



Press Coverage

Norma D. Hunter

Arts Visitor

2008

CELEBRATIONS FOR ARTS VISITOR

THE career path change which brought Huntly arts visitor Norma Hunter to her current position was celebrated at her recent graduation.

Former nurse and mother-of-two, Norma graduated with a BA (Hons) in Sculpture from Robert Gordon University's Gray's School of Art.

Norma (52) gained direct entry into the fourth-year of the course after previously completing a BA in Fine Art at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), after working with Deveron Arts to deliver education projects complimenting their artists-in-residence programmes.

Norma has taken up the post of Arts Visitor, a unique pilot role in collaboration with Creative Scotland, Deveron Arts and the local cancer support group, based on the model of an NHS Health Visitor.

The role will allow Norma to work with families and the local community, supporting their cultural health by encouraging participation in art projects.



Hats off to Gray's School of Art graduate Norma Hunter who changed career to become a mature student and has taken up a position with Deveron Arts.

BROTHERS HISTORIC WOOD WORK



Pictured with art student Norma Hunter are brothers Stanley and Danny Alexander who planted trees on the Battlehill on Sunday and were there when the wood was planted in 1947. Among the trees they helped to plant were some which are part of Norma's university project to create a labyrinth with trees.

SUNDAY'S community tree planting event at the Battlehill Wood was of special significance for two Huntly men.

Brothers Danny and Stanley Alexander were both involved when the Battlehill was planted with trees in 1947 and went along specially to be part of Huntly's history for a second time!

Danny, who is 85 and Stanley younger at 79, had read about the tree planting event in The Huntly Express and decided that since they had worked at the original planting in 1947, they ought to be part of the work gang again!

"It was such a fine day, it really was grand up on the top of the hill," said Stanley.

Danny and Stanley found themselves involved in a special planting operation, assisting Gray's School of Art student, Norma Hunter who had marked out a special labyrinth of trees which will form a pathway high up on the hill.

The two men planted some special oak trees and also got stuck in to helping plant some of the other broad leaved specimens.

Stanley recalled, "In 1947, I had not long left school and was working in forestry. I was just the loon and had

to carry the trees in for other folk to plant.

"I never thought that I would see the Battlehill which I helped to plant, felled and planted again. I had not been up to the Battlehill for a good few years but it certainly was grand to be there on Sunday," said Stanley.

Danny, had returned to work for the Forestry Commission after being demobbed from the Navy.

Danny recalled that the winter of 1947 when the first trees were planted was bitterly cold and workers had to endure sleet and snow as they put the trees into the ground.

"It was just after the war and the Forestry Commission planted the trees for Huntly Town Council. Timber had a good value because it was just after the war but of course the value of timber went down

"It's good to see the wood being looked after. It was fine it was cut before it blew down. The new wood will be a rare place to have a walk as it is all opened up," said Danny.

Stanley and Danny believe they are the only two of the original squad who planted the Battlehill still alive.

ARTS SUMMER SCHOOL TAKES A TRICK



Fun indeed for some of the youngsters who attended the Deveron Arts Summer School.

DEVERON Arts, Arts Visitor Norma Hunter, assisted by local artist Sarah Rumis, ran a very successful week long 'summer school' recently.

The Empty Shop on Bogie Street was transformed into a studio for the group of ten or so youngsters who took part in a series of workshops.

The workshops named the 'Continental Market' linked the weeks of several international artists, who have worked in Huntly in recent years, to the countdown to the start of the 2012 Olympics.

Deveron Arts have hosted artists from all five continents of the world so the youngsters explored their projects, their different cultures, made their own pieces and visited the various artists had left behind

in the Town Collection. Throughout the week the children were involved in a variety of activities such as designing and constructing an obstacle course from cardboard, which they then took turns to complete blindfold as their version of the paralympics.

They made a trip to the Dean's shortbread factory to view David Sherry's 'Health and Safety A-Z' and to find out how shortbread is made.

At the GRA office the youngsters talked about money matters with Carol Henderson.

"Everyday the lunch served consisted of food

from the countries they were exploring and they listened to music from everywhere from China to Australia," said Sarah.

The week long event ended with a picnic and a treasure trail around the

town which the parents of the children completed.

At the end of the week, all the youngsters were awarded gold for participating in Huntly's first multi-cultural summer school.



The obstacle course was great fun.

'EXPRESS' RECYCLED FOR FUTURE REARS!



Arts Visitor Norma Hunter with a project made from headlines, puts her Huntly Express covered seats to good use as she reads, what else but The Huntly Express! (H.E. Photo)

AFTER being read and thoroughly digested, there is little doubt that The Huntly Express is put to all sorts of uses but now copies are being preserved for posterity or perhaps rather posteriors!

Arts Visitor, Norma Hunter has been using old reference copies of Huntly's favourite weekly paper to transform otherwise dull and dreary plastic chairs which were rescued from Deveron Arts basement in the Brander building!

Based on an idea she saw in Edinburgh, Norma, has been arranging layer after layer of pages from The Huntly Express, coating them with a glue mixture then sealing the final layer with several coats of varnish to create a durable layer so that they last for 'rears' to come!

The chairs previously had dull resin seats but using her creative flair, Norma has themed the seats so that literally each one tells a story.

One has weather as its theme while others turn the spotlight on Halloween, the Battlehill

Wood project, Relay for Life and cancer initiatives and Deveron Arts artists in residence.

"There are more seats still to do and plenty of Huntly Express papers so I will do some more as time allows. I might even cover a table or two with the newspaper as they create quite a talking point," said Norma.

The seats will be used in the Deveron Arts Empty Shop studio for functions there including the current series of dinners being held to show appreciation to the hosts of the Town Collection of art works.

Norma's dedication rewarded

EX-NURSE RETURNED TO EDUCATION WHILE HUSBAND'S CARER

A FORMER nurse who gave up her job to care for her husband when he was diagnosed with cancer graduated from the Robert Gordon University yesterday.

Norma D. Hunter, 53, of Kennethmont, who was head nurse at Ladysbridge Hospital at Banff, collected her BA (Hons) in sculpture at the morning ceremony at HM Theatre. Having stopped work to look after Tony, 61, who had developed bowel cancer, she decided to return to education. After completing a BA in fine art at the University of Highlands and Islands, she gained direct entry into the fourth year at RGU.

"I would encourage anyone in a position like mine to do it and to believe in themselves. Anything is possible," she said. "It was hard work, but absolutely worth it. It has been a really interesting journey."

It is also not one that looks like ending any time soon as Mrs Hunter, whose work focuses on social sculptures and public participation, is to take up the newly-created post of arts visitor.

The role, which is being piloted in collaboration with



Norma D. Hunter, who graduated with a BA (Hons) in sculpture

Creative Scotland, Deveron Arts and a local cancer support group, will see her looking after people's "cultural health" and motivating them to participate in art projects.

She said: "I will be supporting people who would like to be involved in the arts, but who are in a vulnerable situation. Getting involved creatively can make a tremendous difference. It has been

very important for our own personal journey. Tony is a former Royal Marine and therefore has a very tough spirit, determined to regain full health. His experiences encouraged me to reassess my life and fulfil my ambition."

Mrs Hunter was joined yesterday by her husband, her mother, Barbara, father, Stephen, and 18-year-old son Gwylm.

ART PICK ME UP PLAN

ART could be just what the doctor ordered in a new project launched by Deveron Arts.

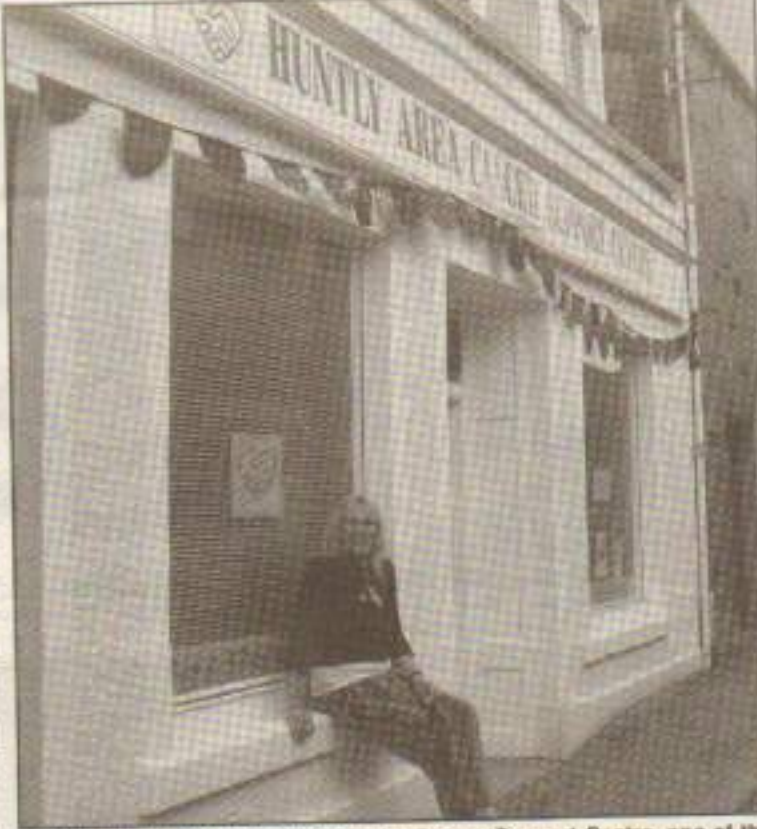
The group is piloting an initiative, called Arts Visitor, which could be taken forward by Creative Scotland and implemented elsewhere.

The inaugural Arts Visitor is well known local artist Norma Hunter, a trained community nurse who is completing her honours Bachelor of Arts Degree at Gray's School of Art.

The methodology of the Arts Visitor is borrowed from the tried and tested NHS health visitor's working methods and will include working in partnership with families and groups, drop in clinics as an alternative form of artist's studio, helping people with special needs to realise their ideas and regular talks to groups and schools.

Funded by a scheme called pARTners, Norma has made an initial link to the Huntly Area Cancer Support Group but aims to work in pARTnership with families, individuals and groups focussing on a broad range of issues which could include everything from teenage pregnancies to drug abuse and the effect of rural isolation.

Working alongside the artist in residence at any particular time,



Art Visitor Norma Hunter, outside the Cancer Support Centre, one of the places where she hopes to encourage people to become involved in art to help them through their illness.

Norma's aim will be to expand upon their work and engage with a wider group of people.

Initially she hopes to make herself available to people affected by cancer, not just the patient but their families and carers, encouraging an involvement in art to be a positive response to the condition.

Joanna Strathdee who underwent treatment for cancer last year and is a member of the management committee at the Deveron

Street centre is delighted about the collaboration with Deveron Arts and the Arts Visitor project.

"This is a very positive step for the support centre without any financial or other implications for us. Clients can decide for themselves if they wish to be involved in Norma's project and make contact with her.

"However, it is potentially an extra tool to help people and families touched by cancer

especially with Norma's health background and the informal and relaxed way she envisages her role.

"An involvement in the arts, in its very broadest sense is likely to keep people active, give them an interest through the period of their illness and be beneficial to their health in the longer term.

"It is important that people with cancer have an interest beyond their illness and I am sure that Norma will

come up with ideas and projects which appeal to a very wide spectrum of people," said Joanna.

Norma's art takes a variety of forms but she regularly works out of doors and previously undertook a project where able bodied people had to complete a number of challenges in wheelchairs to gain an perspective on disability.

The first scheme she intends to implement is to landscape and improve the area to the side of the Stewart's Hall.

"It's the area by which people in wheelchairs can access the hall but is also the place where people go out of the hall to smoke. There is potential there to make it much more attractive and although Aberdeenshire Council have no budget for the work, they are willing to let me do what I can to spruce it up so if anyone wants to come along on a Monday afternoon I'll be pleased to see them," said Norma.

The project is to run for a year during which Norma expects to work with a number of different artists in residence.

"Working with different artists who come to Huntly who will have their own themes, I envisage managing to make contact with a broad audience," she added.