



Atholl Centre Pitlochry

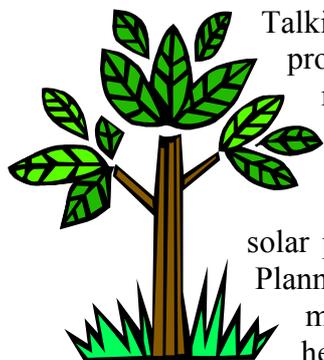
*Time Out
Time Away
Time Together*



Spring Newsletter 2010

Spring has arrived again and it's time for a newsletter. The last letter marked the beginning of the 40yr Celebration of the Atholl Centre, a reminder of who we are and what we are trying to do. Since then we hope many of you have continued to keep up to date by following the blog (web diary) on our website www.athollcentre.org.uk which we started in November last year.

The most immediate change you'll notice is that our newsletter is now going out primarily by email. Paper copies can be sent out on request, but it is much greener as well as more cost effective to go paperless where possible. We hope you will welcome this change. Please get back to us with your comments to: admin@athollcentre.org.uk.



Talking about greener, one of the more exciting developments in recent months has been a project to change our heating system to a wood pellet boiler and solar panels. This is as a result of doing an energy audit and discovering that our ancient gas system is now only 60% efficient. We also discovered that our insulation was in great need of upgrading. Community Energy Scotland have given us invaluable advice and assistance. Working closely with them we have selected a potential supplier for the boiler and solar panels and another for the insulation and are now pursuing funding for the project. Planning permission has to be obtained, so we have also started that process. We are very much looking forward to having a simpler, greener, more sustainable and more efficient heating system – if all goes well – by the end of this year. The new system will also benefit the church with whom we currently share heating and water so we are working closely with them to ensure a smooth transition.

Even more exciting is the way local community use of the Centre has grown and grown over the last year. The day the Baptist Minister's wives arrived for their 3 day conference we had 4 groups at once: They had the conference room, English as a foreign language were in the TV room, Adult literacy had the dining room and the Missionary prayer meeting in the vestry. The day they left was just as busy: WA lunch in the dining room, Baptist ministers wives in the conference room, having a buffet lunch, Arthritis Care self management group in the church and Four Ways mental health support group in the TV room. We also have the University of the 3rd age (U3A - retired folks), Highways support group for people with learning difficulties, Amnesty International and Madcaps (music & drama group) regularly coming as day groups as well as regular use by church groups. We are pleased to say that residential bookings are also up, with all weekends booked solid to mid July and quite a few groups booking up to 2 years in advance. There are still spaces midweek though, and still room in the autumn and winter for your bookings.

B & B at the Centre

The Centre is available for B&B at £22.75 from June to October this year. Come and enjoy the beautiful surroundings, the theatre and castles and the good food at Pitlochry.

2 star Self-catering Apartment

The Centre Apartment sleeps four in 2 bedrooms (cots and airbeds can be added at no extra charge). Also kitchen, living room with TV and DVD, bathroom with bath and shower. Towels and bedding provided.

From £175 (March –October)

Things don't always go smoothly, of course. The day the Baptist ministers' wives arrived was also the day the solenoid valve on the heating system failed and while Iain frantically chased up a heating engineer, Chris was charged with finding as many electric heaters as possible to heat up all the public rooms being used. Fortunately we have back up heaters in most bedrooms to help out with people who feel the cold more than others, so they were deployed with military precision and by the time bedtime came the engineer had been in and fixed the problem. On another day Bob our visiting chef had 100 dinners to prepare for 2 days when one of our 2 ovens broke down. It was a huge logistical nightmare to prepare all that food with only half the resources and by the end of that weekend Bob was absolutely exhausted. Because we had to get someone in who did industrial cookers it actually took several days to fix and cost just over £500, eating chunks out of our budget!

We are supported by many hard working volunteers. Clement came to work with us for 3 weeks in February. He flew in from France, from a church whose new minister Pitlochry Baptist has been supporting in prayer for many years, and helped with maintenance and painting. He stayed in the flat and got to know lots of people in the church. They took him into their hearts and homes, and told him lots about Scotland. He was even able to join the English as a foreign language class, which he found very helpful.

“How can we help you?” is a well worn phrase at the Centre – and here are 2 examples of what we mean: Last summer we received a phone call from the caravan park. A French couple had been staying there and the night before they were due to leave, the husband was rushed to hospital by ambulance with a mystery illness. Their caravan was already booked to another party – could we have them? Mme Dimi arrived very flustered, speaking broken Franglais. How could we help? Iain tried to reassure her and noting her communication problems suggested, “I can get my French mother-in-law to talk to you”. Just then Danielle walked in, and overhearing his words, offered her help straight away. Mme Dimi was overjoyed to be able to explain her problems fluently and Danielle was able to comfort her and offer reassurance (and explain the NHS) over several days until her husband was discharged.



Danielle

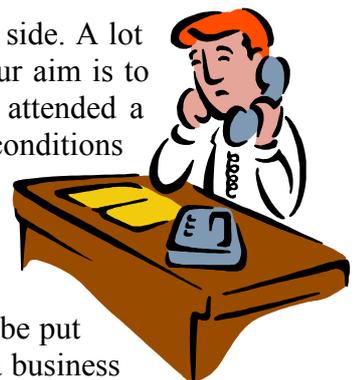
“This is *providence*”, Mme Dimi exclaimed. “We could not have been better looked after.”
“With our remerciements and reconnaissance. We never forget you” – M. & Mme Dimi
They are still in touch and plan to return to Scotland and to stay in the Centre again this year.

“The food was good and the beds comfortable. What more could one ask for?” .Gordon Martin
The Martins wrote to say what a great stay they had had with us at the Centre. Gordon's wife, Liliias, is wheelchair bound and they found our disabled facilities ideal to stay for a week's B&B. They were able to enjoy the shops, cafes and restaurants of Pitlochry as well as a Highland night at the recreation ground and a concert at the town hall. They loved the Arts & Crafts exhibition which was at the Centre during their stay and worshipping at Pitlochry Baptist on Sunday. The Christian ambience provided by the caring staff, and the chance to meet and exchange friendly conversation with other guests at breakfast, was a real boost to them and they called it “a privilege” to have stayed here.

“What an excellent facility”

Thanks to “Postscriptlancashire” we had our first review on “tripadvisor” recently. This is a website that many people look on to book accommodation and plan their holiday activities all over the world, so it is a real plus for us to have a good review there. If you have enjoyed your stay at the Centre please write your own review on www.tripadvisor.co.uk

Guests see and appreciate the service side of the Centre, but there is also a business side. A lot of work needs to be done behind the scenes to keep the Centre going and in fact our aim is to keep the Centre growing. A major need was to finance the heating project. Anne attended a Funding Clinic run by Perth & Kinross council and was advised to get a building conditions survey done and a business plan professionally formed. Successful in that process we now have a list of the maintenance work we have to do to keep the building in shape, and a reassurance that it is basically sound. Thankfully most of the work mentioned is already planned for, so no big surprises. We now have a professional business plan, which helps us to see clearly where we are aiming for, what needs to be put in place and how the finances might work. On top of that we are now blessed with a business consultant who is willing to help us with advice in the future too.



Fundraising is vital for the Centre's work as we support guests with social or physical needs through our **subsidy fund** so that they can afford to have that life changing workshop, holiday or conference at the Centre. It is also essential as we embark on various projects to enhance the service we can provide for guests, starting with the **heating project**. It was encouraging to see in our Year End Audit that not only did we break even this year, but thanks to a generous gift can now afford to employ a part-time admin assistant.

40 years project. As we enter the second 40 years of the Centre's work we have some exciting plans which we would want to share with you. We want to bring the conference room downstairs so that it will be more accessible to all Centre users. To do this we need to extend the present dining room and fit a sound proof moveable partition. We would also like to upgrade the chalet so that it can be either part of the centre booking or available to disabled friends as a self contained flat. In addition we hope to develop a number of en-suite bedrooms in the main building. All this will cost money but when we look back on the generosity of Atholl Centre supporters in the past we believe it is possible and would be a fitting preparation for even greater things in the future.

Do you have any stories or anecdotes of your time spent at the Centre either as a guest or as a member of staff? We would be delighted to receive and collate a selection of them as part of our 40 years celebration, so please send them in to me

AGM. The Annual General Meeting of Atholl Baptist Centre Ltd will take place on Friday 11th June at 7pm. This will be preceded by a buffet at 6.30pm. B&B is available at £20 should you wish to and stay overnight.

Thank you for your support up to now. Please continue to pray for, and give generously to the Atholl Centre. It is because of your support that we are able to do this very worthwhile work.

Yours in His service

Iain

Iain Walker (Director)

We are sad to inform you of the death of Kathleen Moyes this April. Wife to Watson, the founder and honorary president of the Centre, Kathleen was instrumental in setting up the See Hear Deaf weekend and Bridge the Gap holidays for deaf children here. It was Kathleen's idea that the Centre should be accessible to people of all abilities. In her work at the Centre and in the deaf community she was a lady of great innovation and foresight. We extend our deepest sympathies to Watson and the family.

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I would like to make a donation towards the work of the Atholl Centre.

Name

Address.....

..... Post code.....

email.....

Amount: single donation £.....Monthly £.....Annually £.....

Please tick this Gift Aid box if you are a UK taxpayer. The government will give an extra 28p for every £1 you donate to the Centre. A Bank Mandate form will be sent on request if required.

I am a British Taxpayer and wish to donate through Gift Aid.

Signed.....Date.....

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