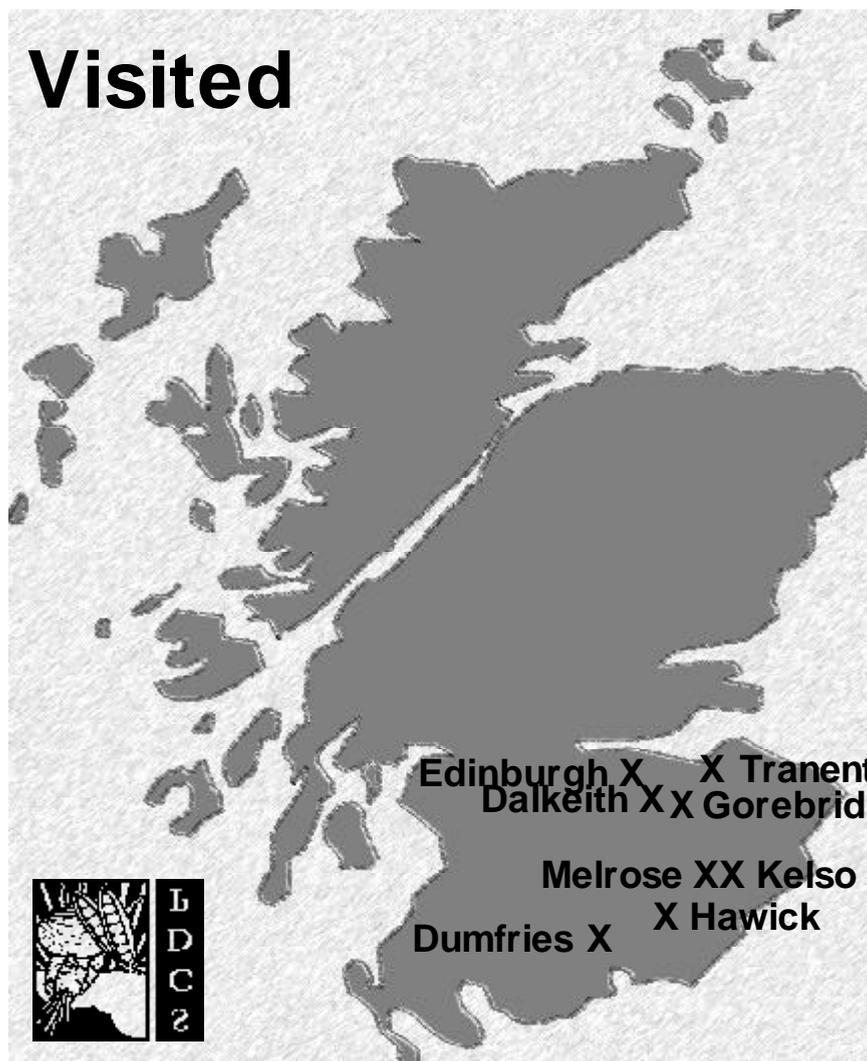


# SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A report of the Scottish  
Community Diet Project's  
Rural Study Tour  
4th - 7th October 1999

**Visited**



# INTRODUCTION

**Southern Exposure**, a tour of rural food projects, was organised by the Scottish Community Diet Project in October 1999. Financed by the Project's Network Travel Bursary, Southern Exposure aimed to give volunteers from community food projects in the North of Scotland the opportunity to visit other community food projects in the South of Scotland. Largely due to transport costs, workers and volunteers from Scotland's rural community food projects seldom have the opportunity to travel to and network with other initiatives throughout the country, particularly in other rural locations. Feelings of isolation and frustration can consequently result.

Bearing these factors in mind, Southern Exposure was planned to help act as a catalyst for greater contact and exchange of information and ideas between community food projects in remote and rural areas throughout Scotland. A Northern Exposure rural food tour will hopefully take place in the year 2000 to allow community food projects from the South of Scotland to visit some examples of community food activity in the Highlands and Islands.

A total of six participants joined the Southern Exposure tour from the Highlands and Islands. The four-day trip was co-ordinated by the SCDP's Development Worker, Lizanne Hume, and was made possible with the navigation skills of the tour's mini-bus driver, Gordon McAlonan, who is also a community food activist within Ferguslie Park in Paisley.

The following paragraphs give a snap-shot of each of the six participants and their reasons for volunteering to join the tour.

*My name is Carol and I am the project co-ordinator of the Islay and Jurra Health Promotion Project, which is funded by Argyll and Clyde Health Board. I heard about the Southern Exposure Tour from the SCDP and accompanied two volunteers from projects I work in partnership with. I felt the tour would be extremely beneficial to me, as networking opportunities are very important living on an isolated island community. I am also interested in how other communities tackle food issues as the Islay and Jurra Health Promotion Needs Assessment (1996) identified the cost of living especially in relation to food as the biggest issue for Islay residents. With no or low wages, people struggled to buy basic essentials and were reluctant to discuss healthy eating in any shape or form!*

**Carol Muir, Islay**

*My name is Graeme and I'm 17 years old and live on the Island of Islay. I have been involved in a lot of voluntary youth work and have also started training to be a youth worker, which is part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. My expectations of coming along on the tour was to have fun and find out how food projects work on the main land, but most of all I thought it would be a good learning experience.*

**Graeme Hamilton, Islay**

*I'm Robert from Islay and joined Carol and Graeme on the Southern Exposure Tour to help further my work with the IDEAS Gardening Project. I also wanted to come along to find out about the community food work in other areas of Scotland. I was keen to be able to compare and contrast the work of projects in rural mainland areas with what happens on Islay, and also make lots of new contacts.*

**Robert Howison, Islay**

*My name is Shay, I'm 15 years old and live in Grange, Morayshire. My mum and I write a community newsletter along with various friends. I came on the tour to learn about other communities and the problems they encounter. Our community isn't much to speak about at the moment, and I thought by coming along on the tour I might be able to find out some new ideas and contribute to building my own community up. I enjoy meeting people and I thought it would be interesting to meet new people and visit new places.*

**Shay Giles, Morayshire**

*My name is Catriona, and I live on the island of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides. I am the chairperson of Newton Steadings Trust, which is a company limited by guarantee with the aim of promoting the work of four local voluntary organisations. We hope to be able to provide land with training advice and encouragement to families to grow their own organic produce which will benefit them economically as well as have a health advantage. The idea has grown into the development of a healthy living centre proposal. SONAS, our local health initiative, was progressing this idea and mentioned the Scottish Community Diet Project's Rural Study Tour. I have had a sharp learning curve in reading community appraisals and local health development ideas. I was enthusiastic about joining the Southern Exposure Tour to find out about what is happening in other areas.*

**Catriona Muir, South Uist**

*I am Jenny, and work for Health Promotions in Elgin, which is part of Grampian Health Board. I am also part of the Practitioners Network Group, where Bill Gray spoke about the work of the Scottish Community Diet Project. This was of particular interest to me as my role touches on food issues at all levels. I thought this would be a great way of finding out what is going on in other areas as well as helping to form new networks, compare areas, share ideas and just see what is going on in the South of Scotland.*

**Jenny McLean, Elgin**

# DAY 1 WHAT WE DID!

## Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 1999

Originally the tour was planned to begin on Tuesday morning, but due to the difficulty of travelling to Edinburgh for early morning from the Highlands and Islands, the tour was amended to allow participants to travel to Edinburgh during Monday daytime instead. The tour therefore officially began on Monday evening.

*"The group size was small enough to feel intimate, but big enough to provide variety and a range of experience. The mix of ages, and backgrounds also helped create a friendly atmosphere."*

Jenny

Everyone was collected from their different points of arrival by mini-bus throughout the day and taken to Edinburgh for an evening meal. Dinner was served in **Six Mary's Place Guest House**, which is situated in the heart of Edinburgh and offers a range of vegetarian and vegan cuisine in a non-smoking environment. The SCDP thought this would be an appropriate starting point as Six Mary's Place is a social firm with an ethical ethos like that of most community food initiatives.

*"Providing transport and meeting costs is not always enough to allow volunteers to attend these events."*

Catriona

Marilyn Beagley from the Pilton Community Health Project in Edinburgh joined the group with her daughter for the meal. Marilyn shared her experience of working in Barri Grubb, a community food initiative which is part of the Pilton Community Health Project. The group compared and contrasted the problems of accessing quality, affordable food in an urban setting with that of rural areas.

Afterwards the group drove to Newbattle Abbey College in Dalkeith for the first overnight stay.

# DAY 1

## WHAT WE LEARNED!

*"From chatting about the work in Pilton to Islay, we quickly identified many shared problems despite the very different environments food, transport, drugs and alcohol were all shared concerns, particularly amongst our young people."*

Carol

*"People on the ground are the experts and know the issues best. We need to get our message to the Scottish Parliament and keep it high up on the policy agenda."*

Robert

The group discussed some of the difficulties volunteers encountered when asked to participate in a tour like Southern Exposure. In addition to the distance of travelling to Glasgow and Edinburgh from the Highlands and Islands, other barriers such as work, school and childcare were found to be insurmountable for others who were keen to participate in the tour.

Everyone felt that meeting in Six Mary's Place helped the group gel as a unit and established the focus of the trip immediately. The small size of the group and its varied composition also helped the group members get to know each other quickly.

**Six Mary's Place** is owned and managed by Edinburgh Community Trust and operates as a social firm. The business was established in 1992 to create employment for people with mental health problems through running a self-financing commercial guest house, which would create a calm and peaceful environment for staff and guests alike.

An independent evaluation study in 1996 confirmed that staff were deriving positive benefits from working at Six Mary's Place, and there were improvements reported in mental health and stress management. The Trust has a partnership arrangement with groups in Poland wishing to replicate the project, and has helped many other organisations with study visits, information about business and advice on setting up a guest house social firm. Please see end of report for contact details.

## DAY 2

# WHAT WE DID!!

*"Transport is the big issue in rural areas. I've been both the Roots and Fruits van driver and development officer lately, which is a difficult balancing act. The van used to deliver fresh fruit and vegetables to customers throughout East Lothian every week of the year, except Christmas. It's more difficult to deliver so frequently until we get a new driver and also the van repaired as its brakes have recently failed. Elderly people are particularly dependent on this van delivery service, especially when there are no other shops."*

Pamela

*"Fruit and Veg on Islay is three weeks old - when it first arrives it's a scramble to get the best before it all disappears!"*

Graeme

*"It is satisfying to watch students who initially find things a bit difficult, settle in, begin to use their own initiative and learn."*

Trainer from the café.

### Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 1999

After breakfast the group set off to visit the only community food project in **East Lothian** called **Roots and Fruits**. The project was set up as the result of a public seminar held in Musselburgh in 1996. Professionals from voluntary and statutory organisations throughout East Lothian got together to see how they could tackle poverty in East Lothian with Roots and Fruits being one of the successful outcomes. **Pamela McKinlay**, Development worker for the project, explained the problems they have had to cope with lately without a van driver.

Afterwards the tour travelled to the **Work Start Oak Tree Café** in Gorebridge for lunch. Workstart, based in Greenhall Community Education Centre, offers training for a job in the catering industry to people with learning disabilities, people who are experiencing or have experienced mental health problems or people with a physical disability. The Project was formed in 1994 with money from the European Social Fund. There are around 36 students on the WorkStart Programme, some part-time and others full-time, with up to 16 students in the café each day. The café is open from 10am until 2pm Monday to Friday and offers a wide range of reasonably priced meals.

The last project visited was **Gorebridge Community Health Project**. Staff and volunteers made the Southern Exposure tour very welcome. The project was set up three years ago and encourages awareness and action on health issues through community development. Its has a varied programme of activities range from a food coop to a community gardening project and drama group.

# DAY 2

## WHAT WE LEARNED!

*"Transport, employment and shopping are the three key issues for the community of Gorebridge. We believe the key to success is to go slowly and work at the pace set by the local community. We've recently been involved in drama workshops to help tackle the myths around food poverty and our gardening project continues to develop, although we are currently trying to liaise with the school kids to help reduce vandalism and raise awareness of our work."*

Ian Stewart, Development Worker, Gorebridge

*"Communities are surveyed to death - research has to be backed up with action quickly or else the community will lose support and interest."*

Carol

*"Roots and Fruits in Trannet are currently without a driver for their van. The New Deal criteria have prevented the last driver being able to stay in post. Policies can actually work against rather than work for those most in need of support to get into work and training."*

Jenny

Despite the range of projects visited, the common issues all groups faced were funding difficulties and short-term contracts. The group felt that one or two years was an impossibly short time span for an initiative to achieve lasting results, especially with so few staff in place.

*"One or two strong people in each seemed to be keeping the initiative afloat, putting much strain on their own health. The dedicated workers and volunteers seemed to do this without complaint as they realised the alternative might well be the risk of the initiative collapsing."*

When asked to describe what the group thought of the Work Start cafe, the group replied:

*"Work Start was a really special place - it was humbling to visit. The trainees' self esteem went through the roof when we gave them the aprons. They just appreciated our visit so much!"*

The gardening project at Gorebridge was of particular interest to the group. The Gorebridge volunteers spoke of how valuable gardening had become to them: *"Growing puts you in touch with your soul - it helps overcome depression, anxiety and puts you back in touch with your self again. It's about total wellbeing."*

Visiting these initiatives instantly kick started the networking process, which the tour aimed to achieve. Names and addresses were being swapped to arrange follow up meetings and phonecalls. Many of the groups visited were also

# DAY 3

## WHAT WE DID!

*"The success of the project is emphasised in our comments book where many people have stated how they have benefitted from learning new recipes, practical knowledge of basic cooking skills or just enjoyed having a proper lunch. These services would otherwise not have been available."*

Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre Annual Report

*"Listening to grass roots and recognising that the community have lots of skills to be shared, and supported is crucial to the development of the Borders strategy. We need the community to be involved from the start and throughout the whole process".*

Anila Chughtai, Borders Health Board

*"Communication between health promotion departments throughout the country is lacking - similar resources are being created in different areas - we need to start sharing rather than reinventing the wheel!"*

Carol

*"We encourage mums to recreate the environment of the centre and the role food plays here in their own homes. We encourage them to buy a dining room table and chairs if they can so that food plays a focal and organised role in their family's life."*

Liz Hay, Family Centre Staff Member

### Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October

Before leaving Dalkeith, the tour made a quick, but extremely worthwhile visit to the **Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre**. Sheila Burnfoot, Project Manager, had invited a number of project volunteers to talk about their work over the past seventeen years. Until recently the project operated a successful community café and coop, but funding difficulties have forced these successful ventures to close in the meantime.

Southern Exposure afterwards travelled to the Border's town of Melrose to meet Anila Chughtai, a Public Health Nutritionist for Borders Health Board. Anila explained her involvement with the development of a Borders Food and Health Strategy. The group also had a chance to look at the resource section of the **Border's Health Promotion Department**.

Afterwards the group travelled to a café in Kelso called **Under the Sun**, which promotes the work of fair trade organisations such as Tradecraft and TearFund. It was the perfect setting for meeting Doctor Nancy Woodhead from **Earthward**, which is an organisation that provides practical support and training in permaculture and growing. Nancy has been involved with a number of community food projects, and was keen to share her expertise with the tour, particularly since many of them are interested in community gardening initiatives.

The afternoon was spent at the **Kelso Family Centre**, which recently was awarded a Scottish Community Diet Project Grant to develop its food work, and the **Burnfoot Community Health Project** in Hawick.

## DAY 3

# WHAT WE LEARNED!!

*"Disordered eating patterns are also openly discussed and dealt with at the centre as a mother's unhealthy relationship with food can lead to disrupting their children's relationship with food too."*

Kelso Family Centre, staff member

*"There is no stigma attached to coming to the centre".*

Kelso Family Centre, staff member

*"Burnfoot is slightly outside Hawick and is seen as a separate area. It is situated in a council house at the end of a small row of shops for the scheme. Transport, and shopping are the key issues for this community as there is only one small shop in the scheme. Car ownership in rural areas is vital - not a luxury. However statistically car ownership is often used as an indicator of affluence, so rural areas like Burnfoot often miss out on funding opportunities."*

Kenny Richardson, Burnfoot

*"The project is a safe place to come to. It was slow to take off with the community, but now that trust has been built up, it is very much part of the Burnfoot community fabric."*

Kenny Richardson, Burnfoot

The Kelso Family Centre is based in a converted council house and consists of two play rooms, a living room and kitchen, which are all beautifully decorated to create a warm and friendly atmosphere. Although small, the staff utilise space very well and work in a highly organised style. Food is central to the work of the project as the group discovered.

Mums take recipes home and learn to cook and prepare food at the centre. Difficult food issues are also dealt with during individual and group sessions with the mums, and not just issues of food poverty. The staff hope to expand the centre in the near future, perhaps into the empty house next door. The popularity of the Centre is thought to be partly due to its accessible location within the council scheme, but from the group's short visit it was clear that much of its popularity must also be due to the positive ethos and attitude of the Centre's staff.

**Burnfoot Community Health Project** is based in another Borders town, Hawick. The Project Coordinator, Audrey Laycock was unable to meet us due to illness, but had arranged a warm reception for us. Kenny Richardson in charge of Border's Health Promotion department and the New Community School Nurse informally chatted to us about the work of the project and the positive impact it has made on the community of Burnfoot. The work of the project is valued greatly locally. It is home to the community dentist, an aromathrapist, and the community nurse. It also has set up a breakfast club in conjunction with the new community school only minutes away from the project as well as being involved in a wide range of other health promoting work.

# DAY 4

## WHAT WE DID!

*"The rendezvous cafe was another special project, which had a real buzz about it. Despite funding hurdles to jump, the staff and volunteers have created a real safe haven for its members to come along to relax, learn and eat well."*

Carol

*"The ground rules set by the members help create a secure and pleasant atmosphere - everyone is made to feel important."*

Cafe Staff Member

*"You can come anytime and feel really listened to. It's not just about good food."*

Cafe Customer

*"Money and lack of staff again were the problems experienced here. It doesn't matter what corner of the Scotland you visit,"*

Catriona

*"Food was the vehicle to get everyone together and from this many other activities can take place."*

Cafe Staff Member

### Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October

The final day of Southern Exposure was spent in Dumfries. With the help of Joy Cherkaoui, a health promotion worker with **Dumfries and Galloway Health Promotion Department**, the tour had the opportunity to visit the **Rendezvous Community Café in Dumfries**, which is one of the many successful community food initiatives in the Dumfries and Galloway area.

The Rendezvous Community Café is run by the national Schizophrenic Fellowship for users of mental health services specifically, but all the community is welcome to eat within the café premises.

Joy chatted with the group about other initiatives in the area including the Food Train in Dumfries and the Kelloholm Community Cafe.

## WHAT WE LEARNED!

Meeting the members and workers at the Rendezvous Cafe gave another dimension to the range of community food activity, which exists in rural areas. The group commented again on the similarity of the problems encountered at this project with those found elsewhere. They also were inspired by the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff and volunteers, despite the funding difficulties they faced. As one participant commented:

*"community food activity is really a labour of love when you consider the odds you're often up against. Seeing work like this, however, makes all the effort seem so worthwhile."*

# CONCLUSION

In less than four days, the Southern Exposure tour uncovered many shared concerns and hopes about rural community food activity in Scotland as we approach the end of the 20th Century. In particular it highlighted the great need for more networking opportunities in rural areas as feeling isolated and forgotten about are often big issues for the groups and workers we met. As distance and cost are the greatest barriers preventing this happening, financial support for further trips would be essential.

Here are some concluding remarks made by the group:

*"Under the pressure of a very short time-scale, it was difficult to visit all the many possible projects on route, and those that we did see we could only spend a limited amount of time at. However, all project's visited seemed to be delighted that we included them in the tour."*

Lizanne

*"Being on this trip has taught me that we are not alone - many, many people are addressing similar issues and needs in many rural and urban areas."*

Carol

*"This boost in confidence to both the groups visited and the visitors was so apparent throughout the trip and made the whole process more than worthwhile."*

Jenny

*"It's given me a lot more confidence to know that the problems I face in my own work are shared by many others - the trip has helped me to keep going forward!"*

Jenny

*"It was good fun to be on the trip and meet so many different people with different ideas, but stemming from the same motivation."*

Graeme

*"It was a pleasure to meet so many dedicated and enthusiastic workers and volunteers throughout the trip and to travel with such an optimistic and motivated group. Together I hope we have captured a snap shot of life in rural Scotland in these pages and conveyed to you a little of the energy and warm hospitality we consistently received throughout our trip."*

Lizanne

*"Being on the trip has helped me make links with projects on the mainland as well as with others on the tour. Listening to the experience of others, you appreciate the pitfalls to avoid as well as learn about many successful ideas, which I hope to be able to take back and share with others on Islay. More than anything the tour has helped me be more confident about talking about my own work on Islay. The encouragement I have received from others has made me realise how well we are getting on!"*

Robert

*"I've really enjoyed the experience and I'm glad I was able to go. The tour really inspired me and has cheered me up! It was very useful to me. Thanks!"*

Shay

*"We have learned how essential it is that all the community are involved in the setting up of a community food initiatives from the start, especially its young people."*

Shay

*"At first I was apprehensive about going to projects and meeting middle class talkers. However, I have been pleasantly surprised, as it is all grass roots initiatives we have visited and no "suits" in sight that only talk a good game! Instead I've met a lot of people who are actually doing what is needed together with local communities, and it's been very worthwhile."*

Catriona

# CONTACT ADDRESSES

## **Six Mary's Place**

Raeburn Place  
Stockbridge  
Edinburgh EH4 1JH  
Tel: 0131 332 8965

## **Newbattle Abbey College**

Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 311  
Tel: 0131 663 1921

## **East Lothian Roots and Fruits**

Pamela McKinlay  
82 High Street  
Tranent EH33 1HH  
Tel: 01875 615 423

## **Work Start Oak Tree Café**

Mr Marsden  
Greenhall Community Education Centre  
Gawkshall, Gorebridge EH22 4PE

## **Gorebridge Community Health Project**

Ian Stewart  
The Brown Building  
80 Hunterfield Road  
Gorebridge EH23 4TT  
Tel: 01875 823 922

## **Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre**

Sheila Broadfoot  
10 Woodburn Road  
Dalkeith EH22 2AT  
Tel: 0131 663 0440

## **Borders Health Promotion**

Anila Chuthtai  
Dingleton HospitaChiefswood Road,  
Melrose, TD6 9HN  
Tel: 01896 823195

## **Dr Nancy Woodhead**

Earthward  
The Garden Cottage  
Lees Stables  
Coldstream  
TD12 4LF  
Tel: 01890 882 448

**Kelso Family Support Centre**

Liz Hay  
47 Orchard Park  
Kelso  
Tel: 01573 224 533

**Burnfoot Community Health Project**

Kennilworth Avenue  
Burnfoot  
Hawick TD9 8EQ  
Tel: 01450 375 730

**Rendezvous Café**

20 Brewery Street  
Dumfries  
Tel: 01387 259 272

**Dumfries and Galloway Health Promotion Department**

Joy Cherkaoui  
Nithbank  
Dumfries, DG1 2SD  
Tel: 01387 244 507

**Graeme Hamilton, Robert Howison and Carol Muir**

C/O Islay and Jurra Health Promotion Project

The Surgery, Back Road

Port Ellen

Islay, Argyll PA42 7DR

[Carol.Islay.argclyde@pop3.hiway.co.uk](mailto:Carol.Islay.argclyde@pop3.hiway.co.uk)

Tel: 01496 302 683

**Shay Giles**

Jamestown Farm Grange, Keith Morayshire

B55 6NA

**Jenny Mclean**

Health Promotions 239 High Street

Elgin

Tel: 01343 545246

**Catriona Muir**

Office Unit 2

Balivanich Benbecula

South Uist

Tel: 01870 602 539

## **THANKYOU!**

**The Scottish Community Diet Project would like to thank all those who participated in the tour, all the projects and organisations visited, the project workers in the Highlands and Islands who helped the SCDP recruit volunteers, and most importantly Gordon McAlonan for driving the mini-bus. Many thanks to you all. Your enthusiasm and cooperation has been greatly appreciated.**



**Participants of Southern Exposure at  
Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre, Dalkeith**



**Participants of Southern Exposure at  
Burnfoot Community Health Project, Hawick**