



WILLOW COURT VISITOR SERVICES
BARRACKS AND BRONTE PRECINCT
October 2006

Interpretation Plan

Art and life behind the wall



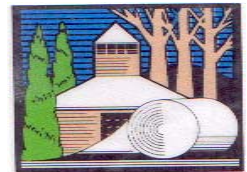
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WILLOW COURT VISITOR SERVICES PROJECT
Interpretation Plan

prepared for



Derwent Valley Council

and



by
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1.

Introduction

INTEGRATED PLANNING

The objective for the project is:

To develop a sustainable and vibrant tourism experience in the Barracks and Bronte precinct at the Willow Court site.

In articulating the vision, the Derwent Valley Council, the valley's economic renewal group, Valley Vision, and the project consultancy team acknowledged the necessity for thematic interpretation planning to lead the project development, given the potential of thematic interpretation to deliver a compelling visitor experience at the site.

As a result, interpretation planning processes have been integrated with site and building planning, development of the marketing and business feasibility case, and operational planning.

The nature of the visitor experience, as captured in the package of interpretive themes, has provided the direction for all aspects of the project and recognises that meeting the needs and aspirations of visitors is central to successful outcomes.

It is acknowledged that interpretation planning is organic in nature, particularly for a new tourism attraction. As additional information comes to light, new opportunities are identified, customer surveys are conducted, and new interpretation techniques and media are developed, it will be necessary to adjust interpretive concepts and implementation.

However, this document provides a 'road map' and rationale that will underpin the continual evolving of interpretive solutions for an ever-improving visitor experience.

SCOPE FOR INTERPRETIVE PLANNING

While it is vital that interpretation designed to provide an engaging experience is authentic, accurate, the project has focused on the needs of the tourism market and the competitive edge of the site as a tourism attraction. This has been informed by the views of the local community, expressed through workshops, consultation sessions, feedback sheets and email.

In addition, the Derwent Valley Council and Valley Vision has anecdotal evidence that a market exists for education and learning groups, including schools, TAFE welfare students, university social work and medical students, and relevant professional organisations.

Core product developed for the first season of the attraction is focused on the visitor market. Further research will be undertaken and separate planning conducted to determine the extent of demand from the education/learning sector and to address specific needs.

This Interpretation Plan therefore acknowledges that the core tourism product will be the central element in the interpretive program offered to the education/learning sector. It identifies initial interpretive services specific to the sector but does not address dedicated requirements. These will emerge from future market research in relation to the sector.

The primary physical scope of the project is the Barracks and Bronte, although Derwent Valley Council and Valley Vision, although the option was provided for 'C' Ward, Therapy Building and Allonah to be considered if relevant to interpretive and business outcomes.

BACKGROUND

This project has aimed to develop a tourism attraction on one section of a large and complex heritage site, owned by the Derwent Valley Council since mid-2002. As part of a vision to develop "a vibrant, sustainable village community where people live, learn, work and visit", the council has sold many of the buildings for commercial and community use. It is committed to its mission to:

Through respectful adaptive reuse and unique partnerships, recycle all buildings, structures and open spaces by 2008.

The Willow Court former hospital complex, incorporating the Barracks and Bronte precinct, is a site with a potent mix of architecture, stories, myth, memory, history, social attitudes, and multiple layers of meaning.

The Barracks was built in 1830 as a convict invalid hospital but soon became a mental asylum. Over the years, the site was developed and expanded and operated as a psychiatric institution, with a series of name changes, until it closed at the end of the 1990s as the Royal Derwent Hospital.

While the hospital complex has closed, it continues to live on in the minds of individuals, families and former staff; and in the New Norfolk community.

Some of the Willow Court history, from its beginnings, is fraught and challenging. While a view has been expressed by sectors of the local community that the visitor experience should focus only on positive aspects of the site story, the historical evidence cannot be sanitised. To do so would not only make the content one dimensional but would undermine the authenticity that research shows visitors seek in their Tasmanian holiday experience. This authenticity is part of what distinguishes Tasmania in the tourism marketplace.

2.

Desired visitor experience

As part of marketing planning for the Willow Court Visitor Services project for the Barracks and Bronte Precinct, in-market product concept testing was conducted in July 2006 by Enterprise Marketing and Research Services.

Two concepts – developed earlier during the experience definition phase – were tested with focus groups in Melbourne and Hobart. They were:

- “Life Behind the Wall”, including stories of patients and staff and the relationship between the institution and the town of New Norfolk; the way that society’s treatment of mental illness has changed; and the connections to the evolution of styles for buildings and architecture; and
- “Art Behind the Wall”, leading with art produced by those with mental illness, displayed in the setting of the former Willow Court psychiatric hospital and supported by engagement with the stories of those who lived and worked in the institution, potentially through to contemporary experiences of mental illness.

While the primary purpose of the product concept testing was to help gauge the core experience with the strongest appeal for visitors, research results provided insight into the desired visitor experience from an interpretive perspective.

Relevant findings included:

- strongest preferences for “Art Behind the Wall”, even though some examples of art provided on storyboards was found to be confronting;
- overall, a positive response to a visitor attraction based on mental illness – “In each group it was said that curiosity would be aroused and that there was now more interest in the subject of mental illness”¹;
- greatest support for self-guided tours;
- a strong interest in stories about patients and staff through the years, providing a “living picture” about daily life at Willow Court;
- the need to clearly delineate the Barracks, Bronte Building and ‘C’ Ward as a site distinct from other areas of Willow Court that are not part of the visitor experience;
- a perception that it would take about 90 minutes to see an experience involving art and interpretation of life behind the wall.

Taking into account the research results and the tourism industry’s understanding of the contemporary needs of visitors, it is evident that the Willow Court visitor experience will need to:

- be engaging and personal;
- stimulate curiosity;
- offer discovery and enrichment through a place, people and circumstances that are different to daily life;

¹ *Valley Vision Willow Court Concept Testing, Qualitative Research Report*, Enterprise Marketing and Research Services, July 2006.

- at the same time provide a level of enjoyment and not be overwhelmingly confronting; and
- offer opportunities for social interaction that touring couples, in particular, seek.

3.

The approach

THE PURPOSE OF INTERPRETATION

Interpretation aims to be “a means of communicating ideas and feelings which enrich people’s understanding and appreciation of their world and their role within it”².

Its intent is to reveal new perspectives in an enjoyable way and not merely to provide entertainment that may be quickly forgotten. In a tourism context, it must also meet the needs of visitors as part of a wider holiday experience.

Interpretation is at the heart of the visitor experience.

METHODOLOGY

This planning process uses Thematic Interpretation, which is world best practice, in taking a strategic approach designed to produce defined outcomes.³

It is based on 20 years of communications psychology research and recognises that the most powerful impressions people take away with them from a site are the conclusions or meanings they have drawn from the facts presented. This requires a focus on the intangible. Visitors take away a range of things, from memories, to thoughts, emotions, understandings and new perspectives.

Thematic interpretation aims to make it easy for visitors to form strong meanings and connections by interpreting through the purposeful delivery of themes – central or take-home messages. It delivers themes to identified audiences via selected communication media, such as brochures, signs or a film, in a strategic manner.

A fundamental premise of Thematic Interpretation is that once visitors attach meanings to the place being interpreted, then the place matters to them. This leads to high levels of visitor satisfaction, word-of-mouth promotion and repeat visitation. It can also result in a higher visitor spend on-site, such as the purchase of merchandise that reminds them of the experience.

While the provision of information is important, the information itself is tailored to assist visitors in understanding the local place in a way that informs their own lives.

The planning methodology has involved:

- a review of the *Willow Court Conservation Management Plan Stage C The Barracks and Bronte, October 2005* and a range of recorded histories that include those written by former staff as well as transcripts of oral histories;
- a review of the project market analysis and benchmarking and product concept testing, leading to an audience analysis and assessment of visitor interests and requirements;
- consideration of the interpretive potential of the site;

² Interpretation Australia Association, 2004

³ Thematic Interpretation and its methodology was developed by the Director of the University of Idaho’s Centre for International Training and Outreach, Prof. Sam Ham, who introduced it to Tasmania as part of a Tourism Tasmania-auspiced training program from 2001.

- determination of interpretive goals and goal outcomes;
- a community workshop to assist in scoping the range of potential topics and to draw on local knowledge in developing themes;
- matching of themes against built fabric and the physicality of the site and against the market segment needs;
- development of interpretive principles, in conjunction with the project's planning team, including a heritage architect, principal and landscape architects, and marketing consultant;
- desktop research, including a web search, to consider other heritage-based tourism attractions in Australia and overseas, and a research trip to Sydney to gain insight into comparative attractions and sites;
- a review of community feedback from an on-site walk and consultation, as well as feedback sheets distributed at workshops and consultations and by the Valley Vision office, and emails;
- development of the interpretation strategy, including mapping of the interpretive journey for the site, identification of the most suitable media for delivering themes to target audiences, and issues to be addressed;
- an implementation plan and budget; and
- a basis for evaluation.

4. Experience definition

THE BRAND

A tourism brand establishes a clear focus for marketing, communication, and development of the tourism experience, ensuring that the set of associations created in relation to a site are clear and consistent with its competitive edge.

The brand for the Willow Court tourism attraction therefore sets the general direction for the interpretive experience. It is a powerful brand that centres on new ways of understanding ourselves – through exploring perspectives on the human mind, the way we define and respond to difference and to what is considered ‘not normal’. This is delivered through art that reveals the fine line between those with mental illness and those considered ‘normal’; the stories and living memory associated with Willow Court; its complex layering; its buildings and surrounds.

Authenticity and respect are key values.

While the Brand promise is about opening to these new perspectives, insights and understandings, some visitors will see it simply as an opportunity to satisfy their curiosity about Willow Court and what happened ‘behind the wall’ in a psychiatric institution.

Full details of the site’s Brand and application guidelines are in the Willow Court Marketing Plan.

CREATING THE BROAD EXPERIENCE

Definition of the broad experience, through adoption of an experience model, has also established parameters for interpretation development. The interpretation layer of the site’s experience model (see Appendix 1 for full details) identifies that, to deliver a contemporary visitor experience to meet market needs, interpretation will need to:

- be engaging, personal, immersive, immediate;
- generate enjoyment through opportunity for discovery and the chance to be captivated in a distinctly different environment;
- enable social opportunities/other expression;
- be themed to provide access to insight and connections;
- give opportunities to ‘digest’ or reflect;
- provide layers so that visitors can self-select the depth to which they explore; and
- enable visitors to talk to locals.

The following visitor experience statement has been developed to help guide interpretive planning and product development:

The Willow Court visitor experience is an imaginative and personal exploration of life behind the wall of a psychiatric institution – and the wall we build between what is normal and what is not.

At one level, the experience satisfies a sense of curiosity about an aspect of society that is often hidden from view. On another level, it represents a range of contradictions relating to the human condition: from beauty to ugliness, fear to familiarity, dreams to despair.

The visitor experience includes art as a doorway into what it is like to be different; peaceful grounds and gardens; opportunities for reflection and for expressing a response to the site and its interpretation; and the chance to socialise and relax in an on-site café and retail area.

It is at times uplifting and at others, provocative; with visitors choosing for themselves the means and the level at which they engage with it. While the range of layers includes the site's place in history as one of the first mental asylums in Australia and the way it represents changing views and treatment of mental illness, this experience is essentially an intimate experience of people – those who lived at Willow Court as patients, the staff who worked there, families and community, and the views, response and stories of those who visit, some of whom will have personal connections to the site.

5. Inventory of interpretive potential

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In scoping the interpretive potential of the site, considerations have included:

- the site's layout and the built environment, including the fabric of buildings and observable features;
- its significance, as outlined in conservation plans;
- an audit of resources and artefacts prepared at the time of the closure of the psychiatric hospital;
- community and stakeholder input at an interpretation workshop;
- the symbolism and meanings associated with buildings, spaces, and the site history; and
- contemporary attitudes and developments in relation to mental illness, such as art therapy.

STRENGTHS OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Identification of buildings for delivery of interpretation – and product development – has been made on the basis of site inspections, requirements for strong delivery of interpretive themes, and the understanding of the visitors' desired experience and length of stay on-site.

It has therefore been determined that the significant built features for inclusion in interpretive planning, other than the requisite Barracks and Bronte, are:

- 'C' Ward and its two adjoining walled exercise yards, due to the capacity of these areas to deliver the sense of daily life for patients and staff and physical restrictions; and
- Therapy Building – which features a stage, projection room and meeting room used for dances and patient entertainment, and small side rooms where services such as hairdressing were provided for patients – and the adjacent walled exercise yard and gardens used by female patients in Allonah. The building and small exercise yard, including garden areas, offers insight into the contradiction between what is normal human behaviour and what is not.

It is acknowledged that, due to budgetary factors, it may not be possible to incorporate Therapy Building into the Willow Court visitor experience.

OBSERVABLE FEATURES ON-SITE

In its undeveloped state, key observable features on the site in relation to the project-specific Barracks and Bronte buildings include:

- the high, solid wall on two sides of the project site;
- the original main gateway and iron/brick fence;
- the axial approach to the Barracks and the building's dominating presence, enclosing an access yard on three sides;

- original markings on building fabric, such as windows with timber areas chewed by patients and pencil records of electricity meter readings; and signage such as that regarding conditions of visitation, on the exterior wall of 'C' block;
- windows with small panes to prevent escape;
- stark, high-walled 'airing' courtyards to contain patients while allowing them to exercise;
- open-plan communal bathrooms indicating the absence of patient privacy, and gathering spaces;
- toilet doors with the bottom section exposed for patient surveillance/safety;
- rows of cell-like patient rooms in Ward 'C';
- nurse stations and tea rooms in 'C' Ward and Bronte buildings;
- kitchen areas;
- lockable doors in entrance sequences to 'C' Ward and Bronte;
- old tree, lawn area and remains of patient paddling pool adjacent to Allonah;
- the main entrance to the Barracks;
- rooms and verandahs at the Barracks;
- Bronte patient areas and verandahs;
- grassed outdoor area at Bronte; and
- road access to 'C' Ward.



Small exercise yard

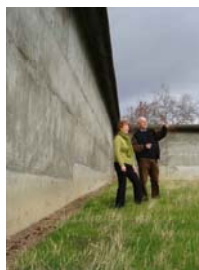
Perimeter fence



Large exercise yard



Front entrance, 'C' Ward



Wall, large yard



Windows, 'C' Ward

In addition, consideration was also given to the interpretive potential of Therapy Building and the adjacent enclosed courtyard, once used by female patients considered to be aggressive or violent and segregated in the Allonah building. The key observable features in this area include:

- the main Therapy Building room, with a stage for live bands, performance and concerts, a large timber floor for dances and entertainment, and an upper level projection room for film shows;
- small rooms to one side in the Therapy Building, used by visiting hairdressers, dentists and others providing services to patients;
- overgrown garden areas in the Allonah courtyard, with flowering plants such as roses that were planted and tended by patients; and
- separate access areas to the Therapy Building for male and female patients.

STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the *Conservation and Management Plan Stage C The Barracks and Bronte October 2005*, Statements of Significance for the Barracks and Bronte buildings and adjacent spaces acknowledge that:

- the whole New Norfolk complex demonstrates the evolution of philosophies for treating the insane throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and is the only place in Australia where such a full breadth of the developments in mental hospital design and management are preserved;
- the Barracks building is historically significant as the first custom-built institution for mental health in the Australian colonies;
- the Barracks building is an outstanding example of colonial Georgian design and is believed to be the earliest intact Australian example of a convict barrack in the Palladian courtyard design; and
- the Bronte building (B Ward) is a good representative example of changing views on psychiatric care, featuring access to light and ventilation, a pleasant outlook, and access to outdoor space, as well as demonstrating the growing emphasis on patient surveillance.

ARTEFACTS

While some site artefacts and original fittings, furniture and equipment have been retained, a great deal of material has been removed from the site and recycled and/or souvenired.

An immediate sub-project is required to source and assess original site material for its heritage significance and its relevance to interpretation, as part of the visitor experience.

INTERPRETATION WORKSHOP

Participants at the community theme development workshop identified a range of potential topics for interpretation under the following categories:

People e.g. stories of patients and those who worked on-site; daily life; attitudes; continuing connections.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| <i>History</i> | e.g. of the buildings; the development of psychiatric care; convict origins; living history. |
| <i>Place</i> | e.g. relationship with community; town within a town; location; features of the site. |
| <i>Social context</i> | e.g. defining normal and not-normal; emerging understanding about mental illness; barometer of health of society and its values; a reflection of Australian culture. |
| <i>Mind/spirit</i> | e.g. role in contemporary exploration self-exploration; sense of presence of the building; emotions; repercussions of closure. |

6. Audiences

VISITOR PROFILE

The project Market Analysis provides insight into who visitors to Willow Court are likely to be. It indicates that the key market segments for the attraction are:

- two interstate touring segments – Big Tour (Affluent Older and Lower Older) and Short Tour (mostly older or younger couples);
- day visitors out of Hobart, including the Short Break segment (Affluent Families, Lower Older and some younger demographics in the mix) and cruise ship passengers (50+, highly educated, majority of international origin, seeking distinctive experiences);
- Visiting Friends and Relatives.

Across the touring segments, the mix is predominantly 45+ and travelling as couples; and most are discerning travellers seeking satisfying experiences. On the whole, they are happy to be challenged and to gain insight but within the limits of their wider holiday needs for relaxation and a degree of 'cocooning'.

The marketing approach for the site will also include targeting the coach sector.

The intrastate market is generally not a consumer of tourism attractions but is more strongly triggered by opportunities for social activities (shopping, dining etc) or by events. This Tasmanian market typically responds to a new, significant tourism attraction in the first season of operation (the 'novelty value') but this falls away quickly unless the product is significantly refreshed.

However, Tasmanians have a key role in terms of influencing the VFR segment (Visiting Friends and Relatives) and what they see and do while staying with them.

Market research and benchmarking indicate that the duration of on-site stay for visitors in terms of a regional tourism attraction is 1-2 hours, including time spent in a café.

EDUCATIONAL/LEARNING

As indicated in the introduction to this plan, the attraction aligns with learning and awareness needs for schools, colleges, TAFE, and tertiary students in a range of disciplines, particularly the health and wellbeing sector. Further research will be necessary to fully gauge the extent of the market and its specific requirements and to determine, over time, what will need to be added to interpretation services designed for the tourism market.

INTERPRETIVE AUDIENCES

While market segments are a way to understand how to reach people to entice them to visit in the first place, their focus is on attracting visitors.

Once they are on-site, the segments are no longer useful in defining them for interpretive purposes. Instead, with the communication challenge now switching to enhancing or delivering the

experience, interpretive audiences are defined on the basis of differences in the way they use the site.

Therefore, the interpretive audiences for the Willow Court visitor attraction are:

1. Visitors (domestic and international);
2. Intrastate visitors and locals
3. Education/learning

7.

Goals and outcomes

Willow Court as a tourism attraction seeks to achieve four goals, as indicated in the table below.

The stated goal outcomes provide the measures against which the success or otherwise of the interpretive program can be determined for monitoring or evaluation purposes.

Table 1 Goal outcomes

| GOALS are to: | Goal Outcomes: |
|---|---|
| Enhance the visitor experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• visitors will report that overall the interpretation contributed to their experience in a positive way• visitors will report that they found interpretation relevant and meaningful• visitors will indicate that they have been provoked to think more about the subject matter interpreted• visitors will report a desire to recommend the experience to others |
| Stimulate visitor spend | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• visitors buy interpretive and other merchandise that reminds them of the experience• visitors will buy optional interpretive produces, if available |
| Protect the site's conservation values | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• visitors will not interfere with artefacts, heritage features or fittings• visitors will remain in designated areas• teachers monitor student groups at all times |
| Generate public support for the site and its services | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• visitors report a positive response to the site and the way it is managed• teachers, students and those visiting the site for professional development or learning report having a positive response to the site• local residents and stakeholders say positive things about the site or report having a positive image of it |

8.

Themes and implications

As the first step in developing an Interpretation Plan for Willow Court using Thematic Interpretation, an on-site workshop was conducted on 28 April 2006 to draw on local knowledge in developing interpretive themes.

The representative workshop was attended by members of the local community, including the New Norfolk High School principal and a group of students; Derwent Valley Councillors; Valley Vision; tourism industry; site stakeholders; and project consultants, including a heritage architect.

The process of developing themes has also involved consideration of responses from an open community consultation session and the review of:

- the *Willow Court Conservation Management Plan: Stage C The Barracks and Bronte 2005*, in particular the site history and Statements of Significance;
- the *Willow Court Barracks Building, Royal Derwent Hospital, New Norfolk Conservation Plan 1992*, particularly the Statement of Cultural Significance;
- local histories, including *Troubled Asylum*, written by Ralph W. Gowlland and published in 1981; *History of Lachlan Park Hospital*, by Dr G.M. Crabbe and published in 1966; and *Royal Derwent Hospital Past to Present 1936-1978*, by psychiatric nurse, Lawrence Edward Cullen.

The following proposed themes will deliver the Brand promise and are consistent with the understanding of what visitors desire and the experience that will appeal to market segments.

It is important to note that the expression of these themes is intended to capture their intent. The words used here are not necessarily the way that these themes would be communicated to visitors, as the manner in which interpretation is delivered, including the constructs and language, is determined by what is most effective for the audience and by the strengths and constraints of the medium.

Included with the themes are a set of underpinning ideas that emerged in preliminary interpretation planning. They have been retained here to indicate the range of layering and the creative potential available to build each key message or theme.

Themes are:

PRIMARY THEMES

- P1 At Willow Court you can go behind the wall of an institution and, through art and story, meet the human face of the development of psychiatric care in Australia.**

Examples of underpinning ideas:

- this is not just about their story – staff, patients and the community – but about the way it puts you and your response (mind, heart and spirit) into the picture;
- Willow Court has a strong sense of place/is evocative, confronting and provokes introspection/reflection.

- It offers a chance to journey through the breadth of humanity/human experience – invoking a wide range of emotions – leaving “your soul open for exploration” (a journey of self-discovery);
- Willow Court touches the inner spirit inside of us and provokes a deep response in all who come here;
- It reminds us about the fragility of the human mind and our vulnerability (needing care for ourselves and loved ones, how we treat others, our deeper values etc);
- what was once a restricted place is now open to reveal its secrets and stories – “opening the white gates of Willow Court”;
- Changes in the approach to and the actual diagnoses for mental illnesses and the way this informs and reflects social attitudes of the day;
- This was a town within a town;
- A personal site: people, possessions, associations, relationships;
- Happy things: entertainment, activities, hobbies;
- Gendered site and spaces; attitudes to sexuality; daily routines;
- History of the buildings, architecture and uses of buildings and spaces in relation to mental health and societal attitudes;
- Diversity of reasons why people were sent to Willow Court (not just mental stability or behavioural but social, political etc);
- This place is complex. It means many different things to different people, not just through its tangible presence, physical remains and history but through what it represents;
- It was a barometer of the health of society and its values.

P2 Willow Court challenges our understanding of what is normal and is a powerful reminder of the way that, regardless of where we live, we continue to grapple with the way we treat difference in society.

Examples of underpinning ideas:

- Changing definitions, diagnoses and understandings of abnormal behaviour and what makes people mentally ill or different;
- The shift tells us something about the way we define and reach agreement as a society on what is normal;
- People who were “not normal” were sent here – and what is “not normal” has dramatically changed over time. (What is not normal?)
- This was home for people that didn’t fit anywhere else (embarrassment, solution to a family or community problem, dumping site ...);
- We have a long way to go. This is a site that causes us to question what’s normal, including our own values. We are still looking for answers and communities still struggle with this.

- legislation changed the lives of people living at Willow Court.
- changes in diagnosis of mentally ill and intellectually impaired improved as doctors became to understand illnesses could be grouped and treated and as attitudes towards what constituted a mental illness began to change.
- the progressive introduction of medication over a period of time enabled people to live a more normal lifestyle e.g. 'improved' behaviour/more 'acceptable' behaviour, reduced self harm, minimised hysteria;
- The ongoing struggle of the Willow Court facility, from its early years to its closure, to obtain resources, support from Governments etc;
- Broader struggle for recognition of legitimacy of mental illness care and support;
- Relationship between Willow Court patients and New Norfolk community (e.g. community groups taking patients to church; patients going to shops etc).

P3 This is not distant history but a reality that is immediate and lives on for former patients, staff, their families, and the local community.

Examples of underpinning ideas:

- the social history of the site through family connections who have had members working at the site up to four generations and conversely families who have had generational admissions as patients;
- The 2001 closure and its impact/repercussions on staff, patients and the community e.g. Staff felt targeted and blamed for the closure of the facility;
- Continuing connection of former patients to the site/ impact of institutionalisation e.g. some still visit the site;
- The existence of the psychiatric institution at New Norfolk has forged a cultural identity (e.g. stigma such as the football team from "loony town"; New Norfolk's "symbiotic relationship" with Willow Court as a source of significant employment etc);
- There is still a living community with strong connections to the site;
- The impact and associations is wider than New Norfolk and Tasmania – interstate people have links to the site through relatives who were patients here etc.
- What was it like to live and work at Willow Court and how did the community/Tasmanians respond to those who did live and work here;
- Where are the people now?

SECONDARY THEME

S1 Many patients from many walks of life were treated at Willow Court, showing that mental illness knows no boundaries.

Examples of underpinning ideas:

- It could be you or your loved one
- Topical and contemporary perspectives: e.g. current views on mental health, causes etc.

9. Interpretation Principles and Issues

In developing the interpretive program and facilities for the Willow Court site, a range of broad and specific principles have been identified to determine the style, tone and, to some extent, the substance of interpretation. These are:

PRINCIPLES

Sparseness

One of the key observable features of the site, in relation to identified interpretive themes, is the sparseness and lack of decoration of buildings, the simplicity of open areas, and the impact of enclosed outdoor spaces with no furniture or softening influences.

A critical interpretive principle is that no interpretation or site works should impair this quality.

Atmospheric site

Allied to the above, the site – through its built environment, the sense of enclosure, and the general absence of ‘civilising’ influences in landscaping and design – has an atmospheric presence. This includes remnant graffiti and observable features such as chewed timber frames.

It has been determined that this should be preserved and planning in relation to animation of the site should take this into consideration. For example, the gathering area or venue for school groups, professional organisations and adult learners, has been located in Bronte to minimise the distraction of noise not in keeping with the quieter, more reflective aspect of the site and the visitor experience.

Implicit interpretation delivery

Due to the potentially powerful nature of the site, interpretation focuses on implicit delivery of messages as well as the explicit delivery that occurs through tours, film, computer touch screens etc.

As part of implicit interpretation delivery, the project team has considered such things as physical orientation to the built environment, use of internal lighting, opportunities for silence, and techniques to highlight elements of the building fabric or features.

Heritage vs contemporary features

Interpretive works, while respecting the heritage fabric, will be clearly identifiable as contemporary elements and will enable visitors to distinguish between original and introduced materials

Signage

Given the nature of interpretive themes and the site values, a principle has been adopted to minimise the intrusion of interpretive signage by, where possible, integrating text into fittings, flooring materials etc.

Consistent signage styles will be adopted across the site, using a signage policy that establishes an hierarchy of communication devices consistent with the Brand and its guidelines for application.

Use of artefacts

While interpretation will use artefacts in delivering themes, it is intended that the placement of artefacts will occur to suggest ideas, meanings and emotions rather than attempting to historically re-create situations. In this way, artefacts will function as triggers to the imagination.

Original voice

Where possible, original voice will be used (quotes from patients, staff and others) to illuminate themes. This may also include poetry or prose.

ISSUES

Partnerships

Successful ongoing development of the interpretation program will require the development of a range of partnerships. Potential partners include the New Norfolk Historical Information Centre group, TAFE Tasmania, the University of Tasmania, the Education Department and schools, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Arts Tasmania, and the Cunningham Dax Collection in Melbourne.

Proposed Resource Centre

Provision has been made in project planning for a venue for a resource centre, for use by researchers, those seeking to explore family or other connections with the site, students and those with an interest in history.

This centre could be used and managed by the New Norfolk Historical Information Centre Committee and would provide a repository for Willow Court-related material.

Artist in residence program

The site, with its many layers of meaning and its rich heritage, could be a focus for an artist in residency program, with the output displayed in the Bronte gallery.

There are suitable buildings outside the tourism precinct for the establishment of a work area or base for artists, placing them near the tourism site without requiring duplication of a facility.

Research project and curatorial support

While some oral histories have been captured and a range of historical materials are available, a research project is required. The program is essential to underpin interpretation, producing primary material for use in interpretive materials, particularly stories that build and reinforce themes. Oral history in particular, and clarity in relation to permissions for use of anonymous or attributed material, is essential to the delivery of personal interpretation that enables visitors to relate at some level to those who lived and continue to live the Willow Court story.

At the same time, curatorial support is required to determine the range of artefacts available as an interpretive resource, their significance, their relevance to the interpretive themes,

conservation requirements, ongoing maintenance, and appropriate storage or disbursement of items unsuitable for interpretive purposes.

10.

Interpretation Delivery

THE INTERPRETIVE JOURNEY

1. Pre-visit

The aim of this stage is to set accurate expectations, and provide preliminary 'conditioning' to or preparation for the experience.

This stage will focus on marketing collateral and promotional programs, ensuring that marketing messages are consistent with the themes and play their part in a seamless visitor journey.

2. Arrival sequence

The aim of this stage is to provide initial physical orientation to the site; building a sense of entering a walled space and the way that moving from outside a wall to 'the inside' changes things; as well as ensuring that visitors feel welcome, reassured, and find a sense of consistency with pre-visit expectations.

This stage will focus on the wall, the physical context of the site, and orientation to the entry.

3. Entry/visitor services

This stage, from an interpretive point of view, is designed to heighten the sense of expectation on approach to the entry; and provide the first introduction to people on the site – friendly visitor information about ticketing and on-site services and facilities – as well as initial orientation to what they'll find.

This stage will focus on stepping inside the wall, a glimpse of the Barracks across a low, landscaped barrier on the approach, and visitor services in the Bronte building.

4. Inside the site

The aim of this stage is to deliver the power of the interpretive experience in a captivating and engaging manner. Visitors can move about the site in whatever order they choose without their choice of sequencing affecting the quality or accessibility of interpretive messages and understandings.

This stage will focus on the Barracks, 'C' Ward, exercise yards, and the Therapy Building.

Interpretation in the Barracks focuses on establishing the themes and the wider context. This will serve as orientation, for those who start their experience in the Barracks, or contextualising and reinforcement for those who choose to explore the Barracks later in the visit.

'C' Ward is intended to be an encounter with the personal – patients, personal possessions, feelings; and staff and their stories. In particular, the strength of the upper level for delivery of interpretation about patients has been recognised. Disabled access issues to the upper level has also required a focus on delivery of interpretation on the ground floor.

The Therapy building is the strongest site for delivering the theme in relation to what is normal/normal behaviour and what is not, through a focus on entertainment, socialising, and self-care (e.g. hairdressing, dental services).

This stage also acknowledges the need that visitors, including Tasmanians and locals, may have to express a response to their experience or to make a personal contribution to the ongoing story of the site.

Three opportunities will be provided for this – adding a ribbon to help create a ‘memory wall’ of colour and movement (ribbons can be tied to stainless steel wires); recording a response in writing in an experience book to be located in Bronte; or, for those with personal connections to the site, there will be an opportunity to record an oral history or verbal response to the visit.

5. Transition to departure

This stage aims to provide the opportunity to express a personal response to the experience, if desired; to socialise with others and discuss the experience; and to take whatever time, if any, is required before shifting attention to logistics, ‘where to next’ and other departure issues.

The focus of this stage is the Bronte building, where interpretation will also provide the connection to the present day and contemporary mental health views, through art therapy examples and exhibitions.

The main interpretive delivery mechanism in the Bronte building will be art by people with mental illnesses, artistic expression relevant to the Willow Court site or artistic outcomes generated through an associated artist-in-residency program.

MEDIA MATRICES

Media matrix for what is likely to be the core or primary interpretive audience:

AUDIENCE: Domestic/international Visitors)

| MEDIA | P1 | P2 | P3 | S1 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| PRE-VISIT | | | | |
| Visitor information providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TVIS centres, Tourism Tasmania Customer Service Centre – staff bulletin/briefings | X | X | X | |
| Ongoing familiarisation program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional tourism operators • Travel trade • Tourism Tasmania | X | X | X | X |
| Advertising | X | X | | |
| Editorial: Treasure Island & Entrée | X | X | | |
| Media Kit: Visiting travel journalists/Tourism Tasmania VJP | X | X | X | X |
| Websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated site • Discovertasmania | X X | X X | X | X |
| Marketing collateral | X | X | X | |
| Regional Touring Guide | X | X | X | x |
| Tasmania Holiday Planner | X | X | x | X |
| Referral brochures & publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g. Smartcard, RACT publications | X | X | | |
| Tasmanian daily media | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | |
| ARRIVAL | | | | |
| Roadside signage | | | | |
| Orientation signage ⁴ (boundary) | X | X | X | |
| Car park signs | X | | | |
| Main entry directional sign | X | | | |
| Treatment of wall for emphasis | X | | | |
| Open viewline from gateway to Barracks | X | | | |

⁴ Hierarchy of signage

| ENTRY/VISITOR SERVICES | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Exterior sign/identity for Bronte | | X | | | |
| Orientation panel/map | | X | | X | |
| Visitor reception area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dressing of walls etc • use of space consistent with the principle of spare-ness | | X | | | |
| Self-guided brochure (inc. scale of site in relation to entire W Crt complex/map | | X | X | X | X |
| Retail area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dressing • commercial interpretive product e.g. booklet with more detailed info | | X | X | | |
| | | X | X | X | X |
| ON-SITE | | | | | |
| Entry from Bronte delivers visitors on approach axis to Barracks courtyard & Barracks | | X | | | |
| Guided tours | | X | X | X | X |
| Volunteer guides for roves ⁵ (locals with personal stories) | | X | X | X | X |
| Low-key seating to promote reflection, with opportunity (depending on design) to incorporate quotes, poetry or prose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barracks – main interpretation room & verandah • Along main thoroughfare between Barracks/'C' Ward • 'C' Ward – main exercise yard & building downstairs (wheelchair accessible) | | X | | | |
| Gardens/lawn areas – minimal landscaping treatment to retain feel for original uses | | X | | | |
| Exercise yards to remain empty – opportunity for private walking/reflection; strong sense of high walls | | X | X | | |
| Barracks | Gallery of art produced by those with mental illness | X | X | | X |
| | Oral history film (DVD loop) in central room near main entrance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduces themes, establishes the concept of Willow Court as a 'town within a town' etc; • include computer animation showing scale and development of the site in relation to changing attitudes to mental health (original plans available); • permissions/availability of two existing films? | X | X | X | X |
| | Wall-size area of newspaper cuttings of the day to highlight opposing views of the institution | X | | X | |

⁵ Office provided for volunteer base

| | | | | | |
|----------|--|---|---|---|---|
| | Photo album – stylised with large photos | X | X | X | |
| | Programmed or one-off live performances (day or evening): Barracks courtyard e.g. relevant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> theatre music | X | X | X | X |
| | | | | | |
| 'C' Ward | Retain unimpeded view through adjacent metal gates into exercise yard (gates locked) en route to entrance | X | X | | |
| | Retain sign outside original visitor's entrance | | | | |
| | Upstairs – series of 'random' patient rooms set up with items in situ (not behind glass or 'staged'), focusing on personal objects, the window and the door, chewed timber etc: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rooms are not sequential but appear in a series of locked doors, with at least three that can be opened or 'discovered'; items/interpretive text & images suggest things about the occupant(s); their personalities, relationships with other patients, staff & the local community | | | | |
| | Stereoscope ⁶ installation – sense of looking through a peephole in one door to see who is inside | X | | | |
| | Downstairs – Soundscape activated by movement sensors as visitors walk through ground floor – snippets of sounds, voices, crying, muttering, eating in dining area etc based on historical evidence and interspersed with silence | | | | |
| | Downstairs – ground floor nurses station/tea room set up to give insight into the attitudes, responsibilities, personalities of nurses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> include newspaper cuttings – noticeboard effect⁷ | | | | |
| | Downstairs – touch screen/computer x 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with range of stories about people who lived and worked here over time; connections to community and community identity (builds on limited interview histories on introductory DVD); differences between mental health care then and now. | | | | |
| | Downstairs– display focused on "Where are the people now?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> what happened to people who were here in the early days (e.g. many returned to families & communities; others died here); what happened to the people who were here when the Royal Derwent | | | | |

⁶ Similar to artist Martin Walch's installation – peepholes in door

⁷ Used particularly to indicate opposing views

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | <p>closed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> this is about reinforcing the sense that real people with real lives, hopes, aspirations etc have passed through the site. | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Bronte | Display of art therapy & psychiatrist interpretation (Eric Cunningham Dax Collection) | | X | | X |
| | <p>Gallery: relevant contemporary exhibitions e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> output from artist-in-residencies mental health issues | X | X | X | X |
| | 'Experience' book – for those who wish to express their response to the visit in writing, both tourism visitors and those with personal connections. ⁸ | | | X | |
| | | | | | |
| Therapy Building | Soundscape, continual loop – sounds of dances, entertainment, voices, stage in use etc | | X | | |
| | Occupational therapy/craft items on display | X | X | | |
| | Side rooms along wall of main room – items in place suggesting 'normal' activities e.g. upright hair dryers, dental chair etc | | X | | |
| <p>Memory/remembrance wall as an opportunity to express respect/'download' response, which also becomes an interpretive 'reinforcer':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ribbon available to tie on 'wall' of stainless steel wires on edge of garden between Bronte and Allonah, visible from 'C' Ward/Therapy Building exit area; multiple colours of ribbon (colour/movement) sold in dispenser or retail area; encouragement for visitors to write a word on their ribbon to personalise it; small panel near remembrance wall: what it is; what to do. | | | X | X | X |

⁸ Contribution and/recording of stories & oral histories – see media matrix for Tasmanian audience

AUDIENCE: Tasmanian visitors/ locals

| MEDIA | P1 | P2 | P3 | S1 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| PRE-VISIT & ON-SITE – as for audience of Domestic/International Visitors, with the addition of: | | | | |
| Opportunity to record an oral history, share a story (verbal or in writing), contribute a photo etc as part of the evolving interpretation of the site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offshoot of potential University of Tasmania Living Memory project? • will require trained volunteers to record/gather stories and obtain permission for any use of material in the interpretive program (local history group?; • will require equipment resource; • will require maintenance of archive of stories (local history group?). | | | X | X |
| Open day for locals/tourism operators | X | X | X | X |

AUDIENCE Educational/learning

| MEDIA | P1 | P2 | P3 | S1 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| PRE-VISIT & ON-SITE – as for audience of ‘visitors’, as well as: | | | | |
| Educational officer (development of schools program & resources; liaison with schools) | X | X | X | X |
| Specialist tours (education officer) for adult learners/professional organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be developed on basis of understandings acquired from market research for this audience | X | X | X | X |
| Speaker’s/presenter’s program for adult learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAFE/Uni partnership etc. | | | | X |
| | | | | |

The Educational/learning audience is one with specialist information needs. Research to identify those needs is outside the scope of this current interpretive planning brief, which has identified the tourism market as the primary focus.

While the Educational/learning audience is an important one in relation to public education and professional development, in terms of the financial viability of the project it is considered a secondary market.

TRAINING OF GUIDES AND VISITOR SERVICES STAFF

Training of paid staff in visitor engagement and creating opportunities to make connections with visitors; and in interpretation for paid/volunteer guides.

The personal touch is paramount throughout the site and staff will need training to deliver a consistent, friendly and interactive interpretive and visitor service.

11. Evaluation

An interpretation evaluation program is essential to ensure that the interpretation program and services meets the needs of the site's audiences and to provide for ongoing improvement and refreshing of interpretation.

This will need to be developed within the context of the available resources, including site staffing levels and skills in relation to evaluation, and capacity to out-source.

The challenge with measuring success for an interpretive program is that it involves intrinsic values and meanings and therefore, quantitative measures of use and participation provide a limited picture on how well the interpretation is working.

As part of the Thematic Interpretation planning for the site, the identified Goals and Goal Outcomes (Section 6) are the foundation of the evaluation program for site interpretation.

The *Interpretation Evaluation Tool Kit*, developed by Prof. Sam Ham and Prof. Betty Weiler (Director of the Monash University Tourism Research Unit) for the CRC for Sustainable Tourism, provides an evaluation system and tools for face-to-face evaluation and its use should be considered as part of the whole-of-site interpretive program.

12. Implementation

Interpretation implementation will include, but is not limited to, the following:

Resource for development of accurate, authentic interpretive content

- a research project to identify content, particularly stories, and associated photos, original records, newspaper clippings, original quotes, poetry etc.

Development of consistent visual identity for interpretive materials

- development of a graphic design concept for interpretive materials, consistent with Brand and the graphic design concept for marketing collateral
- development of signage policy allied to the above, incorporating signage styles

Curatorial services – artworks and artefacts

- identification and assessment of artefacts
- development of curatorial plan and guidelines for managing and maintaining artefacts
- sourcing of appropriate artworks
- curatorial services for development of gallery or galleries

Guide training

- research and preparation of guide script outline and/or modules as the basis for tours;
- workshops with guides to develop thematic interpretation tours

Ongoing planning, coordination and evaluation

- start-up planning and coordination of interpretation implementation
- development of evaluation program for interpretive services

Development of interpretive products, as per media matrices

Potential interpretive products and indicative costs are:

| MEDIA | REQUIREMENTS | INDICATIVE COST |
|--|---|--|
| Gallery fit-out/ presentation of artworks | Gallery fit-out as required (climate control?); presentation of artwork, accompanying interpretation | ** To be determined in conjunction with potential partner(s) |
| Signage | Approx. 2 orientation panels + 8 interpretive panels/features: concept development, prepare artwork, engineers drawings, construction, installation etc | \$35,000 |
| Brochure production | Self-guided DL x 40,000 copies | \$8,500 |
| Introductory/ overview film | Equipment e.g. heavy duty projector/screen | \$10,000 |
| | Production of film: concept development, filming, editing etc. | \$15,000 |
| Interactive elements | Touch screens & stands etc x 2 with content | \$15,000- \$20,000 |
| Soundscape | 'C' Ward soundtrack | \$20,000 |
| | Associated hardware | \$10,000 |
| Memory 'wall' | Concept development, manufacturing and installation | \$6,000 |
| Guide preparation/ training | Familiarisation/ development of guide presentations/ thematic interpretation training/ opportunities for soft start-up (x 2 weeks total) | \$5,000 |
| Project management | | \$15,000 |
| | TOTAL | \$139,500- 144,500 |

*** Project manager currently (Nov. 2006) in negotiation with Cunningham Dax Collection managers in Melbourne, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and arts@work.*

Appendix 1 EXPERIENCE MODEL FOR WILLOW COURT SITE

Four critical layers must be considered in designing the visitor experience for the Willow Court site. Together they create the visitor experience and deliver the Brand promise for the attraction.

The experience model, based on the Tasmanian Experience Strategy framework, is:

| Experience layer | Key elements |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Interpretation (tone/style) | <p>Engaging, personal, immersive, immediate</p> <p>Enjoyment derived from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunity for discovery in a distinctly different environment; and • the chance to share through socialising/other expression. <p>Themed to provide access to insight and connections</p> <p>Animation of site consistent with interpretive intent</p> <p>Opportunities to 'digest'</p> <p>Layered so that visitors can self-select depth at which they explore</p> <p>Opportunities to talk to locals</p> <p>Explicit interpretation delivery vs implicit</p> |
| Service | <p>High proportion of local employees</p> <p>Friendly, down-to-earth, efficient service to site customers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of visitors' needs & interests; • local knowledge; and • visitor information/referrals to other places to visit. <p>Ticketing</p> <p>Well-designed retail area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality goods at range of price points; merchandise includes selections that support interpretive intent; • linkages to interpretation in relation to displays; and • positioned to optimise buying impulse linked to experience of interpretation (visitor flow important for revenue outcomes). <p>Café (low-key food and bev.; gathering space, chance to share and talk, comfort, added reason to visit/stay longer ...)</p> |
| Infrastructure | <p>Interpretive infrastructure as determined by themes/interp planning</p> <p>Arrival experience is crucial (conditioning to what lies ahead, signalling the start of the visitor journey etc)</p> <p>Uncluttered spaces and minimal visual distraction from buildings, spaces & site layout</p> |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| | <p>Seating (demographic)</p> <p>Level of comfort & cocooning (heating/cooling, toilets, shelter)</p> <p>Opportunity for activities (theatre, needs of school groups etc)</p> |
| Place/raw Asset (physical) | <p>Atmospheric</p> <p>Location</p> <p>Spaces/opportunities for socialising & sharing the experience</p> <p>Use of spaces/buildings linked to interpretation</p> |