



Autumn Prayer & Newsletter 2012

The rowans are heavy with crimson berries and the red, gold, russet and bronze bloom of autumn is spreading across trees and bracken alike. Yesterday on a drive we admired a trio of partridge pick its way unconcernedly across a low stone dyke, their variegated plumage reflecting the play of sunlight on bark then narrowly missed a pair of pheasants who whirred off at the last minute in confusion. We just can't resist having our own touch of nature at the Centre too: We've just won a bronze award for our containers



our Oystercatcher

in Pitlochry in Bloom - all thanks to volunteer gardener Alastair - and having had the entertainment of a young oyster catcher using the dining room roof as a nursery in June, we put up an owl box there in the hope of more avian guests. It's too easy to take it all for granted, but Cloe our French intern raved about the beautiful setting of our summer Highland Nights - the evocative sounds of the Vale of Atholl Pipe Band with the mountains as their backdrop. And now we have cards from a local artist for sale in the foyer, so visitors can have a keepsake to remind them of our beautiful surroundings.

New Faces

Cloe came for 6 weeks internship in May & June. She is training to be a PA at college in Confolens, Pitlochry's twin town, so it was great to be an active partner in our community in this way. At the end of her stay she wrote "It is my last week at the Atholl Centre and in Scotland and I've learnt more in 6 weeks here than in 8 years of English classes in France."



Cloe



We also welcomed Wilma from Dundee in June as our summer volunteer. We had asked for a volunteer to live in and supervise B&B over the summer period. She has really got stuck in – in fact we have sometimes had to tell her to stop! - and has enjoyed the Centre so much that she's still here & hoping to move to Pitlochry permanently. Wilma has been a star in helping us to set up our Thrift shops.

Wilma

Glynnis, our part-time secretary who has been with us for 2 years, is moving to Fife. We are very grateful for her cheerful presence, bright ideas & businesslike phone manner which have made her a great asset. We'll miss her, but wish her well in her new venture as she & her husband set out to make their new house into a retreat centre. Wilma will take over from Glynnis for at least the next 3 months.

In the summer we employ quite a few students to help serve meals, do dishes and clean rooms, but what happens when term time begins again? God has provided and we now have a great team of secondary school helpers who are happy to have the occasional weekend of work. Last weekend, out in numbers to help us serve 80 guests, they sported our new Atholl Centre T-shirts (logo kindly sewn by Glynnis) - so professional looking.

Groups – large & small, old & new

Hosting group holidays is a core function of the Centre, and the groups we serve can vary in size from 8 to 80. L'Arche came in May for the day with 68 adults with learning disabilities, UFM (80 delegates) came for their annual Scottish get together in April and Superb Choice (an offshoot of SU) came for their annual reunion day in September combining with our Going Solo residential group (eating in a separate room) to make 80 people for lunch and dinner. At the opposite end of the spectrum some very small groups use our self-catering flat combined with a couple of extra bedrooms to self cater, and find that very convenient. Groups of 13 people or more can have sole use of the Centre which allows them to feel completely at home – something which guests regularly comment on.



L'Arche

Heartbridge (YWAM) wrote: "Your warm hospitality has not gone unnoticed. We really felt at home in Pitlochry."

The African Children's Choir wrote, "Thank you kindly for all the ways you have cared for us this past week and helped us get on our feet. Your flexibility, generosity and good pleasure have been a gift."



African Children's Choir

Atholl Centre holiday a permanent feature in their calendar, sometimes booking 2 years ahead. But there is still room for new groups, especially mid week. This year we had the Waddington Street centre (adults with mild learning difficulties) for the first time and also Perthshire Youth Brass Band, who liked us so much they have booked several dates already. We also had a lady who had first come with Fife youth orchestra when she was a teenager and was now returning with her husband to a favourite location (staying in the flat). They enthused about the Centre and about Pitlochry. "We'll definitely be back." they said.

Coming up: our new Creative Holidays – a series of mid week breaks with creative themes.

Still available is "Overflowing Voices" 31st Oct – 2nd Nov led by choir leader Shona Brown and "Festive Decorations" 13th – 15th Nov led by Maggie Robertson who runs her own craft company. Just phone or email to book.

Fundraising Success

You'll be pleased to hear that our new disabled friendly door opener was installed on the 22nd June. We had to raise just over £3,000 to install it, but the local community really came up trumps for us. We had a bag pack at the local Co-op, a grant from the Enchanted Forest community fund, a coffee morning by Pitlochry Baptist WA, a performance by community players MADCAPS and various gifts from local supporters. On top of that we had 2 cyclists, Richard Underwood from Garioch Baptist and Rulzion Rattray (brother of a local man) in the Etape Caledonia Cycle challenge who raised over £1,300 through sponsorship. Well done guys!



Iain with Graham & Aggie from Bridge of Don Baptist at the new door

Future Plans

Since then we have been raising money to cover the initial architect's fees for our new build. (We were granted planning permission in early May) This is our 40th anniversary project to make the Centre even more disabled friendly & bring our facilities up to date - making a new ground floor conference room, converting the chalet to a disabled friendly apartment & adding en-suites. We had a successful 2 weeks of Thrift shop in the dining room in the summer raising about £1,400 and we held another this October. We're also planning a fundraising meal. Please keep an eye out for that on our website and facebook. Having finally put the last touches to our up-dated business plan with financial projections courtesy of Just Enterprise (Scottish Government funded advice & support) we will now be approaching Trusts and grant making bodies to help us make our 40 year anniversary dreams a reality. Please pray for all of those involved in this process, especially our fundraiser, Anne, as it is a mammoth task.

With thanks for your support,

Iain (Iain Walker, Director)

Just let me know if you'd like to support us regularly – subscribe to our newsletter, donate, volunteer.

Volunteers wanted - Phone 01796 473044 to volunteer

We're looking for a plumber and other volunteers to help with our office refurb in Dec/Jan.

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