'm not at the bottom anymore. It was on completion of my Masters in environmental psychology last year that I asked for a change in job title to designer and environmental psychologist to reflect that I was never intending to be an architect, and architectural assistant just didn't seem to really fit the bill anymore.

I suppose when I started it was also before the recession hit so we had lots of big projects, and teams could be up to 11 people, which was like a third of the office would work on a project. So, that was a really comfortable place to start because you could get your bearings and work out how to do stuff, and there were always people around working on the same stuff to ask questions of.

Then things got a bit quieter, but we still had some big projects and I tended still to be embedded in those, but doing stuff that was more and more specific to what my interests were. So, in the first project I did everything that was required. The second I mainly did room layouts and stills, but still did the odd bit of detailing there needed to be and did that. I made it clear I wasn't that bothered about detailing. And after that I have tended to stick in the room layouts, interior

design, graphics, marketing bits I like. Normally I manage to get it my way to have those things to do.

Now with finishing having the environmental psychology degree I'm able to tailor that even more to stuff that's very specifically what I'm interested in and beginning to get a reputation.

Debs            That's good. There are lots of different things there that I'd like to bring up; but one of them was your interests and why those interests are there – but I'll come back to that. The other one was the fact that you were quite specific about not wanting to be an architect or architectural assistant. So, why was that?

Rebecca        It's very unusual. When I joined the practice I was the only architectural assistant, or that kind of creative technical side, not admin, that hadn't done a degree in architecture. Most architectural assistants have done their degree in architecture, part one or part two, and they tend to have their little break, do their part three and quality. And that is the standard route. So, when I joined I was just architectural assistant as if I was a part one. But of course there is no clear career path for me at that point.

Architects – big generalisation – tend to think that architects are wonderful and can't really understand why anybody wouldn't want to be an architect. So, if you're an architectural assistant that is studying architecture clearly you want to be an architect – although there is another lady in the practice who did her part one, she might even have done her part two, but has no intention of becoming a fully qualified architect; she's quite happy where she is. If you didn't do architecture it's probably because you weren't quite bright enough –

that's the impression I always get – that for some reason you failed to get onto that course. So, you settle.

So, I've tried to make it clear that no, no, I'm fine with the insides and that's what I like. There's no point in trying to mould me and give me those jobs. Because some of the people of similar age to me that have recently qualified are really begging for their own jobs to work on and have that responsibility. Yes, I'd like my own jobs in the area I'm interested in; but I'm not interested in designing an entire building. It's just not my thing.

So, I feel I've had to restate that several times over the years that I'm not an architect. That I suppose goes with saying about not liking detailing and things, in that when I first started I made a big thing about oh, it would be really interesting to know how buildings go together and find out the construction. I found out some of that and decided that was enough and I didn't need to do that anymore. In terms of I have to do stuff that's not a keen interest sometimes and do those kinds of drawings, but I like making the pretty drawings; I'm not that bothered about what they show. I don't seem to retain that information very well, so I have to ask people how it's all put together every time I come to do it. So, they might as well get somebody else to do that.

Debs            So, you are much more interested in the graphical output?

Rebecca        Yes.

Debs            The visual aesthetic.

Rebecca        And I think I quite like the quick win of a nice drawing.

Debs            Quick win, what's the quick win?

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Rebecca        It's done. It looks lovely as it is.

Debs            For whom?

Rebecca        For me! If you're drawing a detail and you've just got to get it out quickly, it's got to go to site, it's all about how the membrane is buried in the wall, so you do this not very attractive drawing, you get it out to site, they build it and you never see it. So, there's not a lot of satisfaction in that for me. Other people love doing them. I understand when people like detailing when it's about getting those perfect elements that sit well together. But when it's buried in a wall I can't get excited.

Debs            I can understand that one.

Rebecca        But in terms of why I like the interior stuff I don't know really; I just do.

Debs            The people around you, the people you work with – again we'll come into that at the end when we talk about your role in more depth – but do you find that they are perplexed with you in the fact that you are not interested in that sort of technical build aspect?

Rebecca        I don't think so. They now know that I'm not that bothered so they're not trying to push me to do it or anything like that. And I think they accept that everybody likes different parts. I tend to say I like preplanning, which is when you can make the prettiest drawings and things that look like drawings of buildings, and I like the interiors and visualisation and stuff like that. I do like seeing the building being built. But some people really love being in the action onsite, answering questions from contractors and that's their thing. Or some

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people are really good at liaising with clients and teasing out what's really required. So, everybody has their different –

Debs Core strength.

Rebecca Yes. It's a case of quite often they end up working on a job where they employ some of those skills but the rest of it they just have to do. Or if it's a bigger project you can pull in the right kind of people to do the right things so that everyone's happy. But that's down to management to resource.

Debs There is a certain satisfaction in producing visual drawings; I understand that one.

What led you to go into that route really? What made you do your degree?

Rebecca I suppose it goes back to way, way before then. At school, 15, 14, 13, whenever it is you decide and select your GCSE options, at that point you're kind of making a statement about what you think you're going to do in the future, or at least what you think you might be good at or enjoy otherwise you wouldn't pick them. For a long time I've always enjoyed thinking about interiors and fashion as well at the time, design generally. Probably you're an influence. It's odd because I was better, naturally better without as much effort at languages and science. Design is more of an effort, but I like it better.

Debs That's interesting.

Rebecca At GCSEs I got A stars in science, English language and English literature, and German – did I get A star in German? Anyway I got A star for art and design. But I feel like I have to work harder at design, but I like that work. Whereas I find science interesting but I don't get

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the same satisfaction from things related to science. So, I suppose it was quite handy going back to my Masters in that I could drag the science bit back in and the English in terms of writing and doing those kinds of bits.

I guess I sort of made a decision at school that I was going to go and be an interior designer really in my life, so I chose textiles and art and did those kinds of subjects. And that then informed what I did for my A levels, which I started off doing textiles, graphic design, which was actually more of a product design course – it was an odd course, that particular A level; a good course but odd. And art, along with maths and English. And then that was too much because I had three coursework heavy ones, so I dropped maths and textiles. But oddly they made me take maths again the next year; they wouldn't let me drop it completely, I had to take it again as an AS – which I think is because they thought I had a very arty line up and they thought they wanted me to have something a bit more concrete. Which was a stupid idea because I didn't want to do it by that point, so I barely went to any of the lectures and came out with an E, I think.

So, I knew what I wanted to do; I didn't really change my mind. I just geared everything to doing that. Then when I was at college I applied to Falmouth, Kent at Canterbury and the Southampton Institute. I didn't want Southampton Institute; it was sort of the backup plan. I wasn't impressed by the lecturer who interviewed me at Canterbury. I decided I like Falmouth and so, although I could apply to three more unis I didn't want to, I just wanted Falmouth, and I got it so it was fine.

Debs                      Obviously I know the degree, but why spatial interior and landscape?

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Rebecca I didn't want to do interior design because I thought it might be too wishy-washy and all about curtains and cushions. I felt like I had enough ability to pick some curtains and that kind of thing, or it's stuff you could pick up. Whereas thinking about space and its certain requirements and different things around that would be a more useful route. So, spatial was interior and landscape; whereas the Kent at Canterbury course was interior architecture. So, the interior side I think is probably fairly level, but I was interested to get the landscape bit too; which actually as it turned out was a little bit pointless because every time I had an opportunity to gear something towards interiors I did. I never willingly chose a landscape project, but obviously there was the option.

I'd say actually now, having a degree in interior architecture, probably would be more helpful than in spatial design because nobody knows what it is. I've had several occasions with people thinking it's something to do with space, the one in the sky and that I'm designing rockets or something – which would be terribly exciting but it's not what I do. ((Laughter)) Nobody could spell it. I remember somebody, after we left uni, they sent an email I think to the course leader and the rest of us saying: so when somebody asks you in an interview what is spatial design what do you say? She said: it's sort of to do with spaces inside and outside. And it was a bit woolly, but it was a nice atmosphere down there.

A few people have converted their courses to part ones and have gone to pursue architecture and landscape architecture. Some have stayed as interior designers and things like that. And others have gone into teaching. At least three have gone into teaching, art generally and down that route.

Debs            Seeing the progression, the environmental psychology seems to not fit from an external viewer, if you see what I mean. Obviously I understand what you've done it for, and it is designing spaces still and understanding spaces and the psychology of space.

Rebecca        How I was looking at that was for my dissertation for my undergraduate degree it was about privacy in public and creating spaces, how they affect people. And that is the key bit. As designers we can make spaces that we think are pleasant or we hope will facilitate certain things; but it's then thinking about the psychology of how that works. That's where the environmental psychology came in. It was through I wanted to do a Masters, I wanted to do something that was similar to what I did for my dissertation, and that seemed to be what the course was.

Debs            Fit.

Rebecca        I think it's a course that because of the environmental bit they don't think environment and spaces, they think sustainability, and half the course is that – it's just not the half I'm interested in.

Debs            So, your role has really changed from when you first started to where you are now?

Rebecca        Yes, I'm less of a monkey now.

Debs            Our own conversations, you have been requested now because of your knowledge.

Rebecca        Yes, and I think that was the thing that my – not that it wasn't respected in the first instance – but I had nothing to back up my views. I didn't have the experience to go with it and I didn't have any educational bits that were any different to anybody else's; so it would



just have been an opinion. Whereas I now I can give a respected backed up opinion.

Debs            Qualified opinion.

Rebecca        Yes. And some areas the dementia side of things I'm interested in, I am particularly interested in it so I'm happy to look into it more, other people in the office aren't interested in so they're happy for me to take over that and become the office expert on that, and then they can ask me questions as and when they need to or get me involved in the project as and when they need to, without having to learn anything. We have other people work on a lot of education projects and do similar things.

Debs            I know there was somebody at the office who's now retired – but the question is: who has influenced your design work or where you've got to be where you are? Who has influenced you mostly? Or isn't there anybody; is it all through personal interest?

Rebecca        It's difficult to say. In terms of interior design choices and things like that I'd say nobody in the office has really influenced what I think is a nice style, because other than me we don't tend to get involved in that level of interior design so nobody else has set a precedent for that that I can follow and steal bits from. So, for that side of things. Then I'd say it's all magazine, internet, TV.

Debs            Research.

Rebecca        Yes. Just looking at interiors and deciding what I like and what I don't like. Why that is I don't know; it obviously just speaks to you in a particular way. And you catch up on particular trends and you've got

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to be aware of actually not being too trendy in a lot of things we do at work because –

Debs It goes out of date.

Rebecca Yes. If it's a care home or an office it's not going to be changed in two years' time. If it's a hotel it might be, but we don't do those at the moment. So, I'd say it would be outside. Previous education, research, everything probably goes into that.

In terms of bigger design I guess you come to respect the opinion of particular people in the office that you can appreciate how they've arrived at solutions and that they're neat solutions that work really well. So, you value their opinions. You might have some people in the office that you think why have you done it that way, it doesn't seem quite right; so they're not the person that you then speak to.

Within the office we're constantly using our own projects as precedents for other projects and stealing – for want of a better word – bits of projects and sort of using those as a starting point for new projects. So, a care home we have a layout for a bedroom with en-suite that we use basically that layout because it works really well in any care home that we design. The same I had a thing at the beginning of a hospital project that I was working on where we were asked to put together a set of exemplar rooms, and working out what the square meterage of the ideal layout in a room would be so that that could act as a starting point in a real room, which has more constraints on it than the ideal room.

It's in the office looking at previous projects and knowing particular members of the staff that are very good architects. But the interior side is down to me! ((Laughs))

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Debs Is it Mike who's retired?

Rebecca Yes.

Debs Did he influence you at all about designing for care homes and things?

Rebecca Probably more indirectly than directly because it was only shortly before he left that I got to appreciate how into his care homes and things he was and how much he knew. But I have used projects that he's worked on as good examples. Actually in an essay that I wrote for my degree, my Masters, it was about dementia and way finding I was able to use that project. And it was through doing that essay that I realised how well designed that project was, because the features that I was looking for I kept finding examples of them in that project and thought oh, clever Mike. Because he wouldn't necessarily have discussed that in great lengths in the office; he just knew how to do it because he'd worked on lots of care homes previously. I think before he moved to DKA he'd worked at a practice that majored on care homes and things like that so that's why he had so much experience in it. And obviously at retirement age there's a lot of experience to draw on. But yes he knew how to design a good building for the people in it, and was very, very thoughtful about imagining people in the spaces.

Debs Empathic.

Rebecca Yes. I always try to do the same thing. When laying out desks in a room and there's that horrible desk with its back to the door, and you think nobody's going to want to sit there, poor sod who's got to have that desk. So, you hope that it could be a spare one. You think I'll try and rearrange it so there isn't the crap desk – doing that kind of thing. And I know that he did that. Whereas other people, I wouldn't say

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necessarily people in the office, but are far more driven by making the outsides nice.

Debs Less about the interior.

Rebecca And squeezing in the insides.

Debs To fit.

Rebecca Yes. Whereas I prefer it the other way.

Debs Basically the persona thing and the empathic experience, putting yourself into somebody else's shoes to live their life in that space, is what you, I wouldn't say major on, but probably is a big driving force.

Rebecca Yes. I like to imagine myself in all the rooms I lay out. It's particularly handy now you can make all the 3D views because you can just go and walk into them in your head; oh that's not very good, and do all that kind of stuff. And we talk about journeys when we're having crits of building. So, somebody will say, "Right, so as a patient I'm coming in here, I look over there, I can see the check-in desk, I can see the reception desk, I go to reception; then what happens?" And we do talk through those as we're designing things. It's not a case of: oh, we've designed it all; oh it doesn't work. Particularly when you meet with clinicians you need to be able to talk with them: So, the person walks in, they're sat with you at the desk, they talk through their issues, they step over there, the curtain closes, they undress in privacy – so you have to be able to explain that as well otherwise it's quite difficult to bring the plan to life for them. Again, the 3Ds help, but you need to be able to explain.

Debs Tell a story?

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Rebecca Yes, and really help them to work out how they're going to inhabit that space. Because we're used to doing that and other people are not.

Debs It's really interesting because the interpretation of design, designing for visitors to use heritage sites is a similar thing, for most people that care you try to stand in their shoes and do that journey yourself. And there is an opinion, as you probably are aware, that some designers are far too arrogant to take that on board in the same way: I'm the designer; I know what's best; this is how it's going to be.

Rebecca They're not very good designers.

Debs They would not be a designer I would go to.

Rebecca Designers are problem solvers that can make the problems look pretty half the time – that's what it's down to. I used to, not get into arguments, but have to firmly make my point sometimes, or at least I felt I had to, in lectures in environmental psychology because a lot of studies – I was only looking at some studies about it the other week – they've asked architects to imagine a lay person's perspective, and they've got it wrong. They have been incapable of predicting the right response. I'll find them for you. In some articles to do with that that I've read it's kind of saying architects design for other architects; they like to make statement buildings. Well, maybe a few Richard Rogers, there's the star architects, the ((?)) of this world; but they're taken on by their clients because they want a star architect to create a building – that's the key point of that building.

Debs Brand and impression.

Rebecca        Is to create this big impact. And the client is probably happy to accept some compromises on internal spaces and these things to have that star architect design their building. Ordinary architects have to design things that work, that the client's happy with and likes the design of, for a budget in a certain amount of time.

People might look at things sometimes and think, oh why did they do that that way – well the client might have requested it. Why did it do it that way – well they had designed something much nicer but it was too expensive and so somebody down the line say, “No, you can't have that”. And they said it so late down the line that you had to come up with a bodged solution at the last minute. There are all those bits that happen. We try our best to make a nice building but it doesn't necessarily work out.

Sometimes clients will ask for something and you do your best to explain why that might not be appropriate, but if they want it they want it. They pay so they have to have it.

I had on Monkton Park – I don't know if I should say names – the office building I'm working on at the moment I designed a reception desk, and it's a very odd building reception because it's manned by the council customer services and the police, because police are now in the same building. They should be integrated. At some point in the future there will people at that desk and they'll go through to the police or through to the council; but at the moment they're separate. But because in theory it could be a security risk they want a higher reception desk where the desk level is about 900, people are sat on high chairs so they've got more of a slightly eye to eye view of people, with a wide desk that somebody can't reach across and grab you. So, that's the idea. Of course that completely goes against everything to

do with inclusive design and having a low desk that people in wheelchairs can use. This desk is three-sided, and ideally you want the main customer facing area to be low because then nobody is being sent around the back and it's all these horrible things you have in refurbished building where the normal people can go through the steps, but if you're a bit decrepit you have to be sent round the back to the staff entrance or something. That's not fair.

So, the design we now have for the reception desk is high on the two front sides and low for a very short section on the back; which I'm really uncomfortable with. I've said several times that this is not amazing; but they feel that the security aspect is more important than that inclusive part.

But when you consider the users of the council side they will be there to claim benefits and all this. So, the percentage of people that might be elderly or disabled – because an elderly person might want to sit at the desk for a short period if they've got to talk through something rather than stand at it.

So, it's those sorts of things that I feel at some point somebody's going to go: why did the designer do the desk like that; that's not right. I won't be there to say actually that's what they wanted. So, that's the awkward bit where a say designer you can give the client the information and try your best to provide the best design, but if they don't want to do it you can't make them. It's frustrating.

Debs                      As you know with Beaulieu I was not persistent but I kept raising the fact that the application should be on handsets, and the fact that I would actually design it on handsets regardless because that's where it really needed to be because I could see people using smartphones

more and more. But no, absolutely no. they didn't want the security risk of people perhaps if they were loaning out the handsets, walking off with them – because it's a big site; the whole security issue of the sunshine, how can they see the screen outside and all this. There were probably five different reasons why they didn't want these things in.

Actually I've come round more to their way of thinking that maybe handsets aren't necessarily the be all and end all because everybody is now using smartphones. And actually to go and visit a heritage interpretation sites it's actually maybe a good idea to look at what you've gone there to visit; rather than trying to look at it through a phone, a smart handset. I think a mix of tools, a mix of handset would be good.

But trying to convince them back in whenever it was that this is where things are going and this is what you really should be looking at so that you don't have to re-do this is really difficult. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.

Rebecca It's our responsibility to highlight problems and best practice and all of those things. If they choose to, I use the word derogate a lot, then there's a derogation schedule on most jobs of things that for one reason or another we have to move away from best practice because of whatever it is.

Debs So, you clearly state that?

Rebecca For the hospitals particularly we definitely have a derogation schedule. You've got normal building regs, and then for hospital buildings you've got HBNs, health building notes, and HTMs, health technical memorandums. Those pieces of guidance, the specific Department of Health guidance, conflicts with building regs in several



points. So, you may have to derogate away from a Part M item in building regs in order to comply with an HBN, and vice versa. And we tend to stick on hospitals to following the health guidance and not the standard guidance because it's more specific.

But then there are other reasons why, for infection control, clinical whatever reasons, they might think that neither of these things is appropriate, because they know better as staff that use these things apparently, so they'll want neither. So, we'll have to derogate both.

We have PI insurance and all this kind of stuff, and we have to make sure that should that be raised again in the future there's a clear list of why we've done that.

Debs            Audit trail.

Rebecca        And also I think it's changing a bit with design and access statements now in that you don't necessarily have to do them for every job. But you need to be able to say in those why you're doing things a certain way for planning and things, to say: yes, we're not doing this but actually we've got this instead and it's better; or we can't do that because the plot is too small and there's not another plot available – and all those.

Debs            Justification.

Rebecca        Yes.

Debs            Do you find that the people that you're talking to, the client then – and there are several because there's usually team – that they are actually qualified to make those requests i.e. do they know about building law? Do they know about regs and stuff like that? Or is it just from their experience that's what we want? Or somebody has said to

them, “You can’t have this, so can you pass that onto the designer please?” All this kind of thing?

Rebecca Taking the hospital example, there’s a big client team there. You have the project director, who is employed by, it was NHS Somerset, it’s now Somerset Partnership I think. So, he’s leading the project. His right-hand man, who is kind of the project manager from the Trust side. Then there’s an external project manager that leads for them from leads. And then you have people like the matron and the locality manager and the divisional manager, all of these higher management people but directly related to that specific hospital. So, they tend to be the sort of high-level team so they get to approve everything. And particularly the project director, project manager from those sorts of things they tend to have done previous projects so they’ve learnt things on previous projects that they can bring forward and things: didn’t do that right last time; do it this way this time. There’s that.

Whereas the next rung down, the locality managers etc, if there’s been another job in their area they might have been involved, but otherwise no. So, you have to handhold a bit more there and explain things very thoroughly. They have a better idea of clinical requirements but not what’s possible in terms of building. So, you sort of have to span that gap.

And then the next rung again as we go through reviews with clinicians. So, if you take a single bedroom design: we’ll have done it out in sketch form; passed it by the project directors and project managers at higher level; drawn it up properly – although actually the first step is probably we’ll have discussed it as a team in the office, then it goes out – then it’s drawn up; then they select the people that need to approve those rooms based on their knowledge of what happens in

those rooms or who's going to be managing them when it's built. So, you have infection control lady who has a look at pretty much everything because the main things in hospitals now are privacy and dignity and infection control. So, you've got to make sure that single rooms do that, it's all more private and everything. But then infection control affects levels of furnishing, floor finishes and all those sorts of things. And closely linked to infection control but tends to be more of a circulation in cleaners' rooms and that is the people, not quite facilities management, but the cleaner lead. So, they do all of that.

And then you have the matrons who look at wards and stuff like that. Then clinicians look at the outpatient rooms. Therapy people look at those. And it's sort of high level approve stuff areas basically.

Basically we come up with a plan that we know works in terms of regulations, all of these things, works within the building footprint. And it's only when we're comfortable with that design that it's released to the people who are going to be using it who can then say if it works specifically for them.

The guidance from these health building notes is that rooms should be flexible by being standard sizes, with standard equipment, and you should try not to vary things. So, opening it up for the clinicians to look at what's available and what they would like to do you have to say no a lot! Because a nurse needs to be able to walk into any one of ten rooms and know where everything is; as does a clinician. Just because doctor whoever uses a room four days a week doesn't mean that he can have it precisely how he would prefer it, because he might retire or somebody else has to use that room or whatever. So, we have to try and keep things fairly standard. And that's explained by the Trust side management at the beginning.

We've had one particular lady in the outpatients' department was pleading with me and my colleague about having more rooms. We can't make that decision. We've been told how many rooms there need to be; if you're really concerned you need to take it up to your higher management and make a case for those extra rooms – which she was unable to do. They'd already done the footfall of how many people are coming through and they'd decided how many they needed and that's how many she was getting. So, it's that really difficult thing. But at least we have the backup in we can just say, "I'm afraid we can't do anything about that". Again, the fact that it's led by their managers, that they can't tweak every little thing, it needs to work in principle for most people. That's the thing.

So, that's how we get the extra bits of information. They can walk us through one of their days and how things work. We did have fixed cupboards in one room. But they were saying, "Actually it's easier if we can have two trolleys and then we can just take those trolleys out and refill them and bring them back; rather than having cupboards that people don't end up using or whatever else and wasting space". If the trolley is not there they can use that space for something else. So, that sort of level of detail is helpful, but you still have to be quite guarded with what you can change. And that's easier for some people to accept than others.

Debs            It's an interesting outlook, looking at what you're saying about hospitals and things like that. In my head I'm working the same scenarios with the whole heritage interpretation where you've got the curator coming up with an idea. It'll be their stakeholders who perhaps have an influence on that idea. But their client then is a completely different body. Whereas in hospitals you've got the patient, but you've also got the employees that are inhabiting that

space at the same time. So, they're the client, but the stakeholders and everyone are the client too. So, it's quite difficult pleasing everybody.

Rebecca There's client and there's user, and we very rarely interact with the user – which is quite strange for me. Particularly in terms of interior design – not in an office building; there are too many to deal with – but in a care home environment where there are people living there and it's their home you feel like you should be able to talk to them.

Debs But you're not?

Rebecca You don't, no. You talk to the management who have a vision for that space; but they don't live in that space, so that's awkward.

Debs So, the correlation there: as a designer I'm talking to the heritage site and that's the relationship. Quite often the visitor, the physical act of speaking to the visitor isn't always there. From the people that I've spoken to it is there but quite often in an indirect way: it's via feedback. It's, not a virtual sheet of paper, but you know what I mean. It's very remote I suppose from the experience then and there.

Rebecca Two things come into mind from that. For my dissertation I went back to a retirement village after we'd refurbished the clubhouse and asked them what they thought of it. We very rarely ask. We send a feedback form to our client because that's part of QA procedure to make sure that we did a good job. But we don't go back and do a post-occupancy evaluation or anything like that. So, how do we know we did a good job?

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Debs            I was going to ask you these questions at the end. It is good to talk about it now, because it is capturing the success of that project, isn't it?

Rebecca       I've recommended that as part of our interior service that we're trying to offer, ramping up developing, that we could offer post-occupancy evaluations, because I've done a little bit of outlook and it's something that I'd be interested to do. Because we do lessons learnt on projects, and that people in the office will talk about a project that they've worked on and things that went badly, not to do again, and things that worked well. So, that's a regular thing that we try and do in the office so that one team doesn't make the same mistake that another team did.

With the hospitals again they actually got together before we started I think Bridgewater, they got together with a design team from Minehead, contractor, the client, got everybody together to have a big discussion about what we were going to take forward from that. So, that was good; but it still didn't involve any patients or any of the actual clinicians that we use in those spaces. It's very easy, if you don't get that feedback, to just keep making those same mistakes.

We were talking earlier about an office project that I'm working on where they liked one office, so we are replicating what another architectural firm did. But it's only now coming to light that there are issues with that first project, and so we're specifying the same things again and you can see that we're going to have to change them because there wasn't a detailed review of how that building is functioning before then replicating it elsewhere; which is clearly a mistake.

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Debs            Clearly a mistake, yes.

Rebecca        The other thing I thought about is Andy in the office is a qualified DQI assessor.

Debs            What's DQI?

Rebecca        Design quality indicators – I think it's indicators and not indices. And I'm not entirely sure what it involves, but I know that he does go into schools – because he's also a cub scout leader so he's fully on board with that kind of thing anyway – and he'll get all the children – there was a video on our website at one point – involved in designing what they would like in their school and all that kind of thing. I think that's a nice way of doing things.

Debs            Excellent idea.

Rebecca        You can imagine some let's say retirement village sites independent residents can be quite – even though they've moved to a site that they know part of the reason is that even though they're fine now they may have to move into a care home later – they hate the idea of all these old decrepit people in a care home just across the road. So, they're not generally keen on more care homes being built or extensions or all this kind of thing; partly because of the disruption and it's supposed to be peaceful, and then there's always building work. But you could see how it would help get them on board if they could be walked through it a bit more.

We do always for that kind of thing have consultation events. For a planning application we have consultation stuff where members of the public can come in. There was one for Cleveland Hospital, which wasn't actually built because they didn't have the money. I went to

that one, because I tend to do a lot of the boards for that kind of thing in my graphic role. But I actually went along to that one to help answer questions and talk to members of the public. You do tend to get people who are against it coming more than the ones that are for it.

Debs I think for any survey focus group.

Rebecca But actually some of them were thinking it's not so bad and all this kind of thing. It's interesting to understand their worries because there might be some things you can do about it; there might be some that you can't. There is always the danger of asking somebody for their opinion and then not doing anything about it; which I think is worse than not asking for their opinion in the first place. If you've listened and then ignored it I can see it's more frustrating.

We talk about sense of ownership and things like that – you're trying to involve Bridgewater College in Bridgewater Hospital, the young people of Bridgewater College on the art courses providing artwork to help them and therefore their families who know that they've been involved and so on and so forth feel ownership and feel proud of the hospital so that they don't torch it. ((Laughter)) We've been talking about having artworks at the front, and apparently there have been lots of issues with vandalism and things in Bridgewater. Bridgewater is sold as having crime issues and things, but actually I made a point of looking up their statistics and it's no worse than anywhere else; it's just being run down for no reason really. They did have the big willow man and somebody did burn that down, so we're not having any willow sculptures at the front of the hospital. It's trying to get people involved with those particularly civic buildings so that one, it's less intimidating. If you can have classes and things taking place in those



spaces so people come there when they're not sick then it's not as scary when they are sick because they're familiar with it. But also so that it's a liked thing that people can feel proud of; instead of something that they feel has been thrust upon them.

That was the outcome of my dissertation really is that they just felt like it had been thrust upon them; nobody really cared what they thought. So, they just had this thing. And yes, it looks pretty if you like that kind of thing. But it was just that lack of consideration. The client wanted to use that space to sell the village, this lifestyle, and the residents were perfectly aware of that. If they were taking photos they'd rather the happy ones drinking champagne were in the picture and not the ones with the Zimmer frame and looking a bit worn down by life. So, I don't think the client gave the residents credit. Because there are intelligent people; just because they've got old they haven't suddenly lost their wits – some of them had ((laughs)) but not all of them.

There was a local architect lives in those apartments and they didn't ask him his opinion on it. These particular villages are very, very expensive so therefore they've had some very wealthy people; they've probably had some very interesting careers. Their opinions aren't valued, because management know best; they know what they're trying to achieve. But the residents know what they're trying to achieve too.

Debs                    They need to talk, don't they?

Rebecca              Yes, that was the key thing. They appreciated that there had been a consultation but it felt like it was a fait accompli. It wasn't a, "What do you think about this?" It was "This is what you're having. Isn't it

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lovely?” And although they could leave feedback nothing was changed after. That’s the bit: if you’re going to ask people you need to at least, even if you can’t do anything about those things –

Debs Inform them why.

Rebecca Yes, explain the reasons. It goes back to the thing we were saying before about people thinking architects are designing things in a particular way without understanding what’s been going on in the background. If you’re able to say to somebody actually it has to be that way because of this reason they might go, oh okay, I understand now. Whereas before they just think it’s an idiot thing to do.

I have no idea where that question started!

Debs It’s fine because it’s led onto what I was going to ask you. What I’ll do here is there are some things about what you feel is the most important role in what you do, but you have kind of covered that in a lot of what you’ve said. But if I was to say in three words or something what do you think is the most important role, interior designer, the dementia care strategy or, you know, what part of the role you do at the moment do you consider to be the most important? Not the one that you want to do, but the most important.

Rebecca I think the dementia related stuff because that’s actually possibly helping people the most. It’s nice to think what you do positively impacts others.

Debs So, that is as a designer still?

Rebecca Yes.

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Debs            Because you're designing the spaces for those people so that they're healthier, happier?

Rebecca        Because people can come up with guidance and studies, but they need somebody to actually implement those things. So, you need a client that is willing to. And then once you've got a client that is willing to we need to have the knowledge to make sure that we do it to the best of our ability to solve those problems. That's what it comes back to: it's a problem solving exercise to facilitate certain things. If I could design some environments that made people's lives easier in really tough circumstances that would be the most rewarding. But any interior design, as far as I see it, that's done properly is about people's lives easier. It's just that some people might be in more need than others.

If you design something that's just a nicer place to be it might increase productivity and all those kinds of things in the offices and stuff like that, but if designing something one way or another makes a difference between somebody – horrible example – wetting the bed or capably taking themselves off to the bathroom and using it properly and returning that's a more significant jump in their quality of life than whether there are more plants in the office that makes it nicer. So, I think that's the most important.

Debs            So, as that the design, all your experience that you've got up till now, has that fed into that? Do you feel that that has fed into you being able to do that well? Or do you think that it's a slight shift from where you were, where all your experience is? Does that make sense?

Rebecca        I think you have to have done maybe not exactly what I did but pretty much what I did to work out what I wanted to specialise in. Everything

that you work on does feed in somewhere really. Even if it's something that you think doesn't work in one setting but then you realise that would work quite nicely in another, furniture or whatever. It's only through learning all about the construction of things and doing details that I realise that I don't like them and I'm not interested. ((Laughter)) Because before that I probably thought I was quite interested but I'm not. And then a lot of the stuff that I've been doing in terms of room layouts isn't what I'd consider interior design; it's fitting pieces of equipment in a room.

The first job that I did was a machine layout for this first huge project that I worked on. So, laying out machines in a space turned into laying out furniture in the next project. So, everything sort of links along. And as you've worked on these different things you gain confidence in your own abilities but also other people gain confidence in your abilities that: you didn't make a complete mess of that so we'll maybe give you a slightly more complicated one. So, as that leads on you get to the point where now people are happy to leave me alone specifying furniture and finishes and things, and they know that I'll pick something that's pretty much okay. Whereas maybe in the early days, having not had that experience of seeing what other people are doing as well, they'd have been a little bit more wary.

Debs            Obviously as your mum I've seen you playing around with the Sims where you're creating nice people in their homes.

Rebecca        But the best bit about that was building their houses.

Debs            Yes, building those houses and the interior layout of those houses.

Rebecca        Yes, but that interestingly is all about you know that that little computer person has to fulfil certain things.

Debs Options.

Rebecca You know that when they wake up within a short period of time they're going to need something to eat and they need to go to the toilet, so you need to have both of those things very close to their bed. ((Laughter)) So, it's working out the system. Because I think that's the thing where I'd say I have to work harder at design is that I have a very logical brain, I have creative bits, but I like to know the logic of why something happens a certain way. So, once I can understand what processes are taking place I can understand what processes I need to put in place to deal with those.

Debs Exactly. That is a designer's role.

Rebecca Yes. But some people have a much more open, less-linear – I do like to go through a process in a linear fashion and see it all kind of – I say linear; maybe I can be branching out. Yes, I think of myself as a logical person, and I need to see the logic in something before I want to invest time and effort into trying to get the right thing.

Again, I was saying earlier, if somebody at work asks me to a drawing and I don't see the point in it I'd have to tell them that I don't see the point in doing it. ((Laughter)) I wouldn't have done at the beginning; but after doing a few drawings that I don't see the point in doing I would now tell them that I don't see any point in doing that drawing. So, I need to know all of that and see where something is going and have something in mind and make it all work.

Debs And the experience of doing the Sims, and you were on there for hours, and then building 3D, playing around with Cinema 4D and things like that, because you were doing rooms and stuff, because I can remember you doing those clearly and then, which we're coming

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onto in a moment, assisting me with the Dunster project and then the Beaulieu Abbey you were working as a design assistant with me on that – all of those different things have built quite a lot of experience for doing what you do now.

Rebecca Yes.

Debs Although they're different areas it's that process of experience, isn't it?

Rebecca It's things like through doing the interior design of things you have to do more visualisations than other people do in the office. And even though I didn't have the first set of Rivet training and advanced things – which I'm still very bitter about – somebody came up to me the other day and asked me to give them a quick run through on rendering, which I haven't done, because I was the go-to person on that apparently. But I've never been officially taught how to do any rendering; I just worked it about: just moved some sliders about and hoped for the best.

The day before yesterday I had to explain to somebody else about applying materials to things. Again, nobody has ever officially taught me to do that, I just worked it out. But I've worked it out because, software varies but not by a lot, so I've worked it out in Cinema 4D and 3D Max in the past so I can work it out in Rivet. Put that pattern in there, move those about and it works.

And doing those kinds of things, Cinema 4D which I think was the most –

Debs User friendly?

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Rebecca Yes, intuitive as well, thing. So, that tool in Rivet is actually the lathe in that one, and that one is that one. And as soon as you work out what the parallels are you just crack on and do it. Yes, that has stood me in good stead.

Debs Everything we do, even when we had our office Clear Thinking, we didn't have a cleaner into the office; I was the cleaner. So, there I am, director or whatever, owner, but there I am cleaning the loo after everyone has gone for the day. But then you realise that the toilet is too small and all kinds of other things. So, when you come to do another job when you're planning out you realise that actually – do you see what I mean, every little thing you do seems to –

Rebecca All of us have said at different points, at the club and talking about different things, that we're terrible for going to a shopping centre that you've not been to for the first time and either you look at the bathroom layout there and you think, oh these are nice tiles, this is good, I like this; or why on earth have they done it that way, if they just did this like that then it would have been so much better, why haven't they done that. It always seems to be loos that I pay so much attention to. I've said to friends about the ceilings or the tiles or something and they've just looked at me like I'm an idiot: why is that important. It's important to what I do to notice those things. You don't leave it at work.

Debs No, you don't. Wherever I go I'm looking around and looking at everything and working out how that building was built; even though I'm not an architect I still like to know how these things slot together. But of course all of that builds in that information that I can then pull upon at another time maybe. So, that's what you're saying?

Rebecca I don't know why it came to mind a minute ago because it's not strictly related, but sort of thinking about my qualities, and I think it's imagination – more than pure creativeness it's imagining things and imagining them differently. I've always liked fantasy books and things like that. And the thing that I find more than anything else is work on Photoshop and 3D I become completely absorbed in doing that, more so, and layouts as well. You really get into it and you don't think about anything but that for quite some time. It's the imagination thing: imagining how things can be.

Debs Also because you observe people and the way people move around, I certainly do, and then you imagine how those same people are going to be use whatever it is you've done or you're doing or you're designing. So, yes it's a big part of a user experience, design is. So, you have to in some ways understand people. So, your psychology degree is a perfect fit for what you do. Yes, it's all good.

What I'm going to do is move on to taking you onto the experience of visiting a heritage site. I know that we have visited quite a few heritage sites; it's something we like to do. Without me saying very much about it, even though I would have been with you, what is your overall impression – forget the stuff that I've done – of visiting most historic sites, heritage sites? For you as a visitor and gleaning information and knowing about, observing and all that kind of stuff, knowing about the place you're visiting, what do you think they have on offer matches what you want?

Rebecca I thought about similar things before. It's interesting what you said before about you should be looking at the space and not necessarily at your phone which has the information about the thing. Recently I've stopped getting guides and things when you first walk through the



shop on your way into the National Trust property or whatever because you try and read it and you can't quite read it properly because you try and read it and you don't do it either very well. But that said, then there are times when I then buy the thing at the end and read it in the car on the way home and then think I wish I read that before because then I would have had a proper look at it, that particularly interesting thing.

I think my ideal way of visiting a site would probably be to go in and experience the site, to come away, read the information about it or come away from that, and then return with some of that information; perhaps with that information to hand. So that you get that first pure experience of not trying to worry too much about the detail of the history and everything else but to –

Debs            Absorb.

Rebecca        Yes, to feel the space and imagine things in that space. It's the same when you watch a film before you've read the book, and then you read the book and all you can see is all the characters from the film. Once you've read stuff about it and you know more about it you can't un-know it. So, having that first experience of not knowing it you're never going to get them back.

I don't know how it fits with what you do but I think that would be an interesting way – I've never tried it – going in without anything and then going back, even immediately, with something to see it. That could be an interesting way of doing it.

But then I am really nose-y so I like to have that information. Quite often in a National Trust place there's a person standing there and I

tend to avoid them; which is a shame because they're always really helpful and really interesting.

Debs            They can talk for too long.

Rebecca        Yes, and you get a bit trapped, and they start talking about things you're not interested in. You can't say, "I'm not interested in that bit; I was just a question about this bit". So, I think they do a good job but I do tend to avoid them. And then they have those little laminated paper sheets with some information, and I always think it's a shame that they're not better designed. There's quite often a lot of text on those, and when you're just looking around actually that's too much information to take on board about the entire history of a painting.

I like it when they have things like mirrors and stuff and you can see ceilings and things where there's an ornate ceiling and they have a mirror on a table.

Debs            So, they're being clever with how they are showing some information?

Rebecca        Yes. I suppose bringing things to life, because I like to think of the people that have been in there and lived their life there. I recently went to a Women in Property evening viewing to Number 1 Royal Crescent in Bath. It's just been refitted. They've bought recently 1A; so they had 1 and they bought 1A and it's bolted on the back. 1A used to be the servants' quarters. So, they've been able to shift stuff around a bit so that they can show the house as it was, and still keep education rooms and things at the bottom. What they've chosen to do is not try and reflect the entire history in that building. They know when one particular man lived there and they've dressed it as if he still did. They knew when he was taking different medicines and things like that, so

there is a medicine box sat on his dresser in his bedroom. They know, they had diaries and things, that he was really interested in all the kind of geology and new findings on different things. So, in his study there's all this stuff that he would have loved to look at. So, they've really tried to imagine what he would have wanted from his house, bearing in mind what they know about styles of the time and all those kinds of things. So, they've really created that one snapshot.

I thought that was quite nice because it gets to be Mr Whoever's house at that point.

Debs            There's a story being told.

Rebecca        Yes. But then you have the problem that your stuff kind of stalls in that you want to know the before and afters as well. Without every six months entirely changing the house you need to show that in another way. But I think it's nice to see it like that. Of course they've got the benefit of being able to do it like that. You have other properties where there have been consequential improvements and so you couldn't take a time back there; you have to take it as it is now. And I like that as well. I like seeing that actually in the 1930s they added a bathroom because that's what happened; that's the story of the house. But it does make it awkward if you're trying to set it back in time.

I'm trying to think of other places I've been to recently and how I thought when I went through it. At that particular one we had a talk; a lady was talking about it. That was interesting because she was telling you, but we were whizzing in and out of rooms; she was trying to get it done. So, when you would have liked to have a quick peer around at everything they were onto the next one.

I remember going to Stonehenge recently, and I went with Tom, my partner, who'd never been to Stonehenge. We walked through, we walked around, we didn't pick up a handset or anything – oh, some stones – and sort of left. Everybody else was stopping with their little things and getting to the number and listening to the next bit and doing that. We sort of thought we don't want to do that; we want to just see it. But actually –

Debs            You wish you had now.

Rebecca        A little bit of information would have been helpful because we were just stood there going, "It's nice, lovely, off we go". ((Laughter)) So, that was really limited. You think you know about Stonehenge: local and international landmark. But you sort of suddenly realise well, I can't tell you anything about it; we're just looking at it now. So, it was a bit odd. But of course they're doing a whole visitor centre revamp now.

I'm trying to think of a really nice one.

Debs            Did you go to Hever Castle?

Rebecca        No, I don't think so.

Debs            I remember going there and it's a beautiful, beautiful building and obviously so much history, and feeling really disappointed; even though the place is amazing, feeling so disappointed. I think it was historic Housing Association have got that one, so not National Trust or English Heritage. It wasn't their fault, it's just there were little plaques on stands, and because it's such a popular place you got a whole load of Chinese or a whole load of somebodies, Americans or whatever, standing and talking quite loudly or gabbling loudly. So,

what you were saying earlier about the ambience and soaking up the atmosphere you just weren't able to do it because it was so harsh, and the information was so minimal. Yes, you had the tour people or the volunteer guides standing there ready to give information; but by that time you'd kind of got I don't want to be here almost. You go there with so much expectation because of Henry VIII and all of this, and it's such a Tudor building, so you should be able to touch those bits of wood and feel the past. It was just completely ruined by these masses of people going through.

Rebecca I really hate it when you go into a place and they've got the little cord between posts so that you can only just stand in the corner of a room and look at it from afar. You need to be able to walk around those spaces to appreciate them properly and look out the windows and do all that.

It's interesting what you were saying about touching things. It would be nice in some ways – obviously you don't want to touch things that are antiques and are going to fall apart if everybody touches them – but to have some reproductions made of the same fabrics and things that you could actually get hold of.

One of the nice things that stands out in visiting, I think it might have been ((Land Hide Rock?)), is somebody was sat at the piano. They had a piano in the gallery and somebody was playing it. And it was lovely because it's how it should be to have that music echoing through the building.

Debs Because they're so silent, aren't they?

Rebecca Yes.

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Debs            Other than us as visitors gabbling or talking or making a big noise or clunking around in our heels, it's that sort of atmosphere you're building by having the music playing. It's quite nice, isn't it?

Rebecca        In London recently we went onto the Cutty Sark. I have mixed feelings on that one because it was a fantastically designed exhibition within it – but my focus was on the fantastically designed exhibition ((laughter)), not on the Cutty Sark. It did a really good job of explaining some bits and you could think about how it was, but it was more difficult to imagine it as a boat without those things in it. They'd used wooden boxes that looked like tea containers, so they'd put all these tea boxes as if they were cargo. Which is all well and good, but then they'd been used as a screen for the projector and things like this, so it didn't really look like that. But it was a nicely designed thing.

Then I think it was upstairs, in one of the areas they had benches you could sit on that swayed back and forth as if you're at sea, so you get that motion.

Debs            That's a good idea.

Rebecca        Obviously quite a lot of exhibitions for children, although they're nice for everybody, where you can put your hands in boxes and guess what's that cargo, kind of thing. So, they had some really nice things. But I still can't remember what the inside of the boat looked like; I can only remember the exhibition.

There were rooms like cabins that were smaller spaces set out as if they were being used; I can remember those. It tipped it down so we had to run back inside when we got to the top.

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But there is definitely a balance in that kind of situation between making a really good informative exhibition without taking away from the thing you've come to see really.

Debs            So, do you think that these historic sites, heritage sites – forget Stonehenge – should be dressed how they were used in snapshots, as you said, of time? And then the exhibition or the interpretation or information should then be a separate building. Oradour-sur-Glane in France where you've got the deserted village, and you can really soak up the atmosphere in that place. It makes me shiver even now.

Rebecca        I've never been, but my lecturer in my Masters did a talk on it.

Debs            Usle?

Rebecca        Yes.

Debs            And then you've got this almost underground just the way the land falls and it's been built in dark well-lit, specifically lit if you see what I mean, exhibition where you can go round, and you can go in after. So, you've had the experience and the ambience and soaking up and the dreadful atrocity that happened there, and then you can go and find out more about it in a separate place, not that far away.

Rebecca        Yes, I think particularly something like that where it's incredibly sensitive you don't want to cheapen it by having touristy boards all over the place. It just wouldn't suit, would it? So, yes, I think there's something to be said for that kind of approach.

It's really difficult because I don't think there is one perfect approach.

Debs            There isn't, no.

Rebecca        And you have so many different people going to these places, from my own experience it's designing information that is suitable for all of those different people. They all come with their own baggage and what they want to know. Everybody is different in what they want to know, so how on earth can you provide something for everybody. It's almost like: you've read this, dig a little deeper, go here, kind of thing; which would work better electronically so if it's something where if there's a particular interest then you can make a point of choosing to have more information. Maybe you need to supply a basic level on most things, but then have that extra level to take it further.

Debs            One thing just popped into my head. So, if you could go in and have that uninterrupted experience, that ambience experience, but at the same time initially when you go in you've been scanned or something or you've got a chip given to you, could just be on the card that you've picked up, so where you've travelled and the places you've stopped the longest it's tracking you; that will then be forwarded back to you via an email that you've perhaps given or whatever, or it could flash up on your phone to say: there's a little bit of information here. Your phone would flash maybe, I don't know, I've not thought it through yet. But it could say: do you want to know more about this space or this thing, and you could then say yes or no. But then that could even interrupt your space, so ideally it could be good to have that sent to you afterwards, say: this is your move; these are the areas that you spent the longest time in; there is this information about those spaces, click if you want to know more. Do you know what I mean?

Rebecca        I do. I don't know if the tracking element could cause issues because some people might not like know that you've been following them around.



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Debs True.

Rebecca And if they stopped for a long time at a particular thing they'll probably know that they're interested in it, so if it was available to find more information on that then they probably would perhaps. I think it would be a very interesting exercise to do more of that tracking, almost like a post-occupancy evaluation thing if you were having boards and things.

It was another thing that was mentioned in one lecture at another point in my Masters where they were using GPS tracking to show the routes of people as they were looking at an exhibition, and seeing which bits were the most successful.

Debs What was the overall opinion?

Rebecca I can't remember! ((Laughter)) Maybe a focus group, you'd need quite a lot of people, you could do that to test something and then realise that actually nobody is paying any attention to that. It might even be its position in the space if it was a proper exhibition, or it might be the way it's designed or whatever, it might be that nobody actually cares about that particular piece of information and it's pointless it being there at all. But it's a good way of testing those things, I think.

I probably would be quite interested in seeing where I'd gone and how long I'd spent at different things. It's just whether you'd get some people thinking surveillance.

Debs I suppose you could be given the option, couldn't you?

Rebecca Yes, I suppose so.

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Debs            Would you like some more information about your visit once you've finished – that's all they need to say. And if you said yes and you were getting given something – I can't think technology wise at the moment – but you sign up to it in a sense by saying yes or no.

Rebecca        There almost must be some kind of app on your phone that would be able to track you using the phone's GPS and combine a more information something or other. I think there must be the technology in that somewhere.

Debs            Yes, there is.

Rebecca        But I can see it working better – whenever I think about these kinds of things I always think about houses – but I can see it working better in a landscape because it's harder to track where you've been in a big complicated –

Debs            Building.

Rebecca        Garden.

Debs            Garden? Do you think?

Rebecca        Yes, because there's been some, if you think of Chatsworth, huge gardens. And actually the first bit is fairly straightforward, it's got lots of landmarks; but there's a bit off in the corner where they've got lots of pines and you start wandering through lots of little paths in woods and then out into the countryside and things like that. You always end up looking at the map: so we went there, and then we did that and we did this. So, actually to then see just how far you've bloody walked on one of these things because by the time you've wiggled your way around the house and then got out in the garden and walked around a couple of acres you get exercise points, calories burnt. ((Laughter))

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Debs           The heritage tour interpretation!

Rebecca       So, I can see it working in that kind of thing as well. But it's always that thing: how much people like people to know about what they've been doing.

Debs           Yes. You've have to get the agreement from the individuals involved to do that.

Rebecca       I could see it being really helpful because people might be interested to do it, and it's a way of gaining data on the success.

Debs           It's capturing information all round basically.

Rebecca       Yes.

Debs           So, in that way it's a win-win for everybody if the person is agreeable to having him/herself tracked. I think it will come about, whether I do it or somebody else is going to do it, a much bigger company, I think something like that, if it's not already happening, will come about. The thing is concentrating on a historic house, heritage site in that sense is more important to me than a museum. I know your favourite building from your presentation is the British Museum, the big space in the middle.

Rebecca       The Great Court.

Debs           And I perfectly understand.

Rebecca       I will just say it isn't actually my favourite building, because I tried to describe – for the benefit of the tape – at work we had to do these talks about what our favourite building is – that's the thing at the moment, our favourite building – and what I tried to explain to people was that I didn't have a favourite building. Probably none of us in the

office do have a favourite building. We like different things about different buildings. We hate certain things about particular buildings. So, I was using my environmental psychology stuff to try and explain why people like certain spaces and then explained that I had a photo of the Great Court on my desk, it had been there for six and a half years, it was mainly there because I had a photo of the Great Court and it was something to put on my desk – because I don't like an empty desk; I like something pinned up. Because I'd moved to a digital camera I had very few actual photos. This is one that wasn't in an album; it got put up. And there are many qualities I like in that space, and I do like museums.

But yes, seeing something in context.

Debs            It is seeing something in context. And I think that's where museums have a much harder job to do than obviously a historic house. But I don't know that historic houses are actually pulling it off quite well yet, or well enough.

Rebecca        I think with a museum it's not in context but you can get a lot of big sellers; you can have lots of things with big impact in. Whereas you may have a building or a large site with impact, but once you enter it there are lots of things with less impact inside. You think about going to the British Museum or the Louvre or whatever and queues of people to see particular elements that are so famous. And that is how they're pulling people in. Whereas historic sites tend to be a day out and somewhere to go for a picnic and do all of these things, which is slightly different.

Debs            It's a completely different visit, isn't it? But it's the stories. In a museum there are too many stories; I can't soak them up, far too

many. These things are really interesting and I'd like to make a whole world around that one object, Egypt stuff or whatever, already that would be fantastic; but there are just too many of them.

Rebecca      You get fatigued.

Debs          It's trying to read too many textbooks all in one go; it's just too tiring.

Rebecca      I tend to with museums just scan everything: that's pretty. I don't come away with an awful lot.

Debs          Dunster Castle, coming back quickly to Dunster Castle, something has been on that tor since the 1100s, and over time, over time, over time it's changed from hill fort to this to this to this, to this eventual manor house. And even the manor house itself was changed dramatically at different times. And that's lost to people. Do you know what I mean? Because all they see now is a manor house. So, all that's lost; all that lovely stuff has gone. It's resurrecting that and making people understand why the changes happened and so on, and hence the Talking Walls and the project. It's trying to understand how people read those properties and whether they really care about them in the same way that you do.

Rebecca      It probably takes certain kinds of people to be really – moving into our house, I've been to the History Centre, I know where three people that lived in the house are now buried, which is bizarre. It turns out, having spoken to the neighbour the other day, they were thinking that the house was built in 1901. I was, "Oh that's strange, I thought it was built in 1910". They've lived there for 11 years; I've lived there for nine months and I had to correct them. And she did a course in archaeology; she is interested in that kind of stuff. But I'd somehow managed to come up with something more interesting. I put it down

to being a nosey person: I'm a very nosey person and I don't like to not know things. Particularly historical things I'm intrigued by them and I want to know about the people that decided that this house was a good house for them, because I'm a similar person, clearly: I decided this house was good for me. Are there any parallels? What's happened there? I know one of them died in the house – I'm glad I don't know which room.

So, obviously there's something about me and you that makes us want to know about things. Whereas other people are very happy to look forward.

Debs To a day out.

Rebecca Well, or just to the future. They're not interested in the past; it's something to do or oh, Mary down the road said it was nice, I'll go and have a look – all these kinds of things; it's not necessarily that they're hugely interested. So, there needs to be the quick win again of oh that's nice, for the people who just want a superficial view.

A lot of people you do need that something to suck you in; you need that hit initially that then makes you interested. Some people will never be that interested, who knows why but they won't be; whereas others will want to know more – it's just to what level.

Debs I've asked you quite a bit of this already – how much of Dunster Castle project can you remember, that prototype that you saw me working on and you helped with occasionally?

Rebecca I remember the modelling of things most clearly I suppose and going through all of that, and the fact that it had been around since the first

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degree there when I was little. And I remember they did a nature trail as well. That's about it.

Debs This little picture here is the matrix.

Rebecca Yes, obviously I remember the matrix bit.

Debs That's for Dunster Castle. And that was, for a CD-ROM.

Rebecca Ah, it's coming back to me.

Debs I thought the images would help. Thinking about navigating your way is where I was coming from with the matrix, so you could actually tell which rooms you were in; which is what you were saying about Chatsworth and the gardens: you could tell where you were instantly and what exits etc you had available to go and what they led to. And then you had the different level of each architectural time slice of the building.

As an adult now and having all this experience of visiting heritage sites how would you find something like this, if you had it as a CD-ROM to revisit after your visit?

Rebecca I've always really liked that idea of being able to tick that spot up and down a timescale. So, you've got the up and down of time and the side to side of –

Debs Navigation.

Rebecca Yes. So, I still think that's a really good idea. It completely makes sense to me. I think possibly some people would find it easier to have a floor plan and have it go up and down the levels.

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Debs            So, the idea was on this one you would have the floor plan underneath the matrix in some way?

Rebecca        Yes, and the boxes would sit within the rooms.

Debs            Kind of, yes. I tried to do it for the British Museum when I had that meeting with them there. I did a set of them from their floor plans. I find it more awkward to do it that way; but it was so you could actually use it.

Rebecca        This one here, I always think of the matrix as being the sort of little cube; but you can see there it looks like it's working more in a floor plan route.

Debs            Yes. The question is now, I've got here do you feel this is outdated, but the navigation then turned to this for Beaulieu. I'll explain why a little, but then I'd like you to think about whether you think it works or not or whether it should revert back to the Dunster version. Beaulieu Abbey has only three stages to its life: being built; heyday; and being demolished. Not much, several hundreds of years, but not much really in the actual architectural change of the building. So, you didn't have the richness of navigation if you like in that matrix in the Dunster one, which is so many different changes. So, also I was designing it for mobile, which of course wasn't around for the other version.

So, you've got adult, child, professional kind of levels of information you can choose how to go onto. You probably remember me doing this.

Rebecca        Yes.



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Debs            But then each of these cubes on this homepage were also different elements of the application: so quiz, tool, character – nine different bits. When you clicked onto one of those you then went into another. This one shows more what the Dunster one was in the sense of each of these is now a building or a space within the Abbey. But to me it's not clear – although as I designed it it should be. ((Laughter)) I just wondered what you think of the difference between those two. I know I can't put them side by side here.

Rebecca        I think it might be more intuitive as it was in a plan layout, up and down. And I think that it might work better for more applications if you're not limited to keeping it in a square. But it looks neat like that.

Debs            That's the logical bit: it's neater.

Rebecca        Say you've got a house and it was decorated differently 100 years later, but then they added a room and it went up again – I don't know how you expand that to deal with rooms coming and going. Because unless one goes at the same time as one arrives –

Debs            You're stuck.

Rebecca        Yes. I guess that's the bit I can't quite get my head around.

Debs            Doing this I had to combine spaces. So the knave and apse, so they became one block that you visited.

Rebecca        So, it's limited the flexibility through simplifying the shape.

Debs            It is. So, it may have to revert back to this once you get to this level. That's another discussion perhaps.

Working on Beaulieu Abbey, because you did actually do quite a lot of work –

Rebecca Drawing characters.

Debs What did you think of that and how that all functioned? Because there were only three of us: Sandy for some of the time, yourself and myself. How did you think that worked with what you had to do?

Rebecca I didn't think about it in terms of having much creative input really because it's your baby. So, I wouldn't have been – if I'm completely honest it's extra money for me and it was your baby so it was not my place really to suggest. Obviously if I thought of something really helpful I would have done; but I wouldn't have said, "I want to do it this way" because it's your project.

We haven't really talked about characters because we've been focusing on things, but the characters are one of the nicest things because, going back to Mr Whoever who lived at Number 1 Royal Crescent, it's understanding him in that space, and that tells you more about that space. So, having those characters being able to tell you about what they were doing and all of these things again brings it to live. I enjoyed doodling away on those. But I very much did see it as yours.

Debs If you were to revisit this again now as a designer – you won't because you've gone in a completely different direction – as a project to do what elements are there that you would think no, this has really got to go or I've really got to do something to this to make this work? There may not be anything but there may be something.

Rebecca I can't really think. I think the characters, although it's always focused on the matrix, the characters are really important; so definitely majoring on those still.

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Debs            One thing that came up in the launch guest feedback and other times is the fact that the characters, somebody said they should be film, not drawn and they should be actors or even clips out of films from those kinds of eras.

Rebecca        Did they have much video equipment back then?! ((Laughs))

Debs            Not made films.

Rebecca        I know!

Debs            Remade films.

Rebecca        People in costume.

Debs            Yes, Mel Gibson and all that kind when he was doing his big thing in Scotland and that.

Rebecca        I think that's a really strange take.

Debs            I thought so; but other people's opinions, so.

Rebecca        They were static, weren't they, the characters?

Debs            They were cartoon like; not cartoon at all but done in a storybook fashion, like those French storybooks that you get.

Rebecca        Potentially I can see moving to an animation would be more –

Debs            Doable.

Rebecca        Yes, maybe flow a bit better. I think having people would take away from it.

Debs            You do?

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Rebecca      Hm.

Debs          They make them too real?

Rebecca      Hm.

Debs          So, your imagination is not allowed to work in the same way?

Rebecca      Yeah. Perhaps they were feeling – just trying to think about why they would say that – the cartoons, illustrations would make it seem more child orientated; whereas a film might feel more adult. But unless you've got a hell of a budget it's very easy to make that look naff and very easy for it to look outdated. Because you were see some films that were say set in the 50s made in the 80s they look a little bit like they're in the 80s because that influence can't be escaped. However hard they try the techniques they're employing are of the time, and therefore it looks of that time as well as of the time they're trying it to be. Equal ways 60s films set in the 1600s have a certain 60s feel about them. So, I think that could become outdated and naff quite quickly. Whereas a well-made animation is less likely to; particularly if it's fairly, not minimalist, but doesn't have too much of now in it, it's more likely to be more long-lasting I'd have said.

Debs          It is difficult to factor in everybody's preferences.

Rebecca      That might be another instance where they're imagining Mel Gibson Braveheart setup without thinking through the fact that that was probably a multi-million pound film and the fact that they wouldn't do that. And they'd probably rather you didn't spend that money on an application; that you'd rather spent it on restoration and these kinds of things.

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Going back to hospitals, we've got an arts budget and there is lots of evidence to suggest that art in healthcare settings improve patient well-being and all of this, but the clinicians and members of the public would say, "Why are you spending all the money on art? Spend it on machinery, drugs, things that will actually make us better!" Without really thinking that actually it does do these things as well. They will have thought about what it should be spent on, and if actually you may be seen to be spending too much money on this side of things then they'll wonder: oh, so my visitor fee didn't go to restoring the roof; it went on that, did it? So, there's a balance there as well.

Debs            When you were working on Beaulieu you came down to Beaulieu and you helped me measure the site and so on and took loads of photos. Did that help in being able to understand what you were doing on the project as well?

Rebecca        I love to go to a site and have those photos, yes. And the process of taking photos and taking measurements makes you notice things that you wouldn't have done if you'd been given those photos and given those measurements. So, I think that is important for the person doing it.

Debs            To have an understanding.

Rebecca        Yes.

Debs            The work that you did was drawing the characters.

Rebecca        Yes.

Debs            Did you actually enjoy creating those or did you just see it as a job?

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Rebecca No, I did enjoy it. I was very conscious that when I work for you I tend to be very lazy. ((Laughter)) And I tended to say that I would do it, and then I didn't do it, and then I had to do it another day when I didn't really feel like doing it.

Debs So, you didn't enjoy it!

Rebecca When I was doing it I did; but it always that thought of I haven't done it and I should do it, and so oh, I've got to do that now. So, there was an element of that involved, because I might take advantage of the fact that you're my mum. So, whenever I work for you I'm conscious that I probably don't do things when I say I'd do; which I would do if I was at work work.

Debs So, as a design it was a little bit different to you then.

Rebecca Yes, which I shouldn't do; it's my fault. Actually drawing it was fun, it was nice; it was just making the time to do that – because of course it was work I was doing outside of work and it's the same with anything when you do something on top of what you normally do you've got to find time to do it, without staying up till two in the morning.

Debs Just to clarify, the design changed from Dunster Castle to Beaulieu Abbey, but not necessarily for the better because of the constriction of the matrix in navigating space. Have I got that right?

Rebecca Potentially, yes. I like the cube-ness. It's a nice graphic. I can see that it could be limiting in some respects. To be honest, that's why I stumbled talking about the Dunster thing, because I remember the Dunster primarily as your BA project, and I forget that it was the start of Talking Walls, because I feel so much of Beaulieu is the Talking Walls that I'd forgotten there was that intermediate stage.

Debs            Just for clarification, when I came to the Beaulieu thing I realised the Duster thing wouldn't really work the way that that had been done. So, even though that's what I'd taken to Beaulieu to show them what I could do for them when I came down to it I realised gosh, there are only three ages here, or only two, or actually only one because the building has been demolished. So, how does this work?

But the characters are part of it. The music that was composed, again that was in Dunster as the background stuff, the jingling of teacups and stuff to give it an ambience.

Rebecca       I've had that in a house somewhere where they've played the noises and things, and it's quite nice to have that. It sets the scene.

Debs            I think it makes a difference. I don't think these places should become like silent churches. I think they should have that going; but whether you would hear it with everyone visiting I don't know.

The other thing I'd like to ask you, you've used the Beaulieu app vaguely, do you think there's too much content? There's quite a lot of content in there and not finished. Too much choice?

Rebecca       It's a bit of a sweeping statement but I don't think there can be too much content. I like having options.

Debs            So, you like the choice.

Rebecca       It maybe needs to be presented in a way that you have a simple set of things that you can look at initially. If you get everything at once it can be overwhelming. But the options should be there to access that I think.

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Debs            Probably an irrelevant question because I don't know if you've been on there lately to remember, but there are time slices, which is the Dunster historic; there are tours, animated tours of different periods; there are quiz twitches, the puzzles, games and characters, stories of the characters; there are lifestyles; fact sheets; write a story; send a postcard. Can you remember all those?

Rebecca        Now you're going through them I can remember you doing them. I can remember going through the quiz pages and Word files and things like that.

Debs            I can think Tom or you would be really good at sorting out the design of all of those. Which area do you think is the most engaging out of those? If you were to use it which is the one you would do?

Rebecca        Stepping Down.

Debs            Not the characters? The matrix, you can choose a character to take you up and down.

Rebecca        I guess that's what I was thinking: you have that with those characters. I quite like the idea of having one particular space and seeing that through the ages in one go; rather than doing a whole house in one age. So, being able to compare between them.

I was just thinking when you were saying about games and stuff, I can see that as something you downloaded before you visited somewhere and give it to the kids in the car to excite them about going there, would be better.

Debs            Exactly what it's designed for. There's a lot of content, and therefore the lifestyles and factsheets are there so that when you've taken a school group there they can go with them, then go back. It's not the



stuff you were looking at while you were there. The time slices and characters are what you would do there possibly, and to send a postcard if you want to do that. But the rest is all an after or before experience.

Rebecca We did talk about me going somewhere and then looking at stuff when I get home or in the car or whatever when I get back. But actually you tend to look at stuff beforehand as well, so you need to be interested enough to go to the place. Not to give the game away, but to give you a bit of a taster before you get there.

Debs Somebody has highlighted to me the fact – not from any of the interviews but from discussions about this at different times and presentations of this at different times – including Beaulieu the fact that people just on the spur of the moment want to go somewhere because it's wet or something like this. So, they go to these places because it's somewhere to go because of the weather or whatever; not because they've just set out to go there. So, therefore –

Rebecca Yes. Quite a lot of people have a National Trust guide in the pocket of their car and that's how they select where they go. You don't tend to just drive past a country house in the middle of nowhere. So, even if it's rainy you've got to find out about that place somehow. You might know it already exists and that's how it gets there; but how did you first find out? There's always an initial finding that place.

Debs Selection, therefore choice.

Rebecca It would be interesting if you could link up with Google Maps and get them to do back and forth in times as well.

Debs Yes, it would, wouldn't it?

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Rebecca      Because they're doing all the interiors of things as well now. There's a care home where you can come in off Street View and go into the care home and view it. You had a student that did a high street or something where you could go into the shops?

Debs          It's a guy who's done 360 for market towns. So, he'll do the 360 of the high street and then the idea was to go into the shops, you can click on things, retail, clothes or whatever, menu in a restaurant and go in and have a look. So, he has done a 360 of that space. He's been doing that for three years.

Rebecca      I think there's been talk of Google doing it for a while. I just saw the other day that there is a particular care home that is doing that, so you can suss out whether you like the care home before you even go there.

Debs          But again, it's the people that make that place what it is. So, I expect that 360 there are not many people in that because they will have taken those images while they're not there. You might think oh, this all looks very nice; and then you find that you go there and the people aren't necessarily the people want to spend time with.

Rebecca      It would be interesting if you could somehow link – because I use Street View a hell of a lot – that kind of thing to clicking on a button and seeing it 100 years ago in 3D form.

Debs          You've got augmented or layer technology where it is augmented reality in the fact that it superimposes images from the past or whatever on the top. But I don't know if they're doing that.

Rebecca      It would be interesting if you could embed that satellite view and Google feel into something that you're doing and then use that.

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Because are now familiar with that; everybody knows Google Street View.

Debs Most everybody.

Rebecca So, if you could use that styling it would be a familiar interface. That's something else.

Debs Thank you. We talked a lot earlier about your role at DK and stuff, so I'm not going to ask you these because you have kind of covered them. A couple of questions I don't think we have covered, although we might have done. As a designer do you need to consider the client first, or do you consider the client first, or do you consider the company first? So, when you're designing something do you have to bear in mind what the client wants or what is put in place by your company? i.e. like the email that came earlier whereby the client said could you have a look at this Becks, and was it Ray?

Rebecca Yes, the associate for the job.

Debs Yes, the associate for the job has said, "There'll be a few for this kind of stuff" i.e. kind of intimating that you back off, Becks – your words, not mine.

Rebecca I think we're as a company very guilty of being helpful, and we tend to forget that we're supposed to be profitable. It's only recently that we're trying to make more of an effort to be profitable in that if we're doing extra work we make sure that we do charge an extra fee for it, because it's only fair really. But we tend to have a bit of a jump to it and help attitude generally. In terms of what the company needs or sets out and what the client requires, officially we should write a fee proposal that will outline what we produce; the client approves that

and therefore it should be what they need and then we should crack on and work to those rules. It doesn't generally work like that in that sometimes you start work before the fee proposal has even gone out; things become apparent that you need to do extra bits here and there and you just do them.

But client need is the most important because you need to please the client. If you don't please the client you won't get any more work with them, and so we need to keep them happy.

I think most of us as designers don't want to be caught up in the admin of it all; we just want to design the thing that they want. They've changed all the RIBA stages – I never really understood them so I don't mind that they've changed them – but now there is a stage zero, which is planning essentially; before you launched into doing things. They now make a point of saying: first you have a little think about it, work everything out, work out what you're going to do, then you do it.

Debs            You're saying that that's only just come in?

Rebecca        Like I say, I never really understand the stages. They used to have stages A to F or G or something for the RIBA. And now it's zero onwards. So, it's in the last six months or something. I mean, A presumably included planning. But like I say, I didn't pay much attention because I'm not an architect. But there is now definitely a project planning stage, and we make a point that we have a project planner in all of these things. I'm not saying that we never did that before because we definitely did as part of our QA procedures; but because of the current economic climate we're having to be a bit more careful about what makes us profitable and all those kinds of

things. So, making a point of setting out what we can do for a fee and making sure that we can comfortably do that and then putting in early warning notices and things like this for if you think you're going to have to charge them more money for something, and design change notifications – all of these things to alert the client that something is happening because they've asked for something to happen and that that's going to cost more money.

But ultimately you're trying to design something so you get on with it.

Debs            Because the design process, there are design processes and design methods in all of this kind of stuff, and obviously action research which you may have heard me talking about. Certainly on the design process there is planning and so on; planning has always been at the beginning, so the brainstorming and planning and formatting of the ideas. So, the fact that RIBA has only just picked up on that one sounds a little odd.

Rebecca        I wouldn't say it's just that they've only just picked up; but clearly being stage zero it makes it feel like a starting point. If that was stage one or stage A as was you're already started. Because it's zero that makes it more clear-cut I think, and you start doing things as one, is how I understand it. Don't quote me on that.

We've always had like a working drawings register to fill in and things like that: these are the drawings that we will produce. I'm not saying we always do that because I'm pretty sure we don't. But the idea of management of a project is that they're keeping an eye on what we're thinking we're doing. Most projects start with, however the client has given us information, it'll go in as a potential fee thing – that's one thing that they like to register that some money might be coming in;

but the management will think about who might be involved in that project and call a meeting where we'll discuss it. That might be all that happens for a few months until it's confirmed that it's going ahead, or it might be that we start to get on with it and do things. So, you have that and you have a think about it at that stage. You gather precedents. There might be a call out to the office: this project has just come in; has anybody got any good experience on this, that and the other. Because sometimes people have worked on stuff at other practices that they're not aware of.

I was actually asked in one of my reviews that when a new project happen that we're all made aware of it; because it might be that you'd really want to work on it. But you can't say you want to work on it if you don't know it's there. Because of our system we log jobs on a database and that's where all the information to do with that is stored; not the files exactly but the information. And when we get a new project we have to make a new number, and I think an email was automatically sent out to the management team.

Debs But not to the rest of you.

Rebecca Not to everybody else. So, I said, "When we get a new job that's really good news. We should all be really excited about it. It's a really nice thing to hear". So, in terms of morale and in terms of being able to offer their skills it would be good if everybody knew rather than just finding out that somebody's working on something over there.

Debs Because they get to work on it and not you.

Rebecca Yes. They do try to be good in that they know what things people like to work on. I've made it clear that I like care homes etc, so try and get me involved in that. But sometimes it just doesn't work; you need to

have certain people of a certain level available to work on these things. But at least knowing that that jobs in the office, you might not hear another thing about it, but it's been flagged. So, something like that might go out and ask people about it. Sometimes there's been emails asking: can you think of any buildings that do this, that and the other because we're looking for precedent. So, we do get people outside of the team involved in that sense.

Quite often if it's a building that's starting from the very beginning rather than one we've taken off another firm or whatever else at a different stage, because that regularly happens now in that there might be a feasibility study or up to planning with one architect, and then they'll get another architect to do the other stages. Because you don't really have to bid for stages of work, so there's no guarantee that if you win the first one that you'll actually end up building the building. We do quite well from some architects for that because we must be cheap. They get somebody in to do the design bit upfront and actually they're too expensive to do the construction drawings and we end up doing them. So, returning to that, if it's starting from the beginning we'll quite often have a crit design review of what information we do have and a bit of a brain storm, everybody getting out the tracing paper and having a go at that stage, and then you start to work out which routes might be a good way to go and then people go away and work them out properly. So, that is how things take off.

In the background there is all the administration of making sure the file structure is there. Once you get a certain point you need to work out: so, we're going to have a meeting here with the client and we need to have this, that and the other; you do those and I'll do this. So, it isn't that there isn't any planning because there definitely is; but we're making a point of making that noted a bit better now I think.

Audio title: Rebecca Furse – 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2013

Audio length: 133:49

Debs           Great. The last one was we spoke about how you register that the client is satisfied and you'd actually like that to be re-looked at in your post-occupancy evaluation. So, if that was progressed you would get to know the client was satisfied. But normally it's through a quick appraisal letter?

Rebecca       Yes. We have QA procedures, quality assurance procedures, and within that there is a standard form that at the end of the project it should be sent to the client. We don't mind – well we do mind if they don't send it back – but it's not part of our QA procedure that they must return it; only that we must send it. And then I don't quite know what's done with that information. Somebody in the office will know; I don't know. Presumably if it all says everything is fantastic we go yay, they think it's marvellous, and ask if we can use any of those for quotes on our website, because we will now have room for quotes on our website.

If there are negative things I don't know what happens. To my knowledge we haven't had negative things, but we may have done.

Certainly with our staff reviews our office manager collates all of those and takes them point by point and lists all the responses and looks for common themes and does that. And then in our annual meetings that information is relayed back to us: we asked you about this, this and this; we got these responses; this came up as a query in a review – and they answer it at that point.

But in terms of client feedback I honestly have no idea what happens to it. We say about the lessons learnt thing so some will come in through that. I think a lot of the stuff that comes in from clients is anecdotal. Because we're a big open plan office and we work in teams



that tend to deal with similar things, healthcare team, education team, and therefore seem to deal with the clients again and again, you just remember oh yeah they don't like that and oh yeah they don't like this. So, you try not to do it.

But even in the office I know that one of the directors hates ampersands so if I do a document for him I won't do an ampersand. It's just little things you have to try and remember who likes what, who likes things done a certain way. In the office there should be a certain amount of standard ways of doing things so that you don't get that wrong.

We do have a knowledge base actually, thinking about it, which used to be on the intranet but is now part of our IMS, Information Management System, which is where the projects are logged. Everything is getting put onto that. And it's an Excel spreadsheet. It's linked to – I'm remembering because I did just look at it the other day; it wasn't what I was looking for but I came across it. And we did have a seminar about it the other day so I should have remembered it was there. It's in the specification section, so when we're writing specifications for finishes and materials for buildings this knowledge base relates to that. And it's a place to log if something has not been successful or has been successful. So, there have been times when we've used a particular screed or a thickness of screed and it's not dried in time or it's caused certain issues; I know one of the hospitals they don't like a particular type of flooring, linoleum or something, because it failed in one building or bubbled or something. Even though it was probably the way that somebody installed it they don't want that anymore. So, there is that to refer to. I'd say it's a bit more buried than it needs be.

We use a particular piece of software for our writing specifications, and I have no idea if it could be linked to that better. It would be nicer if it could. Because that piece of software you have different clauses for different types of materials and that gives you guidance as you're in it. It's not quite like the annoying Word paperclip; but there is a box in the corner that as you're on a particular bit it will give you the relevant things to look at if you're not sure. So, if I as a resource fed into there, if you were thinking of putting that screen in don't, then that would be more helpful. But it's probably more technically awkward, which is why we have an Excel spreadsheet.

Debs            That's kind of it really. I was going to ask you if you could choose which role you would prefer to relinquish or keep if required; but really you're doing it, aren't you, really? You're heading more into it.

Rebecca        Yes. I do like a bit of variety. So, even the stuff that I'd hate to do every day I don't mind doing once in a while. I guess some of the stuff, people have said to me, "You shouldn't be doing that anymore" because it should be below me; but I don't mind doing it. I guess sometimes I get asked to do brochures and things that are actually really simple to do, and I've probably told them enough times that they could be capable of just sorting it out, and I have no problem at all doing it when I'm not busy; but when you are busy and they ask for it to be done there and then that's annoying. So, I could relinquish that. ((Laughs)) Otherwise I have a fairly good balance I think.

Debs            Thank you very much.