



HAY CASTLE TRUST

Powys Arwain/Leader



This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

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Table of Contents

Introduction to Tour Guide Training at Hay Castle	2
Aims of the Project.....	2
Interpretation.....	2
Tours at Hay Castle	3
Hay Tours	3
Background to Hay Tours.....	3
Pilot Tour Guides	5
Tour Guide Training Consultation.....	6
Initial trials with Focus Group	7
Writing of Basic History of Hay Castle	7
Development of Volunteers	8
Future Plans	8
Legacy	8

Introduction to Tour Guide Training at Hay Castle

Aims of the Project

This element of the Leader/Arwain project at Hay Castle was designed to incorporate the goal of increasing digital skills with volunteers while also improving the offer to visitors to Hay Castle as well as offering learning about the history of the site and of the area in general. The goal was to create a group of dedicated tour guide volunteers and to work with them to develop methods of researching the history, training them as tour guides and planning how they would use iPads to add to their tours once the Castle opened to the public.

Interpretation

Interpretation is an important aspect of how visitors experience Hay Castle. It is seen as a process of making places accessible to visitors, providing insights and to stimulate, facilitate and extend people's understanding of place so that empathy towards conservation, heritage, culture and landscape is developed. Interpretation has been described as 'a process of communicating to people the significance of a place so that they can enjoy it more, understand its importance and develop a positive attitude to conservation. Interpretation is thus used to enhance the enjoyment of place, to convey symbolic meaning and to facilitate attitudinal or behavioural change. Tour Guides offer flexibility and responsiveness as an 'intuitive interpretation device'. The person-to-person aspect of the guide/visitor relationship allows social and visual cues to be picked up on, altering and adapting the 'bespoke' engagement in a way that no other method can.

While there are various definitions of a tour guide, an internationally accepted definition given by the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA) is that a tour guide is a person who: 'Guide groups or individual visitors from abroad or from the home country around the monuments, sites and museums of a city or region; to

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interpret in an inspiring and entertaining manner...the cultural and natural heritage and environment'. Tour guides are thus described as 'key front-line players in the tourism industry'.

Tours at Hay Castle

Hay Castle has always been the perfect site for offering guided tours and tours have been available throughout the development period since the Castle was purchased from Richard Booth in 2011. At first, they were available during the Hay Festival as a special offer and were led by experts in the fields of history, archaeology and architecture. These were only available at specific times of the year and were advertised through the Hay Festival brochure. As the plans progressed at Hay Castle it became evident that more frequent tours would be appreciated, both by locals and visitors. It was thus decided that a tour guide scheme should be explored, and guided tours be built into the interpretation plans for the building when properly open to the public.,



Tours were thus available through partnership with Hay Tours during the summer of 2016 and 2017. These proved incredibly popular, and it became evident that further organisation and structure would be needed in order to develop this offer for the future.

It is hoped that when the Castle finally opens to the public after the major restoration there will be daily tours available, run by volunteers.

Hay Tours

Background to Hay Tours

Our efforts to develop a Tour Guide pilot project dovetailed with the emergence of Hay Tours, an offshoot of Hay History Group which offers walking historical tours of the Hay area. Hay Tours was set up in 2014 as a community enterprise by members of Hay History Group. The stated aim of Hay Tours is 'to promote the cultural heritage of Hay-on-Wye, by offering friendly, informative guided tours of Hay and the immediate vicinity' (Hay Tours, 2014). Funding

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was initially received from a Welsh development fund to kick start the enterprise and provide materials such as uniforms, umbrellas and laminated photographs, with the requirement to develop a training model which could subsequently be rolled out in other towns across the county.



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Hay History Group worked together to research and develop the concepts for specific walks and to investigate the market for offering guided historical walking tours. It was decided that there would be a fee, but that the guides would operate as volunteers with expenses offered for travel and parking. The group was initially developed using funding from Glasu between 2013 and 2014. Hay Tours operates with volunteer tour guides who offer tours according to their specialist subjects and interests in Hay. Tours developed include the Bookshop Tour, Railway Tour, Armstrong Murder Tour and the Cheesemarket Heritage Tour. Hay Tours have a website and a core of 4-5 volunteers who deliver most of the guided tours.

Hay Tour guides do not deliver their tours to a strict script, instead preferring the individual character and preferences of each guide to determine the story that they deliver to their audience. A general background with important dates and names is provided and training is achieved by accompanying an experienced guide on a tour to observe. Written sheets are provided during training sessions (Appendix 3) but these refer more to general advice than any script. Experience found that new guides learnt the elements of the tour through listening and experience of attending the tours themselves and through using landmarks and laminated photographs as prompts

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Pilot Tour Guides

In discussion with Hay Tours, it was agreed that volunteers could have access to Hay Castle during the summer months and thus include the site in their general heritage tour. The Castle tours proved so popular that specific Castle tours were arranged and advertised on the Hay Tours website.

The tours were initially dependent on the knowledge and interests of the individual guides, and this proved popular with visitors who appreciated the individual aspects and stories that the guides shared. One of these tours is shown below.



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One tour guide was also keen to use costumes during his tours and experimented with different props that he would hide around the site and produce at the appropriate moment. Although these ideas were amusing and equally appreciated by many visitors it was noticed that they slowed the tour and required props not to be moved by cleaners or members of the public.

Particular attention would need to be paid to the use of visuals to support the tour. Hay Tours volunteers used laminated photographs and images, but these caused problems and could easily fall out of order and confuse the guide. The following photo shows one of the first tours run by volunteers Pater Ford & Dave Bennett.



Tour Guide Training Consultation

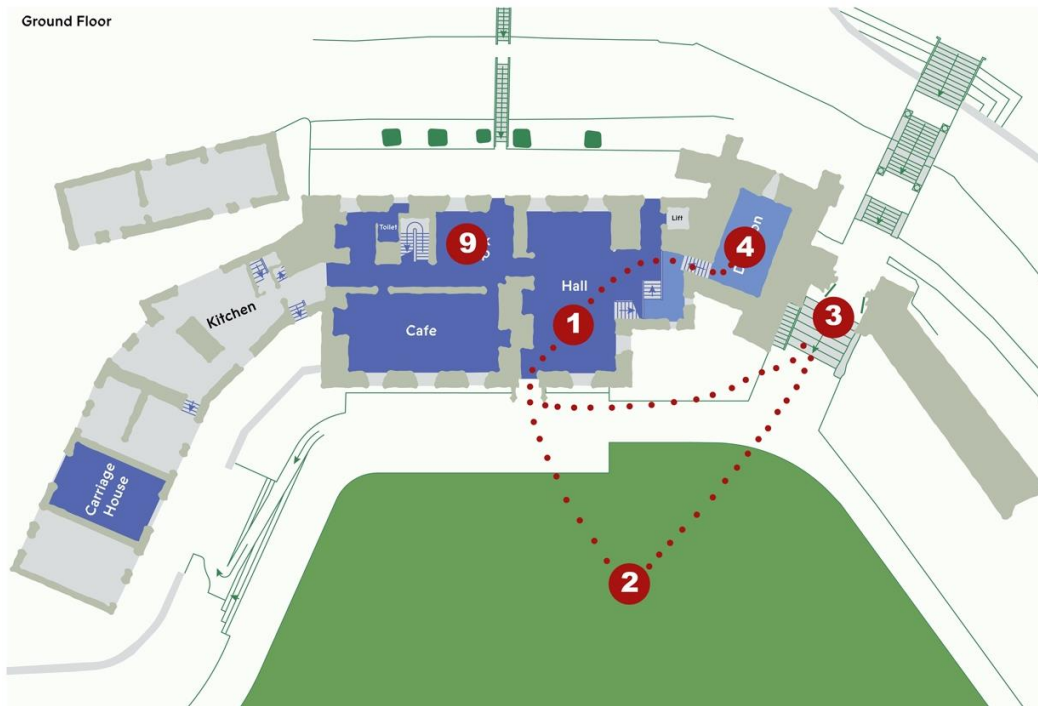
Volunteer guides who had experience of leading tours at the site were consulted on the development of the training scheme. This included discussing the possible routes that could be taken once the site was completed, where there were pinch points and how many visitors could be included on each tour. This consultation drew on their learned experience and helped ensure that guided tours would not have major glitches when they begin.

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The following image shows an example of the routes discussed with the volunteers:

Ground Floor



Initial trials with Focus Group

A meeting was held with existing Hay Tours guides and prospective volunteers in Jan 2020 with the aim of forming a training plan and discussing the history that these volunteers felt was most important to include on any tour. This would then enable HCT to develop a Brief History Introduction which could be rolled out with volunteers in the future. The meeting was held in The Swan Hotel in Hay and discussions revealed areas for research including the following:

- Developing tours with young parents and toddlers in mind
- Doing further research on the fee planned for a tour
- Booking methods
- Use of projectors
- Digital inclusion such as iPads
- Places to research

Writing of Basic History of Hay Castle

As a result of the meetings with volunteers a brief history was further developed and honed. This had been written by Mari Fforde initially as an aid to the interpretation teams, so the development with the volunteers was important in helping reduce the amount of information and making the story telling more eloquent and enjoyable. A copy of the current working history is included in the appendix.

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Development of Volunteers

HCT now has a list of 10-15 possible volunteers who have either come forward themselves or whose names have frequently been suggested. They include previous Hay Tours guides as well as ex teachers, priests and drama leaders whose skills would fit the role of a tour guide. When the Castle opens in 2022 the staffing organisation will include a Volunteer Coordinator who will be able to further work with the guides identified to continue training and get the scheme back on track after the delays caused by the Covid pandemic. The training will also be overseen by the new Learning and Activities Manager.

As a result of the programme the following have occurred:

- 6 volunteers have trained by leading tours during the 2017-2020 period
- Hay Castle has developed a scheme for future tours when the Castle is open again
- 6 Current volunteers have shared their skills in the development of future tours
- Over 100 visitors attended tours of Hay Castle between 2017-2020

Future Plans

Our goal is to train a core group of volunteer tour guides who can deliver 45 minute tours of the interior of the castle, to groups of no more than twelve, twice a day. With a maximum of 14 tours per week, this might therefore mean eight tour guides delivering one or two tours per week.

Sadly, since the castle restoration has not been completed within the timeframe of the LEADER project, we have not been able to fully deliver all aspects of this pilot, but we are hopeful that as the site develops during 2022 our plans will come to fruition.

Legacy

Tour guides will be a huge part of the success of Hay Castle. Visitors to the site will be thrilled, inspired and educated by the tales of Matilda de Braose, Llewelyn the Great, Francis Kilvert and Richard Booth. Our tour guides will bring history to life by explaining the history of this unique landmark in context. Tours will also form a small but valuable part of our revenue stream.

We are hugely grateful to LEADER for allowing us to develop this aspect of our work.

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