

Transcriber's Note: The microphone picks up a lot of wind at certain points during the recording and therefore most of the inaudibles are because of this.

Debs Thank you ever so much for meeting and allowing me to interview you and giving up your time. The PhD is about relationships between the curators, designers and visitors, and external/internal influences put upon them from the initial concept of an interpretation through to the end of it. From my own experience so far things that you want to do can't always get done because of technology, budget or time and so on, so it's really spurred an interest into how we actually get this done. First of all, can I ask you a little bit about your background and how you came to be at the National Trust?

Ruth I came to be at the National Trust because I applied for the job, I suppose. But I started as the Countryside, Visitor and Information Officer, and I was looking at the interpretation needs of the countryside. But then I moved on because the Houses and the Gardens wanted my work for them when they saw the work that was happening in the Countryside, so I then widened the scope of what I did to include Houses and Gardens. From that I then ended up in the Central Learning Team as an adviser to the properties. So started off doing lots of interpretation but ended up advising and training on interpretation.

Debs Because I think when I met you, you were actually at the training stage. I think you were training people.

Ruth Could be, yeah. I did some of that in the region but then more in the centre. Then in the centre we devised a whole overall interpretation philosophy which was led by Simon Murray, one of the Directors. So that was about the point I got to there, yeah.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

- Debs Which bit did you enjoy doing, was it the learning or training?
- Ruth It's very difficult, because it was hugely enjoyable actually right from the actual practice of doing interpretation through to the advising and trying to work on bigger plans. It's very difficult to say that one was more enjoyable than another, to be honest.
- Debs How had you done your studies in order to think that you would get the job at the National Trust?
- Ruth I'd done quite a lot of training. I originally trained as a teacher, but also I was a trained ecologist so I knew quite a bit about the countryside. But I'd worked for Chelsea Physic Garden, I started off as the Education Officer, but then I developed wider, I researched the herb garden and the uses of the herbs and then looked at how to interpret that, and I'd started a PhD. As part of a PhD I did an exhibition where I was looking to change attitudes and behaviour to nature conservation via what was in that exhibition. So I'd done quite a bit of work actually on interpretation so it was quite a wide background. Then I'd gone onto work at the Natural History Museum, and again I'd worked on the interpretation side as well as the education side, so worked with the gallery teams.
- Debs So it was always what the visitor would see.
- Ruth Yeah. I was very much the visitor advocate always, yes. Very much thinking about the needs of the visitor and how to fulfil those needs and get a good visitor experience.
- Debs How did you go about doing that? How did you go about getting the right skills?

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Ruth When I worked at the National Trust I did quite a lot of research on visitors and their reaction to interpretation, and at Chelsea Physic Garden I did a before and after survey to look at behaviour change. So lots of ((?)) questionnaires and finding out why people came, what they were interested in, what they would benefit from, that kind of research.

Debs And was it surprising?

Ruth Yeah. At Chelsea Physic Garden I was really surprised how important the atmosphere of the place was. It's a walled garden so it's enclosed and it's out of the London traffic, but I hadn't realised how significant it was to other people, how truly important that was. So that was one of the biggest revelations to me in talking to visitors.

Debs It's the Abbey at uni where most of it is gone, different ideas of reproducing the Abbey at real size, so that because it had been seen how large it actually was. But if they did anything like that, it would actually destroy the ambience of the site as it stands now.

Ruth Yeah, it will be different. Exactly.

Debs It's really important that you've said that because it is important to people because you've got the very busy area of Palace House and then you've got the Motor Museum and a very busy cafeteria, and so the Abbey is kind of like a real quiet zone.

Ruth Yeah, a little haven. Yeah, I can see that.

Debs I was going to ask if you had a special interest in this type of work, but presumably you have if you were-?

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Ruth I still retain an interest although I don't work specifically in it now. I Chair the AHI, and I've been on the committee for years and Chaired it. For one set of years I stopped Chairing it to enable a succession, and then the succession didn't work out because the person that was lined up left the committee. So I picked it up really only to do an interim year, and I've done two now, so I'm hoping that I'll hand it again now. That's really where I do a lot of interpretation. And I do a little bit of consultancy, but I don't do a lot because I've got a full-time job.

Debs I've noticed that on the Artswork site it is do with young children.

Ruth Yeah, children and young people and increasing their access to arts and culture. We're targeted and tasked with fulfilling Arts Council's Goal 5, which is that every child and young person has access to quality arts and culture. That's our remit.

Debs And the RHS was more do with children-

Ruth It was education across the board, so it was from the cradle to the grave ((?)). That was a wider remit. But again although interpretation wasn't sat in the education team, I worked with them quite a lot because we needed to interpret the different areas like the teacher gardens. I've always done the bits all the way through.

Debs So do you think that it really stems from your teaching at the very beginning?

Ruth No.

Debs I'm trying to think of the influences.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Ruth That's a very good question, where the influence has come from. A strong influence was at the Natural History Museum when at that time the Director of our unit also directed the Exhibitions Unit, and he had a vision to make the Natural History Museum much more visitor friendly, and that's when some of the interactive exhibitions started to come in. We did some very good training there about getting whole teams involved. So he was quite a visionary really, he was quite a strong influence. I think it's more to do with the communication and the interest in satisfying the visitor, how the visitor learns and understands. So it's a communication tool, I think, primarily.

Debs Has any of it come from a perspective whereby you've gone to various sites and the information that you maybe wanted to have seen isn't there, and coming from a frustration maybe and lack of-?

Ruth Oh yeah. Obviously you do tend to look at any interpretation and kind of size it up. Yeah, oh yeah. And I do think actually at the National Trust I was very frustrated working in Houses because I didn't have a very strong background of history, so much was presumed. There was so much that was happening that wasn't explained that would have just made it so much easier to understand. For instance, just when you have a house why one period of history is chosen to be displayed. Who decided that? Why? It's all of that. So that was again the driver in working with the curators. That's when I really started to work with the curators.

Debs So did you find out why?

Ruth Yeah. There's no easy answer, but it was a combination of things including what was available. Of the different eras as it stands what

was most significant within that era of the property. I think there was also a bit of curatorial whim there!

Debs That's what I've tried to change with ((?)), the fact that having just one era that's explained and in context within the building, that through the 3D world you can have the different eras of perhaps significant architectural change. So like the kitchen became a billiard room at Dunster and things like this, so that you can almost transport or teleport people back to that era. I suppose in a house physically if you were to do that it would be a very mixed story, wouldn't it, around the building.

Ruth Yes, it would confuse. And actually what you want to do is good interpretation you give people a story which is coherent, and the story could be see this house in all its different eras, and that would be coherent. But it would be quite a tricky thing to do. I'm not sure if anybody's done that. There's probably a very good reason. You do get houses where you get one part of one era and one part of another era.

Debs From my experience anyway, most seem to be one hit in one place and then everything is fed through.

Ruth So other eras are often explained. Yeah, that makes sense.

Debs Sorry to keep going back to the National Trust.

Ruth No that's fine. It was a good few years.

Debs When you were there ((?)), you've spoken a little bit about it, but ((?))?

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Ruth I think probably more at the start when I worked in the Countryside when I actually commissioned the work, and the way that I did it was to talk to the people involved at the site of what the problems were, what management issues they had, what the interest to the site was, and from that to combine into the interpretation. Yes, so it was also driven by my own interest in natural history. Some of it by visitor survey, but there doesn't tend to be so much work done of the visitor beforehand. Some of the work that fed into it was the work that had been done on statements of significance with local communities and visitors, and that would then feed into the interpretation. So it's a combination. It was never a single unified one person's view, it was a combination I'd say.

Debs Did you have a big team to work with?

Ruth No, they were quite small teams really. It was me and the Warden and the information that had been built up, there might be a Property Manager involved in there, and the designer.

Debs So was the designer employed by the National Trust?

Ruth Yeah. We'd commission in all the different bits. The text was usually written by me, or written by someone I contracted but to the brief that I'd written.

Debs Like any design thing, usually everything from the brief goes to the designer and the designer interprets then the brief as their own biases and influences.

Ruth Well, yeah. Interestingly, I wouldn't say there was that much. It would mainly come through the illustration where one part might be illustrated bigger than another. Thinking back to some very early

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

panel work that the designer might choose, one animal or one insect to be the main focus of a picture which had a pastiche of what was there. Certainly different designers who gave a different feel to the panel.

Debs It probably didn't happen, but if you say you did an interpretation and they created a panel, and then say two or three years later you had to go back and update that panel and put some extra information on, did you have to do a clean sweep because of the differences?

Ruth The only time we had a situation like that was when we designed a panel for Stonehenge for the outlying landscape and we didn't put on a piece about English Heritage. Although we owned the land, English Heritage owned the stones when the National Trust owned the outlying land. They insisted that we put something in, so instead of redoing the panel we just put a plaque in the corner!

Debs Did that satisfy them?

Ruth Yeah. But it looked stupid.

Debs Because it wasn't designed to be there.

Ruth Because it didn't need it. It really didn't need it. It was them being stuffy about it.

Debs Stakeholders are another huge sort of ((?)) on work that gets-

Ruth Can be, yeah. I think probably the most interesting time working with stakeholders was when we were commissioning an exhibition for a little centre in Somerset in the National Park, and it was a community kind of run tourist information place. We interviewed the design teams with them, and they actually chose a different design team

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

than the design team I would have preferred, and we went with their choice because it was going to be their centre so they had to be happy with what was being offered. Which they were. But at that time that's when the stakeholder input really came in.

Debs Because it's not just in instances like that, it can be budget and even what the concept is that's going out perhaps.

Ruth Yeah. It certainly influenced the concept as well because the two design teams had very different ways of realising the centre. Equally valid. You can design an exhibition ((?)), it was ((infinite?)) really.

Debs Exactly, yeah. That's what I've found, because I could have produced anything for Beaulieu Abbey and it would have been accepted – if you see what I mean – as long as the storytelling and the flow was there.

Ruth But did they give you a brief, or were you working with them to develop the brief?

Debs It was kind of the second one, because I went to them, somebody I knew had seen ((?)) and thought it would be good for me. He lives just off the Beaulieu estate, so he then introduced me to them, so I had to pitch what I'd done with Dunster and what I could possibly do to Beaulieu. Which at the time they didn't have any funding for it, so I had to match the funding bid with ((?)). Then of course I had to design it.

Ruth I would say that's reasonably unusual and actually the client normally has a brief so they know. It should be set within an interpretation plan where there may be different interpretation in different ways. And now you need to think about what your web interpretation is, so when people get to the site how you develop it on the site, and what

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

it might be on your mobile etc, etc, etc. So someone needs to be doing that, and that will then demarcate the different stories ((?)). I think your situation is where people don't really understand ((?)) interpretation by doing that way. Which is actually not uncommon having said all of that!

Debs I wanted to put it in as a mobile experience and with a complementary website where they can go to get more information, download in chunks the information that they wanted to explore. But they wanted nothing to do with mobile, because this was 2006/2007, and they thought that people would just walk off with smart screens because they weren't really out much then. So it was a kiosk application ((?)). It was in there for two years and the dual screen one so had a screen up. It was positioned in the Domus, and usually the youngsters would have the courage to explore it, and then other people would stand by and watch it.

Ruth They must get lots of school groups there.

Debs They do.

Ruth That web side of it is so useful for school groups.

Debs Yeah. Susan, the Archivist, she helped me considerably with the decision on characters at the Abbey, because they've got five real characters and ((four and a half lead up?)) characters. We know about Durandus but we don't know much about him ((?)) stonemason. So she helped me with that, and everything to do with the audio script, because they were putting in an audio tour at the time, and so we had to meet with the family to sanction the script that Susan had done before, then I could have the script to then put the animations together around the audio. So it all takes extra time.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Ruth Yeah, absolutely.

Debs So they had something in mind, they wanted 3D and a kiosk basically.
That was my brief!

Ruth Because when you develop interpretation you need to think about the story, so the message, what you're trying to say, the audience, the different audiences, and then your media. So you don't drive it from the media without understanding your audiences and your story. But then that's fairly typical, people don't understand interpretation.

Debs But when the new technology comes out I suppose everybody wants a bit of the action in the technology, and they want to use this new thing and how can we use this new thing? But it is a mere tool.

Ruth Exactly. And it needs to be integrated within whatever else you're doing, as the case may be.

Debs So the kiosk has gone now, but the work is still live on the website. They're redoing the Domus, redesigning the interpretation, and quite a lot of the work I think is on the website, the content, ((?)) going to be used within the Domus, but I'm not quite sure how. So it may be just a bit of action ((?)) or something, which is similar to what they've done at ((?)). And then pointing people to the website so that the ((uni?)) site links with my site, and then they can go up there and get more information for school groups, as you say.

Ruth Particularly school groups where you've got these different eras and the way the curriculum is changing so that they have to cover a chronological on history, actually to see it on one site is quite a clever way of doing it, and the resources just won't be around. So I think it's quite a good thing to talk to schools about as an audience, I would say,

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

how they might use it, what they want to see from it, would be really useful.

Debs When I was doing the fact sheets and lifestyles, I was looking at the curriculum at the time and checking what they needed to cover for history and things like that, so that they had that information to hand.

Ruth You know the curriculum's changed? They've just announced the new curriculum, which they want to start in 2014. Poor schools, no resources. How quickly are publishers going to get stuff out? It could be ideal. I think it starts with a ((pre-history technology?)). Don't quote me on that because you'd have to look it up. A lot of museums major on Victorians and later the Victorians went out into secondary, that's the way the chronology worked, so ((?)) a little bit wider.

Debs That's interesting.

Ruth Yeah.

Debs My ((pet project?)) really is medieval.

Ruth I think medieval's in primary, yeah.

Debs I definitely need to have a look. There's loads of questions on here. I think you've answered a lot of them already, they're just steering me really. I don't want to keep you too long because where I was late. Can I just ask you, how much can you remember of that meeting with you eight years ago?!

Ruth Not a lot!

Debs But you've-

Ruth I've seen the book, yeah.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Debs Do you think that was a good thing to be doing round about that time, that kind of interpretation as that was then, a CD-ROM?

Ruth It's tricky. What I would say is to look at what the visitor wants, and actually what you've got is a really good way of picking information, and to me just looking at the schools' market you've got a really good set of information for schools there. What we're trying to do with ((UCL?)) as just kind of an aside, is to use their collections and why are they using their collections, and actually this is relevant ((historically as it is as well?)) on heritage. Now that these things are in Arts Council rather than having a separate Museums, Libraries and Archives own agency, because MLA was bonfired in the quangos, Arts Council are very interested in a qualification called Arts Award, which is at a level that starts with Bronze. It's produced by a portfolio, the young people produce a portfolio, and then Gold they get UCAS points.

In the last two years they've also opened up Discover and Explore which are for primary schools. So they've developed a portfolio and Trinity College run the qualification, it goes for moderation and they get a certificate. But it's a very flexible qualification and it leads into leadership, and it's a very useful qualification for museums and for heritage, because as an Arts Award is in ((?)) really any creative reaction to a place will be considered as okay. So it's another way of studying history if you like and looking at heritage houses, and also looking at the art within those houses. I think something like the thing that you produce, for now it's very relevant for schools and it can be developed a bit to show how they could use the Arts Award within it, and it would be a really useful product for schools.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Debs That's a good idea. So you could pick say three very different properties and then do a TW on each of those properties, a site for each of those properties, and then they can compare across the properties as well.

Ruth Yeah.

Debs A manor house to a farmer's cottage to something else maybe.

Ruth Yeah. To do the Arts Award there are three or four different aspects to it. They do some artwork, so it could be photography for instance, and that's ideal for historic properties. Or they could be drawing something. They research an ((arts bureau?)) or ((?)) and they share their arts practice, and they visit an exhibition or an event in a museum, housing exhibitions in an historic house, ((?)). So it's very easy, and it's very easy to do it in a very ((?)) ((no-one else will discover?)). You ((could?)) do it in a day almost ((?)). So what museums are doing is developing packages for teachers, so that the youngsters can go and learn about bits of history, and alongside they can develop this portfolio showing that they've done these different parts of the Arts Award that will enable them to get the certificate.

Debs That's a really good idea. I'll have to get busy!

Ruth Yeah. Look it up. The Arts Award, there's a website www.artsaward.org.uk which is run by Trinity. You can just Google Arts Award. And to run Arts Award, so if you wanted to look after youngsters who were doing Arts Award and put them in for moderation, you'd train as an Arts Award adviser. So you can discover/explore, that's half-day training. But normally the schools would have trained advisers and they would use the material.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Debs I'll mention it to Susan as well because she does so much with school groups at Palace House and the Abbey, so they're two very different properties as it were. There's so much they do, like a living history thing, so they dress up and-

Ruth Oh yeah, ideal. Yeah, all of that sort of thing. And in fact the Motor Museum did a really good project when I was working with them with an FE college, where the youngsters were each given an era of history and they had to design the costumes, and then they were photographed next to the cars with their costumes on. And that would have been absolutely ((fine for the Bronze Arts Award?)), they'd be encouraging them to do ((?)). Yeah, there's lots of ways, and it's kind of an interesting thing for a school, it just adds something to what they're gaining from their visit.

Debs Yeah. With our own students, if I just preach at them you just get ((?)). But if you really get them out and doing something and get them involved and stuff like that, it's the same old story isn't it really, they are then involved. And digital media is just such fun stuff to do, so we have created all kinds of apps and stuff. But they have to then research the content that's going ((?)) because they can't just-

Ruth Just an aside with Artsworld and their work with children and young people, we've done a little bit of work with digital where we put out a call for projects for digital. It was about extending arts and cultural organisations' digital practice and working with schools. We funded one where they ran something called the Artist Not in Residence, where schools Skyped with various national ((portfolio?)) organisations. The other one was John Hansard in Southampton where they worked with a school on photography and develop photo

books. They also developed a case study for the curriculum so that the teachers could then use that to run their photography curriculum.

But we're looking at again how we might extend that digital practice, and the general feeling is – and I might be wrong – that the schools tend to be behind the youngsters, and the youngsters actually have the latest technology and are developing/creating with it all the time, and the schools are a bit behind the curve, and the arts and culture organisations are more behind the curve. So it's how you bring forward so they're actually at the point where the youngsters aren't just frustrated because no-one seems to really understand what to do with their technology.

I have a feeling Winchester might have put in an application on the last round, but just to head that with up to keep an eye on the Arts Award website, think about maybe getting involved with it. It will have to be a couple of organisations/schools-

Debs Are our students too old, if you see what I mean, because they're Degree students?

Ruth You'd need to work with schools.

Debs So we could get Peter Symonds ... oh no, that's FE. So we need to look at the other schools.

Ruth Arts Award covers FE as well. It goes up to 19 years old.

Debs I had a Guernsey school in and I was asked to entertain them. So I got them to use the App Builder website to build themselves an app, but they had to combine that all with a brainstorm content what their app was going to be and what were they enthusiastic about. For me

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

noticeably the girls knew exactly what they wanted to do and the boys were, "What should we do then?"!

Ruth That's very interesting, isn't it. They're probably more interested in the techie bit, whereas the girls were more interested in the-

Debs Yeah, they were straight on the computer.

Ruth Boys were busy trying to get into the working of the computer ((?)).

Debs Some of the girls knew Photoshop and some of the girls didn't, some of the girls knew how to do some stuff and some of the girls didn't. So it was actually quite interesting to see what they're not being taught at school. And yet we've got students joining us in September where there's one girl that's writing code already and writing plug-ins for games and stuff already. So it is interesting.

Ruth Yeah. They need to be brought up to a level really. In terms of audiences, that school audience, I think don't forget them because they're a bit unique in their needs from a visitor audience. But I think for what you're producing there's a lot of relevance to it.

Debs Thank you. I better let you go, hadn't I.

Ruth Is there anything else? Ask.

Debs Okay. With your experience of education, culture and heritage sites, what are the elements of the interpretation that stand out the most and are most successful in your eyes, or maybe the children's eyes or school groups? I've ((prompted?)) with educational choice, the amount of choice is always a big issue, I think. Do you think it is? Too much choice?

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Ruth If you talked to people like Culture 24, they say that there's an awful lot of stuff out there in terms of online and for teachers, but the teachers defy the quality, they don't know what's quality and what's not. So yes, in the online there's a lot of choice, I'd say.

Debs But if ((?)) site where the content has been verified by the archivist and so on, if you have say 92 fact sheets – do you see what I mean – and then games and then this, is that too much choice?

Ruth I think people like to have choice, but yes they can be overcome by too much. But if it's an education group, what should happen is that there will always be choice on a school visit and the teacher has decided what the youngsters are going to do, so they direct them. If you take them to a museum, say you took them to the Natural History Museum, you've got a huge choice of galleries, but actually what you're doing is you're directing them to a particular gallery because you're looking at a particular aspect. So I actually think choice can be quite helpful, but the teacher's got to be directing them.

As to what's most successful, it's difficult, because I don't think there's been a lot of evaluation on it. But I think involving the youngsters actively is always the best way however you do it, and whether that is with something digital or whether it's with something real, it's that active engagement that is so important.

Debs Rather than reading a board.

Ruth Yeah. But you can make a board active by using questions and having interactives engaged with it. You can engage the brain. But also youngsters need to engage their hands as well, and touch is very, very important for young people, I think, particularly younger youngsters. Often the simplest things are in fact the most successful, I'd say.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Debs In your experience of interpretation, is there anything that really stands out to you, or a site that stands out to you, as being the most successful? Sorry I keep asking these hard questions!

Ruth It's something that people always ask actually, where can I go to see good interpretation? Actually it's very difficult to say somewhere is overall good, but there is good parts in places. So I'd say for instance that Kensington Palace and their approach to using art within the interpretation, made it incredibly successful because it was so very different and very new and there was a lot of variety actually within that.

The Mary Rose, the new exhibition. I think the way they've built the story is very successful in that. Though there isn't a lot of stuff to touch, it's mainly having screens, but the way they've displayed the boat is brilliant, and that had been lacking. It's been ((?)) for years while they've been dealing with it. And they've brought the characters to life. Have you been to the Mary Rose?

Debs Not for a long time.

Ruth They've just opened the new exhibition and they've done cases about particular characters on the ship, showing all the artefacts and build the story of who this archer was or who this ship's cook was, and all the evidence. So that's quite a clever way of doing it. But it's still a bit-

Debs Static.

Ruth Yeah. They've got some quite good film video that they use, but nothing to touch. They have always used ((?)). I'll think of other things when I go on.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Debs No, that's fine, thank you. I need to go and see the Mary Rose, and I also need to go and see Sea City because ((?)) having already been there.

Ruth I haven't been there because I've been trying to get ((?)).

Debs It looks like we might be involved with the Green Jackets Museum, because that's just across the way.

Ruth Oh really? Is that the one with the Waterloo-?

Debs Yeah, the diorama.

Ruth And they're going to develop.

Debs Yeah. I suggested to them that if they're going to do the cleaning process, that they need to record the cleaning process because that then becomes ... because that's how many years, it's not been done really since the thing was built, I think. Then they're going to put it in a case so they it doesn't ever have to be cleaned again kind of thing. I was talking with Christina about some ideas and trying to come up with ways that would allow people to see the stories of the different parts of the battle. Because it is stories, isn't it, that's really important.

Ruth Oh yeah, it is. It's all about interpretation, telling stories.

Debs The characters are so important, so the gardener or Wellington and stuff, ((?)).

Ruth Is there anything else?

Debs No, I think that's kind of it. There's a little bit here about Hampshire's alliance with museums and things, but we've talked quite a lot about

that. You said that the Hampshire Alliance was a small ... you were there a little time.

Ruth Yes. I just took them through a couple of months. The contract ended in March, so I took them through from November to March covering maternity leave, which was funded by Renaissance. That Alliance, basically the idea is that Southampton, Hampshire and Winchester Museums are working together making economies of scale in what they do, so looking at how they might do joint storage for instance. Winchester on its own I don't think will be sustainable, going into a larger alliance gives it a bit of sustainability hopefully. I think all the councils are of different political persuasions so getting them to agree to something might never happen. It's not a quick win, it'll take time.

Debs Two questions and then I'm done. Everything that you've done, do you feel that each has fed another? Do you know what I mean? So that all your experience, all the different roles that you've had, they've all fed into what you're able to do now.

Ruth Yeah, I'd say so. I think you draw on different parts of what you've done, and you don't always realise you're doing that, I would say, but you kind of build and build and build. I'm doing an MBA at the minute and that feeds into a lot of the work that I'm doing, for instance. Yeah it does, without you realising it a lot of the time. I just want to see if I got a card but I don't think I do. I should have brought you the Arts Award stuff as well.

Debs Don't worry. I'll email you anyway.

Ruth Yes.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Debs And finally then, out of all the roles that you've done and all the positions/places you've worked, which one, if there is one, would you elevate above all the others as being the one that satisfied you the most? You personally rather than your job.

Ruth Again that's very difficult because I certainly enjoyed doing the interpretation, but there's also a huge amount of pleasure in managing people, and through them realising what they do, ((so you kind of develop?)) ((?)), you get enjoyment. To me it would have been very difficult to get enjoyment from them if I hadn't done myself. When you're asking someone to do something you actually understand what you're asking them to do. So that progression has really helped. When you're reorganising a section and increasing the number of school visits they've got to deal with and things like that, you need to have some idea of the practicalities of that so that you're not over-exhausting them in what you're asking them to do.

I think I enjoy managing people the most, so probably my time at the RHS I really enjoyed. And I did a lot then, I developed the Campaign for School Gardening, so I'm very proud of what I was able to do.

Debs I was reading, you changed their numbers considerably.

Ruth Yeah. ((They've stuck to that?)). They've now got over 15,000 schools signed up to the Campaign for School Gardening, which is brilliant, it's a real success.

Debs It's a real legacy.

Ruth Yeah. So that's something I'm most proud of, I suppose. But you take enjoyment from different things. You adapt a bit, I suppose.

Debs Yes you do. That's wonderful. Thank you ever so much.

Audio title: RuthTaylor-22ndJuly2013

Audio length: 46 minutes

Ruth I hope that's been helpful.

Debs Yeah, wonderful.