

HP_NT_Cherryburn_Interview_20_Sep_2017

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KEY:

Cannot decipher = (unclear + time code)

Sounds like = [s.l + time code]

I1: = Interviewer

I2: = Interviewer

R: = Respondent.

I1: The website or anything like that. So, we're not going to take everything, and it will be transcribed.

R: Okay, that's fine.

I2: Okay, do you want to do the intro bit?

I1: Yes, the first bit?

I2: Yes.

I1: Or do you want me to do ... oh well, okay. So, thank you [R] for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the research project. The purpose of the conversation is to collect information about your experience in being involved in the commissioning and presentation of contemporary art for a Heritage site.

You may decide that you don't want to answer some questions which is absolutely fine and it's part of the longitudinal research process, so we hope to follow up on some of these questions in later interviews, just to see how the situation has changed or maybe not.

R: That's fine, yes.

I1: So, all the information that you provide is strictly confidential and no information will be reported with your name, address or any identification attached to it.

R: Okay. Do I need a solicitor present?

I1: It sounds like that, doesn't it? So, just as an opening one, shall I go into the first one, just as a ... what does contemporary art mean to you or what do you think that could or could not be. Any reflections on that really?

R: I don't know what I was expecting contemporary art to be. I was thinking that it could have been anything from a painting on a wall to somebody dancing in the garden, to flags across the farmyard, I really had no perception of what it was going to look like and I was quite amazed by what the artist came back with. When everybody had the same brief, I couldn't believe the diversity in what came back. So, that opened my eyes a little bit more to contemporary art, I think.

I1: Yes, it was extraordinary, wasn't it?

R: I thought it was ... I just could not get my head round how all of the people could have exactly the same brief and come back with such different interpretations of it, all fantastic, actually but so different.

I1: That's (unclear 00:02:42). Do you ... just on the side, like on a personal basis, do you go to galleries or anything like that?

R: I do, yes. If I'm away on holiday, I will go and pop in if there's a gallery around or my [partner] paints and [they do] some pretty wacky things, whatever. But I know what I like, it's trying to remove your personal taste from what you're imagining something to be.

So, I thought it was quite clear that I had an open mind, actually for Cherryburn and the other thing that I thought was useful for me, was having [I1] on-board and having our advice that we had with Interest New Art which is not to do with this project. But somebody who knew more about the artists and just keeping an open mind, I think, was actually important because what you personally think could have a big sway on what could work or could not work within the environment that you're hoping to deliver something.

I1: I agree with you because some of the work that we looked at and it may not be actually the work that I personally would be drawn towards, but you have to think of others.

Do you go to contemporary galleries when you are away or is it mostly historic ones? If you were going away somewhere –

R: No, I would just look at ... so we're off to Barcelona shortly and I'm told I've got to go and see the Gaudi stuff which of course, I will do when I'm in Barcelona. If we're down in London, we would ... where did I go last in London? It's the one with the great big ramp going down the middle, it's very modern.

I1: The Tate Modern?

R: Yes, so we walked around in there and there was a lot of stuff I just did not get, if I'm honest and there was a lot of stuff that I quite liked, but I think it's quite hard going to those kinds of places when you do a job like I do. Because actually I find

myself looking at the signage, looking at the interpretation, looking at the access, looking at what they're promoting, how many people they've got in the space.

So, I do tend to look at those kinds of places with a work-head on, the artist is almost like an added value thing, once you get there but yes, it's one thing knowing you would put it on your wall at home or have around you personally, as to what you think would happen in a work environment. That said, it's also really interesting to see something that provokes a reaction, is a good thing, I think, good or bad, because then people feel something about it.

I mean obviously we would like it all to be a positive reaction or a considered and thought reaction, but some people might say, "Oh I don't like that," which is fine. So, I do like different things, I do like looking at historical ...actually last time we were in Manchester, we went to the Manchester Museum which I hadn't been to for years with my dad and I was amazed how much that had changed but that was almost like a personal going back in time and I could almost feel and smell what the building I was going into and almost remember holding my dad's hand, going in there and I was doing that with my son.

I1: Is that the Manchester Art Gallery or the...?

R: No, the museum on Oxford Road and I like to pop my head in all of them, I do like looking backwards a lot. I do like looking at contemporary stuff, as long as it's not too off the wall but then what is off the wall for me, is not off the wall for somebody else. Art can be very personal, the way people interpret it, isn't it?

I1: So, how do you see the value of bringing, when I say contemporary art, but bringing artists who are working today into a heritage?

R: For Cherryburn or for the National Trust as a whole?

I1: Let's start with Cherryburn. So, Cherryburn, how does that work for you?

R: For me, we relatively recently brought Cherryburn within our portfolio and as you know, it's quite a small but beautifully formed little property with this lovely heritage of Bewick and within the Trust, we do a piece of work around all of the properties called Spirit of Place.

So, we look at the history, we look at what we would want to deliver there based on the spirit of the place. So, Thomas Bewick, would we want to have dinosaurs there, for example, probably not, that doesn't sit with the site, doesn't sit with the Northumberland, it doesn't sit with the Bewick story or the art history of him.

So, it's really important that we have something that sits with our spirit of place and something that feels right for the property. So, it's not a three-line whip that we have to follow a particular path or plan, which is quite refreshing actually now and for Cherryburn, with the history of Bewick on-site and the fact that we have this thing where we do the printing and it just felt right to connect the two.

So, we're bringing his history alive-ish, because all that we've read about Bewick and being involved with the Bewick Society with him, he was quite a forward-

thinking chap. So, we put our twist on that, that if Bewick was still here today, he would be looking to be doing something a little bit more contemporary.

So, that fit with what we were hoping to deliver there. That said, if it didn't work, then we would re-think it but if we didn't have a go, we would never know, and I suppose it's breaking out of the mould a little bit, whatever the mould looked like for a National Trust property. Sometimes the smaller ones get left behind a little bit because the bigger ones get more visitors and get a little bit more maybe marketing or media coverage. But actually, if you dig deeper under the skin of Cherryburn, it's got such a fabulous story to tell, it's just not had the attention and hopefully connecting the spirit of place with a decent, a new story to tell. A contemporary twist on a historical story, I suppose.

I1: And what about for the National Trust as a whole, it's obviously more and more, heritage organisations are bringing artists into their programming, what do you see as the value of that?

R: This is obviously just my personal view but the more that I see, certainly more of the regions are talking more about ... so I've worked with the Trust for 18 years and this is the first time, recently that I felt it was being taken seriously. I think they dip their toe into sites being able to lead themselves or having the money to lead themselves on a particular story that fit with their property. That worked for some of the properties.

That said, it's interesting because we're doing some national programming work with the National Trust at the moment and I think it's fabulous that we've got a five-year plan with some headlines, which is really great. That's the first time that's ever happened and that's all to do with visitor engagement in whatever guise that looks like.

But a lot of the properties, don't really know what they've got in their cupboard and by that, I mean, we're so busy in the day-to-day opening up for the visitors, if we don't have the capacity, whether that's in terms of staffing or money to get somebody to look at the research. Research our properties, to tell us what those underlying stories might be, that we could then start to deliver.

So, it's great that we've got this five-year plan for national programming but then how do properties fit in with that, if they haven't looked in the cupboard to see what their stories are to tell.

So, for example, next year, it's going to be women and suffrage as an overarching theme. Now clearly at Cherryburn, there were women that lived there, so it's clearly a story to tell about women, whether there was any suffrage going on, we don't know because we don't know any of the research, we haven't spent any time on research to understand the women's story at Cherryburn. But Bewick had a mum and sister, so there's clearly stories to tell about women but that doesn't actually fit quite with the spirit of place for that property anyway, because we're telling the story about Bewick.

So, we might not, necessarily fit into that national programming but clearly, we've got our programming that we would like to deliver but that takes some planning, it does.

I1: You know in Trust New Art, there has been ... they've obviously realised some quite big projects or residencies, so there has been. What do you see the advantages of that? I mean what do you see the highlights of why that –

R: Of the residencies?

I1: No, of all the programmes. So, the commissions. Like if you take Folly, from Fountains Abbey or Acorn Bank with the residency programme and then there's been ones at Croome and there's been ones at Mottisfont had them and there's Berrington and all that. What does that ... how do you think that helps the organisation?

R: I think it exposes us to different audiences. So, we do a lot of work around segmentation, understanding who our visitors are, and we put them into categories which is useful sometimes but then I know that I fit into lots of different categories, depending on what I'm trying to do on that day. So, am I going out with my [partner] for a bit of culture, am I taking the kids out to educate them about something or get them to stretch their legs or kick a football. So, I can fall into lots of different categories.

But I think it opens up a wider story to tell about the Trust and we need to appeal to different people at different times of the year and we can't be everything to everybody all of the time, but I think it's nice if there is a direct link to the property and the story.

So, I think it is about audience development and I think it's also really useful to the staff actually to know that we're not stale and we're trying something different, I do.

I1: Do you know what, I just suddenly thought about the piece at Chester's, oh that's an English Heritage place, have you seen it?

R: Yes, it's not working at the moment.

I1: It's not working, that's interesting.

R: The great big bit blew off.

I1: No, oh okay, that's interesting.

I2: Who's that?

I1: It's neon and it was ... well before that happened, it was a good example of how a big Hadrian's Cavalry, a big historic collection on the break-up of Europe has been put into various museums along the Wall and the whole programme, Hadrian's Cavalry wanted a contemporary commission, so there is a contemporary commission at Chester's, which when it works –

R: It's a big piece, it sounds like horses hooves and I think they were keen ... in fact I was speaking to one of the site managers, just earlier this week and she was saying, "I'd rather we not talk about that at moment because a great big bit fell off," we had some quite high winds last week.

I1: **Yes, we did.**

R: And a huge big piece fell off.

I1: **Okay, so he'll come back to fix that?**

R: Oh, I'm sure, yes but we also have for the Calvary commission, we have a piece of textile up on at Housesteads, in the well. Now that's a contemporary piece of art, it's felted fabric with some Roman words on which they are, 26 miles to somewhere.

So, for me, that didn't work on-site because people can't see it, they have to step and look over the walls of a well to see this piece of fabric on a frame. How do they know it's there, first of all?

I1: **Sorry I'm going off piste, does it have that on it, like Roman...?**

R: It's just like Roman numerals and Roman type. So, people need to understand.

I1: **Is that interpretation or is it art?**

R: It's art.

I1: **Why?**

R: What is art, [I1]? I don't know the answer to that.

I1: **I'm quite interested in that.**

R: And to be fair, the site manager at the top, for English Heritage, Sue, she's an artist in her own right, Sue Hodnett, I don't know if you've heard of her, she's done some pretty –

I1: **Was it giving information?**

R: No, not at all.

I1: **I haven't seen it.**

R: And to be fair, people would look at it and I think they would look at it and say, "What is that?" and there is no interpretation around it. If you looked at the Calvary exhibition online, it would say that there are certain things along the wall to see. If you didn't look at that and you came to Housesteads, you wouldn't know it was there because you have to climb over a wall to look down into it. If you went to Chester's you would see the big piece of art and you would say, "Oh what's this?"

or you would hear it and in fact all the staff love it because of the noise, they really enjoy it, they really like it, which is really nice to hear. But the piece at Housesteads it's like, does anyone even notice that? We know it's there.

I1: That's interesting. Sorry I went off piste, but you are right, what is art?

I2: But it's a key question, this spectrum from interpretation to experience, what is it doing, and this is at the heart and it's interesting that you were going to say evocative and it's that thing about feelings and you spoke about the feeling of something and I think that's really important because of the something that's different from a [s.l. dedactor-scene 00:21:07].

R: So, for me at the properties that I work at, I personally, like noise, sounds, movement, something that doesn't make people walk into a historic environment and go, shhhh, like it's a museum. I would prefer to provoke some kind of reaction, what's that or what's that noise or there's something obvious to go and have a look at.

So, whether that is an added value attraction at the property when we get there or whether they are coming specifically to see that, for me it's all about the experience that they have once they get there and of course, we always want it to be a good one. If I get a reaction which isn't such a good one, ideally you would like to have somebody there to talk to them about it, so they don't go away having had a bad or a negative experience, but they just understand why whatever it is, is there and how it fits with the place or the story or trying to do something a little bit different.

I2: Interesting.

I1: I wish you were at the Trust, I suggested they take everything out of the museum and put a sound piece in there and people nearly had a heart attack when I suggest that. I could see the colour draining from everybody's face.

R: But do you know what? For Cherryburn, actually you probably could have done that and there aren't many sites that you and I think that is one of the benefits for Cherryburn and actually just being a little bit wild sometimes, that's not a bad thing, is it?

I2: Shall we...?

I1: Yes, over to you.

I2: Okay, a couple of questions thinking about the commissioning process and obviously these questions recognise where we're up to in that process that it may well be short reflections. So, can you just say a little bit about your experience of that commissioning and selection process, so far?

R: Yes. So, I think, first of all it was to agree the brief which was pretty straightforward. I think particularly [I1's] experience of working in a Heritage environment and art experiences was really helpful because I suppose I don't have experience very much of working with artists. I've worked with quite a few

but I don't have that much experience really of the whole process and so it was useful having [I1's] experience to write the brief in a way that wasn't going to turn people off or keeping it open and fluid enough to say, basically come with anything and we'll consider it, but it had to cover what we wanted at Cherryburn, which it did. I was more than happy with that.

I thought it was really useful when we did the initial selection from all the applications that came in, actually it was a little bit overwhelming because we did have such a big response and I think actually if we didn't have your experience and [Name's] in the room, that might have been a bit overwhelming for us.

I1: Yes, it was, you did have a lot of responses.

R: Yes, and mainly because we didn't know ... not that we would have been steered either way if we did know more about the artist, but I suppose your knowledge of what the artist has already produced or what would fit, was really useful, just steering us a little bit. That was useful.

But that was fine, it was really interesting looking at all the proposals.

I2: Sorry can I just ask, can you just a little bit about the nature of the overwhelmingness, was it just the volume, was it the range?

R: Well, there was a lot and they were so diverse. Of course, it goes back to that thing of, well what is art? And some of them, like a video presentation, that was like, really? But then when you saw it, it was actually that was really quite interesting. Or some of the images that the artists had put forward themselves and it was like, wow that's a bit big, thinking how the artist thinks, how is something that huge going to fit into our little space.

I1: Did anybody stick out for you?

R: Yes, but I can't remember the name. Who was the one who did the ... it looked like a lot of greenery on walls?

I1: Yes, that was –

R: Big installations.

I1: It was when I said what you were looking at is grass paintings and not just photographic images, they were actually grass painting and they hadn't said that, had they? In the narrative, they hadn't said these are paintings of grass.

R: No.

I1: Yes, I can't remember their name at the moment, but I will.

R: But they were huge.

I1: Yes, they were massive.

R: So, I suppose for me, it was the visual impact of what I was looking at and then trying to overlay that into Cherryburn, whilst trying to keep an open mind. But of course, I suppose one of the things that I've learnt is that all so diverse and it is really important to keep an open mind. I think the other thing was when we then went to the next stage of the process which was the interviews, I personally tend to get a feeling about people, about whether you're going to be able to work with them, whether you think oohh, I'm not sure about this one and then I've got to think about the people they're going to work with on-site.

Actually, all of the people we interviewed, I didn't get any bad feelings about any of them. Either we struck lucky or actually all of them who presented, I couldn't have seen us having a problem with any of them. Actually, that process was really interesting when you actually meet them face-to-face and you're almost like, where did you get that from? And it really interesting actually to hear how they developed their ideas, really interesting for me, because I'd never been part of that before.

The worse part for me, was having to choose one, actually because you see how much effort the artist themselves put into their presentation or the work that's gone into it, behind the scenes and really a lot of them did go out of their way. That was because I'd want to give them all something to do, if it was me, it was really hard choosing. It's a bit like the X-Factor, you're gone, that was quite hard.

I1: I think you were quite clear ... I'm just thinking back to that room and we did have an artist who we discounted quite soon. So, for me, on that panel, you were quite clear about that, you said, "I don't think that's that one."

R: And I think we all agreed, that didn't we?

I1: Yes, we all agreed.

R: That presentation was a little bit dark and I thought that presentation was really interesting and very evocative but in a dark way and I just knew that that would not sit at Cherryburn, I just knew it wouldn't. I couldn't have ... from that presentation alone, I don't think I could have sold that to the staff and volunteers on-site, I don't think they would have got it.

I2: Was it the content?

R: Yes.

I1: Well interestingly enough, it was interesting in that the artist put forward the proposal, everything was going very, very well actually and [they were] was obviously a very committed artist and going really well and then [they] showed a clip of something which [they] said, I would take my inspiration from this and [they] showed a clip of a very, very dark, when I say dark, I don't mean visually dark, content-wise dark and [they] lost us all. All of us actually.

R: It was completely connected to something that [they] had seen in a Bewick image, which was bizarre.

I1: **Yes, it was interesting, it was very interesting actually because it did connect with Bewick and the Bewick (unclear 00:30:50) but something fell away, I think for quite a few of us. I think it would be interesting to go back to that at some point.**

I2: **Yes, because there is something in there about, you've spoken about a little bit is the nature of needing to choose, the nature of what is appropriate in terms of the site and the staff and how actually that was an issue that came up, that is really interesting because part of this is, thinking about how that processes work and what are the important parts of it.**

R: Yes, and I suppose the other thing is with artists that I've worked with in the past, I'd laughed with [I1] before actually, sometimes it like nailing jelly to the wall, you just don't know what's going to come and that's a little bit scary because you've got to have faith and belief in that they've interpreted the brief right, they know you well enough to know what's alright or what they could push the boundaries a little bit with. Because clearly as a member organisation, what we don't want to do is upset people, we'll go back to provoking that response, one way or the other but you don't want to upset people.

That said, one of the things that we work on, is an emotional connection to people and emotions can be all over the place, they can be happy, they can be sad, they can be reflective, they can take you back to a place that has happy memories or not so happy memories but that's what we are trying to do. Is make that emotional connection with people on site.

I2: **Is that as a Trust, is that as a site?**

R: As a Trust, yes. As the National Trust, we try and build that emotional connection with people because we want them to buy into us and generally it's emotions that bring people back.

I2: **Interesting.**

I1: **It is interesting because actually Bewick's work is very dark and I mean reflecting on that little incident is that actually it could be very upsetting if you actually looked very carefully at what was happening.**

R: Absolutely.

I1: **Has that happened at Cherryburn? Has anybody got upset about the content?**

R: No, they haven't. That said, I was actually looking through a book of Bewick's yesterday that I hadn't seen before and there was an image that I'd never seen before which was similar to the one that that artist had talked about or shown us about and so it wasn't the first what he's done but that was based on a story that

he'd heard, apparently and from an image, he then engraved a plate about this particular thing, which is quite a dark image. Do we say what it is?

I1: **Yes.**

R: It's of a hanging, of a man hanging. So, this particular one that we talked about actually had a bird in the foreground and you have to really get a magnifying glass to look in the background and you can see a man on a gallows and actually that was based on at hangings, this particular bird would always be found. So, in a lot of his engravings, the detail is actually in the background and not in foreground.

But the book I looked at yesterday, was an image of a man by a river and the story was, he was an army captain who'd come back home with his faithful dog, so there is the image of a dog on the side, but a man had got to the river on his way home and something had gone wrong and he hung himself.

So, actually the images are really dark but when we're talking about this particular bird, because of Bewick's book of British birds and if you actually look in the background and this is the story of the connection to the bird to these incidents, it almost seems a secondary thing.

Whereas the plate I looked at yesterday, it was in your face and as much as you might look at the image and then it says, man and dog or something, then you're looking for dog, faithful dog or something it was called.

So, yes, they can, some of them can be dark but I suppose it's what you're focusing on in the foreground, rather than ... really interesting but then he's quite humorous as well, in a lot of the other images that we've dealt with. So, I suppose it's which way you look at it, isn't it?

I1: **Absolutely.**

I2: **Yes. Okay, we could explore that a lot more, I think but it's an interesting one to think about in terms of what is chosen to interpret.**

R: Yes.

I2: **But still thinking about commissioning process and in a way, that was great because you talked through receiving the work and then the interview process and how that worked. So, now post-interview, can you just say a little bit about how the process has gone in the sense of the working relationships with the commissioned artist and with the research team, just as a reflection, rather than a whole project?**

R: Okay, well it certainly felt very open. It's not felt like it's too structured. I've always felt that I could pick up the phone if I was unsure about something, that's been really easy, it's been really enjoyable actually.

Choosing the artist, now it's not supposed to start until the 7th November, the contract for him but actually he's already been to Cherryburn, he's been a couple of times and actually stayed over last week and it's not an issue for us at all, as

long we've got that dialogue and we made that straightaway and we engaged with the staff straightaway, with this programme that was going to happen, they've all brought into that as well.

It's quite refreshing for me, I suppose I didn't realise how interested the artist would be in Cherryburn, I don't know why but we had a project this year, which the artist really bought into and the artist for this next year, through this project, really is excited by Cherryburn, which is really lovely because that breathes excitement. That gets people thinking and getting excited about what it's going to produce, How we can be part of that, the Trust has an awful lot of volunteers who can be terribly opinionated, good or bad and actually if you bring them on board, it's just a breeze, it's just great.

I suppose any negative comments that we've had and if I'm really honest, there's not been any, but we can always bring that back to Bewick himself, in that if he was alive today, he would be stood there with open arms, welcoming these people in, come on, think about what he did. So, that was always my back-stop.

But actually, it's really exciting and he was at the property last week and he said, "I'm really keen to get under the skin of this and start the process."

I1: You can tell really (unclear 00:38:50).

R: Yes, and so he stayed over last week, he was in the flat and we're lucky that we've got the flat for people to be able to use. I mean it's not The Ritz but it's a useful tool to have and it was great then because we had to talk him through the process of staying there and he met more people and then it's quite a relaxed environment, Cherryburn. So, the staff stood there talking to the artist, they were already having conversations with the visitors, now that kind of thing, you can't buy.

If somebody is interested, you've already got them. You can just see them, bing, it's great, really good. So far, so good.

I2: Okay and in a way that you have got some really positive parts of the process there, is there anything that could be improved in any aspect of the way the project has developed, so far?

R: I haven't got anything negative to say. No, I've really enjoyed it. I think it will be interesting to see what the research finds are, and it would be interesting to hear from the artists, how they found the whole thing as well. No, it's been really enjoyable, it's been great for us, yes.

I1: Okay, so it's me now. So, I touched in this at the beginning. So, what do you think the relationship between this project and your approach to the site interpretation is at Cherryburn? The difference between interpretation and what this ... there's not right answer to this at all.

R: You mean the on-site interpretation we have now or what we're trying to do with the artist?

I1: No, now. The interpretation that you have at the site.

R: We don't have very much actually.

I1: And the relationship between this –

R: For me, I like people talking to people rather than signage or panels and some people don't even understand what interpretation is, they might say that ... we could have somebody dressed up in costume and talking to visitors and they don't get that that is interpretation. It's just a nice thing to have when you're here and I think sometimes, we are too critical of what we do or what we think is right to deliver on-site.

So, we might have an idea that we must have this welcome sign and we must have these direction signs and we must have this panel that says what you're looking at or we've got a lovely garden with apple trees that drop their apples and we leave a mini tractor with a trailer for the children to get on-board and they don't understand that that's interpretation of the site. It's just a nice thing to do.

I think for art, in particular, for Bewick, there's lots of books. You can put some labels on things to say this is an image of whatever but actually it's people's own interpretation of what they're looking at. First of all, do they like it, do they want to pick up the magnifying glass to see what's in the background or having a member of staff there, saying "Actually if you pick up that magnifying glass and just look at that, you will be able to see more in the background of the image, rather than the bird that's at the front and then they tell a story." Then you've got the interpretation of a member of staff talking to the visitor in a more engaging way.

So, in terms of interpretation, I'm not quite sure what's right for one property, is not right for another one.

Cherryburn is so small and such a personal intimate ... we call it a little gem because it doesn't have masses of signage and interpretation and there are enough staff and volunteers around to talk to people about what they're seeing or if they overhear a conversation about something that they're looking at or am I allowed to do this, not a sign saying you're allowed to get your child in that tractor to go and pick up the apples, it's just, there's any empty deck chair there, go and sit in it. It's got a message on the deck chair, whether they've seen the message on the deck chair or not, they know that they can sit in the deck chair, do you know what I mean?

I1: Yes.

R: So, for this project, what's interesting is that we don't have a huge marketing budget for Cherryburn or for our portfolio. So, we have to do a lot on social media or web stories or hopefully getting on the back of national programming because if we can make our story fit within that, we've got the chance of hanging on their coattails.

It's been great, the project that we've done this year, having the guys on-site and hands-on stuff for visitors to do. So, the legacy that they've left is almost

interpretation itself of the piece of art and the connection to spirit of place story of what's going on.

I don't know what the artist this year is going to look like in terms of interpretation and how that's going to fit with us. I'm hoping it's going to be replicated by what happened last year in that we had this open dialogue, and can I do this? Would it offend anybody if I did that? I'm going to give a talk here about this? I've got my marketing and comms [person] talking to the artist already about his history but then that's something that you and I need to talk about so that we don't overstep the mark in terms of the universities. I wouldn't want to upset anybody or crossover, do you know what I mean?

I1: Yes.

R: But for us, also thinking long-term, it's about building that credibility as Cherryburn with quality artists. There's a quality history and if I'm bringing that up to date now, I want that to be a quality follow-on.

I1: Yes, I understand.

R: Because then hopefully you're building a ... our visitors will be looking for the next new thing that's happening, it might be different, it could be anything, what out for Cherryburn space or from an artist point of view, it could be, actually that's a really nice space, I'd like to come and work there or I've got this great idea and wouldn't it be great that artists are then starting to come to us and saying, "Can I go on your list?"

I1: Does that not happen? I would have thought that you would have got quite a few artists coming to you?

R: No but I think the Trust has gone through various ... it's developed an awful lot, it used to be, "Oh no you can't do that in that space, oh no our curators would have a fit about that," I'm sure there are still a lot of spaces like that, they're special, they are something that is particularly special and we'd have to be very careful but I think we're looking at better ways of engaging with our visitors more and depending on what the environment is like, our curators are actually far more open-minded than they ever were.

I1: That's good. So, I'm aware of the time, so I'm going to go onto this one because this is quite an interesting one. What do you think success would look like for you, in terms of this project?

R: Oh, that's a good one. Completely with my National Trust head on, it's that we have got a larger audience or a different audience visiting that maybe hadn't visited before or we've exposed ourselves to a different market. It would be great if they became a member and they bought something and they stayed and had a cup of coffee, it would be great if I just get nice feedback for the people that have come, it's been a surprise, it's been a delight, they've engaged with it, they've had a good time. I would, not that I'd be upset but I'd be disappointed if they said, "What is that? Why have you done that? This is not what it's about." If they didn't get the connection. I suppose that would disappoint me a bit and that actually it's

been easy for the staff. It's not been a chore for them, it's been enjoyable for them as well and they have seen the benefit of working with the artist, what they've delivered, how they've delivered it.

I1: That's great.

I2: This is quite a short simple answer, or a long one, but it's picking up on that sense of you said, success might be a new audience or a different audience, have you got any thoughts about who the audience might be?

R: No, not really. If we look at a normal year for the property and its times that it's open, obviously school holidays, you get a lot of families or grandparents bringing their children because they can run around and it's quite free and it's, all of this don't touch.

We do want people to become engaged and we can do hands-on things but outside of that time, we have what we call 'curious mind audience' which is people who are ... maybe they planned to come out, maybe they hadn't planned to come out but they'd like to learn something new or they'd like to come away with a snippet of information that they didn't have before they arrived or they just want to go somewhere nice to have a decent cup of coffee.

If we have staff who welcome everybody on-site, there is a face to talk to for all of the visitors and it would be nice to understand from those conversations if they've come particularly for the art and then the conversation would probably follow on, keep your on the space because we're hoping for a programme that you might be interested in. Or we market the artist in a way on the members newsletter or on our website that might just attract the eye of somebody different but unless we talk to them or the visitors, that is when they arrive on-site, we probably wouldn't know. Because we do still get people who just come on their own and it might be that they've looked through the members handbook and they're in the area and, actually I've got an hour to spare, its on my way, just thought I'd drop in.

But we are starting to get a repeat audience now that we're recognising which is a good thing because we are trying to engage with our local audience before we start looking further afield but from the connections with the artists, depending on how wide their circle goes, we don't know what affect that will have on Cherryburn, just yet.

We won't know, other than face-to-face unless we do some research on-site or try and get people to engage more specifically about the artist.

I2: Speaking of engagement and in a way, this is a speculative question and it is based on where you are up to in the project at the moment, how are you thinking about how visitors will engage with this project, actually on the site? How are you thinking about that, at this stage of the project?

R: I'm trying to keep an open mind and not be ... I'm still at the stage where, lets just have a go, if it works, great, if it doesn't, can we have a conversation about it and it might just be that, I don't know something is a trip hazard or it's not in the right

part of the visitor journey, whatever that is or we're getting some feedback that's not working for somebody, is that something that we can do?

I think from the presentation that this artist did though, it sits beautifully with Bewick and some of the things that we've seen about Bewick. I don't know what that's going to look like yet and this is the bit about nailing jelly to the wall, what is that going to look like for us, on-site?

If he says he wants to have a barbeque pit in the middle of the museum room, well clearly no you can't do that but if he says, can we move this bit of furniture or can I change the lighting a little bit or something that's doable, that will have an impact on the piece of work, let's have a conversation about that but I don't really know yet.

I1: What if he focuses on some of Bewick's dark imagery and projects more paintings there?

R: I think as long as he talks to the staff that are going to have to face the visitors and they understand where he's coming from, as an artist and how that fits in with the place, the spirit of the place and the history of Bewick, if we can make a connection, emotional it would be great. I think as long as he explains to people why he's done what he's done, then it's an easier story to tell. If it's just well you interpret that the way you want, and we look at it and go, "Oh that's a bit a dark," that's a different story but I suppose we'll just have to see as we go along.

We've already started conversations with the artist and I think the more that we have that open dialogue going, he'll understand the site, there will be limitations, not many but I think as long as you have that dialogue with them, that open dialogue, that you can pick up a phone or whizz an email off, how do you feel about this, before he's gone too far down the road. If we're still at the thinking stage, I would hate them to put all of their energies in and be halfway down a piece of work and then I wonder what Cherryburn think about this and then we go, "That's going to be a bit of an issue for us." So, I think it's just important to have that open dialogue going.

I2: Okay and again, there is a subtle nuance to this question around the audience and the artwork because in this practice in general, there is an implicit assumption that the artwork does something that changes people's experience in a way that might be that the artwork does it in a way that's not the same as another form of interaction with the site.

So, again, just at this moment within the project, how are you thinking that this work might change people's experience of the place?

R: I'm hoping that it's going to open up, for a want of a better expression, a different chapter or a different way of telling a slightly different story and that could be about the artist rather than the piece of work or it could be the connection with the work to the place. I'm hoping that it would just provoke a different conversation with the visitor.

I think it's quite interesting actually because with Cherryburn, this is quite bold for a little place and even though it's small and perfectly formed, it's not done anything radical forever, I don't think. So, hopefully those repeat visitors that are coming, will see something different that hopefully engages them emotionally in a different way.

People like people stories, so whether that's a little bit of scandal or something a little bit different or somebody from a different part of the world coming to little old Cherryburn to deliver this piece of art.

It's quite tricky actually, I'm just trying to think from a visitor's point of view. I think because of the heritage of Bewick being artist and engraver, it's quite easy to attach a new artist story to him because at the end of the day, at Cherryburn, that is what we're telling the story of but engaging that audience in a different way. I suppose wanting to have a bit of a schedule of different artists coming, it's almost like exposing the property and the visitors to potentially something quite different happening regularly.

So, yes what do they see as art, do they see an engraving plate as a piece of art because I'm sure I did when I started going over to Cherryburn. When I saw the images that were printed from that block, I was blown away but looking at that place, would I see that as a piece of art, I'm not so sure I would. So, I suppose art is people's interpretation, isn't it?

So, again for me, it's important to have that face-to-face conversation with people, staff, volunteers, with visitors and hopefully to understand what the artist is trying to deliver so they can pass that on.

I2: Shall we ask just that last question about heritage?

I1: We're just interested because there isn't a ... what does the heritage mean to you?

R: So, working for the Trust, I work in a heritage environment. I suppose for me, I want to see a quality experience in the heritage environment I'm in. So, for example, my office is on Hadrian's Wall, so I've got Hadrian's Wall outside the back door and a fort and for me the heritage of that is quite obvious, it's a Roman wall, to me it is, people know of Hadrian's Wall and the fort is archaeological remains, but you can see that there was a fort there.

But again, that's artistic impression of what ... we can have impression in terms of a short film that people see before they're supposed to go and see the fort, so they can get an idea of what was there or there are the interpretation panels of what it might have looked like.

But I love sites like that, that's the kind of thing that I like to do and sometimes I like to put my own spin on it of what might have been there. Would I like ... so for that environment, it's different to a heritage environment at Cherryburn, for example, where there is a house with a roof on it and people to talk about the person that lived there.

We talk about Emperor Hadrian, but we don't really talk about anybody else there. At Cherryburn, we talk a lot about Bewick, we don't really talk about the rest of his family but that's probably because we know more about him, probably.

So, for me, I suppose heritage is the quality of the experience and the legacy that was left. So, I suppose that's from a Trust point of view, when I want my visitors to come, I want them to have a good experience. Now it might not be a wall maybe falling down, have I told them why that wall is falling down? Or they're not just coming to say, "Oh I went to this place and it was just a pile of stones." But a pile of stones might have been Hadrian's Wall, or it could have been part of the fort or it could have been a garden wall at Cherryburn that had fallen down. How would the visitor feel differently about those heritage environments, see what I mean?

From an employee point of view, heritage to me could almost mean the legacy that's been left there. So, Bewick's legacy is at that small little birth-place which is a tiny little stone shack, but I suppose it's the quality of the work that was left behind. It's a really interesting question that, actually when you start thinking about it.

I1: I mean –

R: We could talk for hours about that.

I1: There is no ... it's just really interesting to see how people –

R: It's really interesting because I look a lot at Trip Advisor, comment cards, conversations that staff have with visitors about what they want and one of my favourite, I always use it as an example, is the Farne Islands off the Northumberland coast, so it is a great big, very smelly rock in the North Sea that is covered by birds and bird poop and the stench ... have you been?

I2: No.

R: Okay. It's a fantastic experience and you have to go and buy a ticket to get on a boat and it's about 40-45 minutes and the North Sea can be pretty unforgiving and you see people all shades of green on those boats getting to that island and there's a group of National Trust Rangers who meet you and help you get off the boat and there are no coffee facilities, there is a toilet, if it works because you can't just flush it into the North Sea.

The rangers have to take fresh water from the boat to this island and they get thousands and thousands and thousands of visitors who get blown away by being surrounded by all of these puffins, beautiful, cute little puffins and terns that are trying to attack you. Now that is an emotional experience that you are going to get in very many other places.

Do people complain that they can't get a cup of coffee? No. Do they complain that there's no toilets for them to use? No, they don't. They come to Hadrian's Wall and they walk up the hill and there's a portaloo, well look at Trip Advisor comments, no loos, no fantastic facilities.

So, it's people's interpretation of what heritage is, what experience they're going to have when they get there and actually what they'll put up with and what they won't put up with in certain circumstances. So, I always joke, when I'm talking to my regional consultants, when I am going to be able to get a decent cup of tea on the Farne Islands or when are you going to have a decent loo over there? But the experience is different and it's what people are prepared to put up with and it just goes to show, you can't please all of the people, all of the time.

You look at the comments and I weigh them up all of the time, some people will say, there's no toilets, it's great that they don't have toilets with Dyson hand dryers that noise makes spoils it. I very often pull these out and talk to my supervisors and say, "Guys, which way do we go?"

I1: That's really interesting. I think that's it.

I2: Shall we officially end?

I1: Yes, has that been recording?

R: Thank you.

I1: No, it's very interesting.

[End of Recording]