

**THE LONG LONELY ROAD or.....**

**A DIARY OF A PhD**

| <b>Time</b>            | <b>Thoughts, experiences,</b>  | <b>Action needed/comments</b>   |
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| June -<br>July<br>2004 | <p>Thinking about it, talking to the Governor, the Rock, the Boss, and the Musician.</p> <p>Why don't I just do my own informal thing and maybe write a few papers on bits I have found – give them to the Governor for informal publication, don't put myself through the stress of a full PhD. Will need lots of time and space – precious commodities I do not seem to have at present, at work or at home.</p> <p>Need fresh fields and stimuli as going nowhere in job – feel as if I have a lot more potential – not just about boredom as per S. V.</p> | <p>Must do something positive –list all ++ and – to following this course of action/decision</p> <p><b>Must answer following questions honestly:</b></p> <p>Why do I want to do it? How will I fund my research?</p> <p>Have I got commitment to complete a long, lonely hard slog again! Impact on work and family</p>                                   |
| Aug –<br>Sept          | <p>Decide I do want to do it, then I get recognition, and will have achieved my own lifelong goal to get as far as I can, make Dad proud of me.</p> <p>Not sure if my proposal will even be accepted – is it 'academic' enough, will the Governor act as my supervisor – don't want anyone else, so in tune artistically with him, just wish I had a few of his brain cells.</p>   | <p>What do I want to study? Will it contribute to academic knowledge – has it already been done? Must be clear on this – from past dissertation experiences too easy for me to go off at a tangent!</p> <p>Who will be willing to take me on for the long haul– know who I want to work with for 5-8 years, but what about 2<sup>nd</sup> supervisor?</p> |
| Oct                    | <p>Have missed deadline for Sept 04 admission – the Boss suggested wait until Jan 05 to start, very encouraging, good advice, agreed with her.</p> <p>Have started Greek conversation classes – determined to get to grips with the language, for personally &amp; academic reasons hopefully!</p>   | <p><b>Must get forms in by Oct for Research Committee meeting.</b></p> <p>2 academic referees needed – think about this carefully (chose the Governor &amp; the Musician)</p> <p>Submitted forms to PG Admissions – unreal!</p>   |

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| Nov -           | Seems a long wait, not heard – is HoD sitting on it? – not keen on p/t PhDs. Confidence going, maybe proposal not academic enough?   | Focus on other things – get to grips with Greek language, if gets tough how cope with PhD?   |
| Dec             | <b>Stunned when proposal accepted</b> – but also excited. Kept it quiet at work, no real support other than from the Governor, the Musician, and as ever the Rock.   | <b>Double brandy &amp; tonic needed – Metaxa of course!</b>  |
| <b>JAN 2005</b> | <p><b>ENROLLED AS A PhD STUDENT on 10 Jan 2005, felt like a bit of an anti-climax for some reason, yet it is a really big day for me.</b></p> <p>Went to Conference for HE Administrators – made contact with Grad UK people – told them I was p/t PhD student - very encouraging,</p> <p>Shouldn't be this difficult to get a student handbook out of the department! Think many people have problems with me being a student as well as a member of staff – expect me to know everything and not need much guidance when in fact the very opposite is true. Wonder if other postgrads feel like this? Must try and meet some!</p> <p>Major problem with starting in Jan is that training courses for p/gs is only once a year, so I either teach myself or ask for help in LIS. Not good at asking for help – never have been, but determined to keep myself on track.</p> <p>GradUK PhD calendar is good – must discipline myself to use it, fill it in, be honest about aims and achievements for first 6 months work.</p> | <p><b>Must get seriously organised for studying</b> – not here there &amp; everywhere like last time!</p> <p>Keep in touch with GradUK</p> <p><b>Must be more pro-active &amp; persistent</b> in getting what I want – and what I should have had as a newly registered student in dept.</p> <p>Think a bit more about when as well as where and how to study – need to establish a regular pattern.</p> |
| FEB             | <p>04.02.05 Went to my first PhD seminar – the Governor introduced it &amp; I felt out of my depth straight away – but at end was pleased I had gone. JM and 2 of my previous lecturers wondered why I was there – seminar experience was frightening! Was clockwatching because only have 1 hr for lunch today – must manage flexi-time more efficiently but having to work (and had a busy morning) are unavoidable – mustn't allow it to detract from what I want to do. Could investigate the idea of a regular study pattern/period, see what line manager and boss say. Uni does have a policy on study leave (for academics, not academically related) but flexi-time isn't as flexible as I would like it to be.</p> <p>17/02/05 First informal meeting with supervisor – not sure what to expect, got a rough plan of what I want to do in my head – don't know if feasible, but keen to</p>  | <p><b>Must not be so reticent/retiring.</b></p> <p><b>I feel overwhelmed by others, lose confidence when not in my field of knowledge</b> (but I know I can give just as good a presentation on subjects I know a lot about).</p> <p><b>Time management</b></p> <p>Must keep <b>clear focus</b> on what reading &amp; doing</p>  |

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| <p>discuss all aspects or approaches. Still concerned that my topic may have been covered, or may find a negative answer to my whole PhD thesis! The Governor doesn't seem concerned about that, so long as have evidence to support argument and state case clearly. Felt strangely disappointed after first meeting, had expected more, but realise that I must learn how to drive my supervisor – MBA work should have told me that but somehow thought things were different at PhD level.</p> <p>18/02/05 Went to 2<sup>nd</sup> seminar – Loeb such a good lecturer – still think so after 15 years.</p> <p>26/02/05 to 03/03/05 Trip to Athens – wonderfully invigorating, seeing sights I know I will be reading, researching and writing about. REALLY MUST improve my spoken Greek, totally lacking in confidence and had hoped to see major progress. Travelling alone as a single person is a totally different experience – determined to continue to do real 'field' research, not just be book-based. Kind offer of help in Metro Acropolis station – didn't realise I looked lost – just working out the best way to the Nat Arch Museum, but chap turned up again at next station – wanted to escort me to wherever I was going.....explained I was a student, finding my way round city, attitudes change, Greeks love it when you are researching their country – national pride comes through, become very helpful. Guy at next station also, so said changed mind and going elsewhere first – made quick exit. Trouble is I think he genuinely wanted to take me to the Nat Arch Mus – seemed very knowledgeable from brief conversation we had – wanted to escort me round his wonderful city. Couldn't do this in London but never feel frightened in Athens Metro.</p> <p>Trip to Delphi was fantastic even if place covered in snow- Mt Parnassus magnificently white! Not a sign of what I really went to see – all under snow. Breathtaking to see the Bronze Charioteer, as beautiful as the Hermes of Praxiteles and the Nike of Paionios in Olympia. Clambered to top of amphitheatre in snow – only Shirley Valentine would build a small votive snowman to ask the gods for help to get back down the mountain in small stiletto heeled boots and 2 inches of snow and slush! Always get an amazed/amazing response when tell fellow travellers that I am a part-time PhD student!</p> <p>Quite an achievement to have enrolled myself as a reader in the National Library of</p> | <p>Stay on track, don't get sidetracked into other areas, but must <b>broaden horizons &amp; background knowledge</b></p> <p>Felt more confident and comfortable in seminar– actually contributed to the debate – progress!</p> <p><b>Make more progress in language skills</b></p> <p>Keep a detailed log of travelling/research costs</p> <p>Always keep the gods on your side!</p> <p>More consideration on organisation and storage</p> |
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|       | <p>Greece encouraging that my pigeon Greek was better than the National Librarian's pigeon English. Most amazing reception from BSA staff – really enthusiastic about my attempted thesis and offered any help needed. Advised me it will be a long hard slog, but am not approaching this through rose tinted glasses – previous experience has taught me how hard part-time study is (and I am now 15 years older...). Wonderful books in the library – would love to lose myself in there for a few months!</p>   | <p>of various sources of notes, information, etc.</p> <p><b>Don't be so amazed when people supportive &amp; interested in what I am doing/may have to offer!</b></p>   |
| MAR   | <p>Terrible news of a traumatic death and its aftermath – deeply distressing &amp; disturbing – hadn't realised how much encouragement the Rock was giving me until find he's not around – mainly in area of IT skills, really must make more progress for self on use of IT and UNI systems. Need more help on p/g systems.</p> <p>Went on an IT course with the Rock– complete and utter disaster! Triggered a bad panic attack – fled from building, v embarrassing and deeply distressing, not had a bad one for quite a while – thought they were under control.</p> <p>18/03/05 Went to another seminar – not very good presentation, unclear exactly what topic was, what knowledge trying to impart, not sure if it was a 1<sup>st</sup> year p/grad, but strangely comforting and reassuring that I felt I could give a better, more interesting presentation. Becoming more comfortable in seminar situations.</p> <p><b>MY OWN TRAUMATIC DEATH EXPERIENCE, had to go and sort everything out. NUMB.</b></p> | <p>Must get to grips with IT problems &amp; systems</p> <p>The panic attacks MUST NOT RETURN – must remain in control</p> <p>Need to be able to identify &amp; measure personal progress at various stages – seminar showed I am <b>growing in confidence.</b></p> <p><b>JUST TOTALLY NUMB.<br/>CAN'T DO<br/>ANYTHING.</b></p> |
| APRIL | <p><b>Struggling with everything having tried to support the Rock through his nightmare, 2 deaths in one month so close together is hitting me hard no matter how I try to get over it. Deep sense of loss, really don't know how to cope, so alone now.</b></p> <p>Dad's death has a huge impact on me and on my work schedule, lost all timescale &amp; interest in everything, 3 weeks off work, desk piled high on return, feel as if I can't do this job any more or my studies. Completely broken. No more PhD or diary.</p>   |  |
| MAY   | <p>Spoken to the Governor &amp; the Rock – must try and carry on for Dad as well as me, don't want to let the Governor or Loeb down. Even if just get back into reading</p>  | <p><b>Still numb.</b></p>  |

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|      | <p>mode – don't force any writing, just read, look at pictures/art history, the Governor told me to go off to one of my favourite islands to recuperate – seriously! Didn't think I was in such a bad way but more people concerned about me than I realised. Huge weight loss, suffering from mental and physical exhaustion. Even Doc concerned.</p>  |   |
| JUNE | <p>Begun to read a bit more and retaining what I have read! Work v busy at present, must keep work/study/life balance going properly. Still can't write though.</p> <p>Concerned that approaching 6 months and not done anything in writing for the literary review, ridiculous that I should be struggling at this early stage.</p> <p>Had wonderful long discussion with the Governor about approach to thesis although bit of a surprise – he's turned the whole approach round to a different angle, not really what I intended doing but it does seem to have a more structured approach.</p> <p>Went to another IT training session – no panic attack. Interesting sessions on e-books, electronic citations and excellent Endnote Workshop. Made me think more about ways in which I am storing information – messy paper files at present as brain and filing all over the place. Struggling to cope again, must just get through this busy period at work then things should calm down. Didn't think time constraints would hit so early on.</p> | <p><b>Hang in there. Don't make/take any decisions.</b></p> <p><b>A little progress goes a long way.</b></p>  |
| JULY | <p>Away servicing audit– yet again not much work done as reading time at home taken up by audit preparation reading.</p> <p>Beginning to worry and self-doubt creeping in again, must get on top of this. Holiday should do me good – reinvigorate me, really bad year since breaking wrist last June, with aftermath of Dad's death, ill health, stressed and overloaded. The Governor still very encouraging – told me to just go off to a Greek island with my Greek books – and some Greek brandy! How did I deserve such a good supervisor?</p> <p>Spoken about training needs and problems of enrolling at odd time of year – want to make sure that I book myself onto the IT sessions in October.</p>   | <p>Maintain confidence – attempt and achieve small goals or steps – don't attempt anything too big.</p> <p>Main problems to resolve are IT, remote access, wireless links, organisation of research notes</p> |
| AUG  | <p>Worried about my lack of progress – went to see the Boss, (excellent as Postgrad Officer), reassuring, keep on reading, don't worry about not being able to write. Must</p>  | <p><b>Be more pro-active</b></p>  |

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| <p>go on p/g training courses – be more pro-active in addressing and resolving my needs, and driving supervisor! Mustn't lose confidence in myself so easily.</p> <p>Made a bit more progress on effective web and journal searching although still find it preferable to go down to the library book stacks and search the journals there – seems strangely satisfying but not so efficient.</p> <p>Have read more – but also went off on glorious tangent of reading and learning not related to my topic – but still interesting all the same. Mustn't let it happen often!</p> <p>Surgery – in hospital and not done a thing for a whole week – terrible headaches have made reading impossible.</p> <p>Major IT problems with wireless technology again – Is it me? Why can't I get things resolved satisfactorily? Passed from pillar to post – do other p/gs suffer in this way? Is it because I'm a member of staff and expected to know everything and not need much help or support? Are they going to always see me as 'staff' not 'student'? Either way it's not good – for me or institution.</p> <p>Info came round about a 2 month p/g course at the BSA in Athens – what a wonderful opportunity, sheer luxury to have 2 whole months to study, talk to other students and academics, beat the lonely slog of p/t PhD! Only 9 spaces so I don't suppose mature p/t students will get much of a look-in. Yet the topic is so well related to my thesis. Must speak to the Governor about my chances of a place.</p> <p>Also asked to nominate a p/g rep to sit on committees – would be nice just to meet other p/grads, but don't even know the security code to get in the p/g room door! Let alone talk to any of them, seems to be a world apart between f/t and p/t students. The words disembodied and even disenfranchised have sprung to mind for some reason! I don't feel as if I have a real sense of belonging to a postgrad community, but that may just be me needing to make more contact with the p/gs, may be possible at lunchtimes?</p> <p>Spoken to the Governor re BSA course– nothing ventured, nothing gained has been my motto (and his advice) so going to find out more. Will have 3 hurdles to face –</p> | <p>Contact subject librarian for 1:1 session in LIS</p> <p><b>Stay focused!</b></p> <p>Time out also needed at times – just need rest.</p> <p><b>Tell P/G Office of problems</b> – finding out too many problem areas for them</p> <p>Get further advice, <b>cost it out properly</b></p> <p>Make more effort to become part of p/g community -Keep on attending seminars – think about giving one – know enough in my own field of study, should have enough confidence to do it.<br/><b>Remember Dad's saying – the more put in, the more get out!</b></p> |
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| SEPT        | <p>asking for 2 months off work, finding the personal funds (but Dad will help me on that front, he's still behind me even if a star in his own right now) and finding out if it will be paid or unpaid leave. Got more info from the BSA website, may ring them for more info and contact course director. Also need to contact our personnel people about such things as NI, and pension contributions for 2 months if it has to be unpaid leave- could also try for 1 month vacation and 1 month unpaid leave, bet they won't meet me half way though – research/study/sabbatical leave only seems to apply to academics, not academically related, and this is a personal educational journey, not allied to work as my MBA was; don't know if it would count towards RAE research stuff to see if I could get any help that way.</p> <p>Really need more advice on sources of financial help to do this – otherwise it will be a case of saying there's a time in everyone's life when you have to do what you really want to do – time isn't on my side as this course is only run every 2 years, I'll be considered even older by then (much as I rage against the coming of age – and the dying of the light/nights/youth, etc. Wonder if I'll ever experience Dylan's depths?)</p> <p>Sent e-mail to course director, worked out the financial cost – roughly £2k needed- family will have to stand on their own two feet financially for 2 months as I will be the one with no income – I've carried them all for long enough, and it's NOT selfish to want to do this course – I want to be a proper PhD student, be a credit to Mum and Dad, and to the Governor – and know that I have given it my best shot. To be surrounded by academics and students who share the same passions and interests – and learn even more would be wonderful. The course includes an amazing number of site visits and it would take me 8 years of holiday visits to get round all of them. Fingers crossed.</p> | <p><b>Check out policy on study leave</b>, any special entitlements, guidance or info from SDU, think what to do if have to make special case (plan B!)</p> <p><b>Contact Course Director</b> for as much info as poss.</p> <p>Complete application forms - nothing ventured, nothing gained</p> |
| <b>SEPT</b> | <b>Target of 5000 words for literary review to be submitted to the Governor</b>  | <b>Submitted piece to the mentor man with trepidation!</b>   |
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