The Deveron Projects family has grown! With new projects come new people, new perspectives, new ideas and new ways of working. Recently we have welcomed in four new colleagues, each from different places and walks of life – recognising, as Joseph Beuys did, that ‘everyone is an artist’.

Between them they have been a chef, a baker, a policeman, a social activist, a bookkeeper, a youth worker, a fluent Arabic speaker, a provider of childcare; they have been students of many varied subjects, ran multiple businesses, and much more besides. They are bringing decades of experience working in both urban and rural environments, and are coming from both near and far to work with us in Huntly. They have diverse interests, ranging from social justice to civic sustainability to food as ‘creative currency’.

But ‘what on earth have these things got to do with ART?’ some in and outside our town may say.

Well, everything, and possibly nothing, we would answer. But if not art, what else have these things got to do with?

The world we live in is complex. Art is merely a conduit that allows us to see multifaceted links. Subjects too often dealt with in isolation, such as climate (change) or migration, identity or belief, food or transport, fashion or education, health or history, can be given room to highlight interlinking prospects. Add local, regional, national and trans-national dimensions, migration and multicultural situations, and we find ourselves in a hotchpotch of opportunities for exchange. Age too, as well as poverty/wealth, gender and other demographic separations; these are boundaries that we need not only to overcome, but also to ensure all demographics are given voice in the dialogue.

New voices bring challenge also. How to maintain identity? How to bring individual working methodologies and concepts together? Can all creative inputs survive a democratic process? Are some voices louder than others?

These are challenges we will jostle through over the coming time, through debate, argument and the enthusiastic exchange of ideas. It’s what keeps us and the world around us going. Never avoiding a subject. Always seeing the art in everything, the artist in everybody.

We hope you’ll join us in making our new friends welcome. A handy who’s who can be found inside. Keep an eye out for them and their projects around Huntly - follow the smell of homely spices and fresh bread! Or call by on a Friday lunchtime to meet us all – the door is always open and we’ll make a space at the table.
By Mary Scott

Bogie’s Bonnie Belle is a local traditional love song written from the perspective of a farm worker who went to work for farmer Bogie of Cairnie around 1842. The protagonist falls in love with Bogie’s daughter Isabelle, and she has his baby. He offers to marry her but is shunned by Bogie as being “no a match for my Bonnie Belle and she’s no a match for you”. Later in the song Isabelle marries a tinker.

I found out that Belle was a real person and that the song was based in reality. It was said that in her later life she lived in The Square, Huntly, so I did some more research. During some of her married life she lived at 22/23 The Square, now known as The Square Deal - currently in the process of being bought by Deveron Projects to host community events and future social enterprise.

Belle was Isabelle Morison, and was born in Cairnie parish on 20th September 1823. Her father was Alexander Morison (1783 – 1866), also referred to as Bogie after their house Boghead of Cairnie, and her mother was Jean or Jane Runcie. Isabelle left the family home in 1851 when she married her ‘tinker chap’ James Bowman - born in Old Machar, Aberdeenshire around 1822. He is not listed on any local census in 1841 or 1851 so he might well have been travelling around with his trades at that time.

Bowman had many practical skills and achieved a lot, including establishing the Rothieden Lamp and Tinplate Works at The Square, Huntly in 1851. He became a well-known tinsmith and was famed for his lamps and lanterns, which became known as ‘Bowmans’. An article in the 1899 Aberdeen Journal offers a glowing tribute to James Bowman as a self-made man - his business became ‘Messrs James Bowman and Son’ and its products were dispatched to every quarter of the globe as equipment for both land and sea!

The censuses of 1861, 1871 and 1881 show that Isabelle and her family lived at 22/23 The Square, sharing the building with their domestic servant(s) and another family. The census also reflects the growth of Bowman’s business: from employing 4 men and 1 boy to 11 men, 9 boys and 1 girl. The family continued to climb in society, moving to a much bigger house at Springbank, Bogie Street by 1891, by which time James was a magistrate. In 1892, Bowman – Belle’s humble ‘tinker chap’ – became the first Provost of Huntly. By then the lamp manufacturing business in The Square was largely run by their son James. Isabelle died on 23rd April 1902 and is buried along with her husband and some of their children at nearby Dunbennan Kirkyard.

The question of planting

At the end of a very turbulent week of politics at the start of September, artist Clemens Wilhelm sat in a crowded Huntly Square beside his Weeping Willow Tree. Political events had once again placed a large question mark over its planting, which is due to take place to mark the day that the UK leaves the EU.

The bench the artist sat on was not The Bench, which has been expectantly reserving the spot on the south bank of the Deveron since before 29 March, the previous deadline for Brexit. At the time of writing, plans are afoot for an evening of fire, music and ceremony to mark A Day In History on October 31st. But whether it will be the day of Brexit remains to be seen. Keep all proposed dates in your diary.
As part of the Hairst farmers market in the Square, Future Fruit artists Sarah Gittens and Jonathan Baxter led screenprinting and the mapping of Hairst’s fruit trees over local cider tasting. Responding to the artists’ invite through space and time, Sir Patrick Geddes made an appearance, asking people to consider how ecology and geology have made possible all human endeavour.

With facilitation from the Hairst Climate Action group, a People’s Assembly was held, with open discussion of the Hairst Food Plan. The weekend ended in the sunshine at Leith Hall, with a foraging walk led by Leanne Townsend, looking at the nutritional delights of hogweed, hawthorn and other herbs.

Huntly Hairst 2019

Hairst – Huntly’s food and farming festival – is an ideal time to discuss our connections to food culture, the landscape and agriculture. Led by the Town is the Garden team, Deveron Projects’ programme offered critical and sensory exploration of these themes.

Stephen Brandes from Cork based surrealist gastronomy collective Domestic Godless posed the question ‘what will we find ourselves eating if war, Brexit or climate change cause the supermarket shelves to empty?’ Creative solutions tasted included Cork harbour water cuppa soup, pesticide-free (and pest-laden) broccoli tempura, aquatic rabbit pancakes, and 1000 Gauloises ashtray ice cream.

Artists, Farming, Farms

By Dr Elisabetta Rattalino
(Friday Lunch speaker, August 2019)

Artist Gianfranco Baruchello (b.1924) ran a farm in the countryside south of Rome for almost eight years in the 1970s. When presenting his farming project Agricola Cornelia S.p.a., the artist wrote that he could sympathise with why farmers leave the land. Instead of depending on the unpredictability of natural phenomena for making a living, they chose the city to decrease the uncertainties in their lives.

Agriculture, from growing a few tomatoes in our gardens to large-scale farming, is one of the practices through which we negotiate our relationship with the unpredictability of nature. If we consider the partners of this relationship as equals, we could describe agricultural goods as the products of human-non-human collaboration. Soil, atmospheric agents, water; the moon and sun; plants, whose seeds have either been selected by farmers or propagated by non-human agents; mushrooms; bacteria, insects, birds, mammals – that transit through or reside in an area; and last but not least, the farmers that dwell in and work the land. All take part in the process, which is also heavily informed by agricultural and political polices, international markets and corporations and consumer choice.

Over the past seven decades, we humans – humans in general, but with different shares of responsibility – have not been great partners in this collaboration. Environmental activist Vandana Shiva reports in Ones vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom, to provide 30% of the food that the world population needs, the current food and agricultural industrial system consumes ten times the energy needed in previous systems of cultivation. This has destroyed 75% of the soil, water and biodiversity. More than 90% of agricultural varieties have already disappeared and 75% of vegetal genetic diversity has been brought to extinction by the monocultures adopted by industrial agriculture.

Yet, in the current climate crises, there are virtuous initiatives that attempt to counteract this dishoovering course of action. Proposing alternative forms of art production and collecting traditional farming knowledges, artist and agro-ecologist Fernando García Dory has been running long-term projects with farmers and shepherds in the Asturias region of Spain. The Casa delle Agriculture (Home of Agricultures) was founded in 2011 by two farmers, a journalist and an economist. This initiative takes over abandoned land in the south of Italy to create communities of like-minded members experimenting with organic growing, partially based on the geneticist Salvatore Ceccarelli’s studies of agricultural planting in Syria. There are many more. I wonder whether, despite their differences, these artist-run agricultural practices aren’t far from what we wish in 2019?

Each in their own ways, these initiatives have infiltrated the human-non-human constellations of agriculture. By operating locally, in specific environmental and socio-political circumstances, they have been proposing and adopting alternatives to industrial farming production. Since land art in the late 1960s, artists have been dealing directly with agriculture, engaging beyond the pictorial representation of cultivated landscapes. These recent farming projects try to establish ‘community of practices’, creating learning networks that develop through practice - informal groups drawn together by common challenges and opportunities, where knowledges and skills can be shared. In a time when we need to reimagine our modes of living together and even our species’ survival, these projects attempt to reconfigure the unbalanced world created by our very human fear of uncertainty.

Rippling of the flax

We’re now more than halfway through the research year of Christine Borland’s inquiry into flax growing traditions. In September, Christine completed a residential flax-working course in Oxfordshire, and will combine this physical knowledge with that rediscovered by Maureen Shaw in her research with the Highland Folk Museum in Kingussie. July asked us to reconnect with the echoes of linen production in the land ahead of the flax harvest. August saw the golden test crops of flax drying in their stocks. In October, the Rippling – the removal of the seeds from the heads of the flax – will be the start of the many physical processes that will eventually turn the plant into fibres for cloth.

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LOCAL/GLOBAL ZA’ATAR SEASONING

By Neep and Okra Artist-Chef, Kawther Luay

“There is perhaps no more delicious a way to start the day than tearing a piece of bread from the loaf, dunking it first in fruity olive oil, and then dipping it za’atar mix.”

Rawia Bishara, Olives Lemons & Za’atar

Za’atar (pronounced za-ah-ter) most properly refers to the hyssop plant also known as ‘Syrian Oregano’ that’s native to the Middle East, southern Europe and the area surrounding the Caspian Sea. It grows best in the hilly hot climates of Jerusalem, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Turkey, where it flourishes in the wild, sandy soil.

Locals pick, dry and grind the fresh herb to be used as the primary ingredient of the popular eponymous spice blend, adding a trio of salt, sesame seeds and sumac – a tangy crimson spice, which lends its distinctive sourness.

The name Za’atar therefore, refers to both the fresh herb, and the spice blend, used so frequently it can be viewed more like a form of seasoning - it is to Arabs what soy sauce is to Asians. It packs a sharp-cut savoury punch, of which a small sprinkling will transform all kinds of dishes. More commonly it is mixed with olive oil into a paste ‘za’atar wu zayt’ and spread over bread dough that bakes within minutes in searing hot mud ovens for a midday snack, or spooned over grilled meats, salads, veg, pulses, poached eggs and stews.

There are subtle differences in taste between Palestinian za’atar and Turkish, for example. It’s a plant that tastes of its locality - the place and the soil in which it’s grown – and so therefore does the seasoning.

In the spirit of the Neep and Okra project’s local/global 50/50 philosophy, we are substituting the herb Za’atar with similar tasting local equivalents - a medley of homegrown dried thyme, dried oregano and wild nettle seeds.

RECIPE: LOCAL/GLOBAL ZA’ATAR

2 tbsp sesame seeds
1/4 cup sumac
3 tbsp dried oregano
2 tbsp dried thyme
1 tbsp dried nettle seeds (or more thyme if unavailable)
1 tsp salt

Toast the sesame seeds in a hot frying pan until golden brown. Grind the sesame seeds in a mortar and pestle or food processor for a few seconds. Mix together all the remaining ingredients and store in an airtight container.

Call in to the Barter Shop at 8 Castle Street for a wee taste of Kawther’s local/global Za’atar blend.

ZA’ATAR POACHED EGG BRUNCH

In a shallow pan fry 1 chopped leek and 1 chopped garlic clove in 1 tbsp butter on a medium heat, until softened. Add a large handful of chopped spinach/kale/chard - whatever leafy green you have at hand – and cook until wilted. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Make two wells in the vegetable mixture and crack an egg into each, seasoning the eggs individually also. Cover with a lid to poach over a low heat until the whites are cooked and the yolks runny.

Prepare a za’atar paste by putting 1 tbsp za’atar in a bowl, and mixing in enough olive to create a runny consistency.

Once the eggs are ready, garnish with some crumbled feta, chopped parsley and spoonfuls of za’atar paste.

Serve with warm bread and sliced tomatoes on the side.
Conversation between Deveron Projects Director, Claudia Zeiske and Huntly & District Development Trust Director, Donald Boyd.

CZ: Good morning Donald, we wanted to talk about the future of Huntly, our town and especially our town centre. You come from a shopkeeper’s family. Boyds of Huntly was an important business on Huntly’s Square. What do you remember?

DB: Yes, my family had a drapery shop on The Square for three generations. When I was a child, my granddad and then my dad were running the business. In those days, the town centre was full of shops and, as well as helping out at Boyds, I spent a lot of time after school upstairs in Rosier’s record shop and also in Black Donald’s Craft Shop - where Square Deal is now.

CZ: Wow, I did not know this. Deveron Projects is hoping to purchase Square Deal and bring it back to life again. What do you think has changed since you were a child in the 70s/80s? What caused the current feel of “Huntly having lost its heart”?

DB: That’s a complex combination of things: internet shopping, digitisation, supermarkets, changes in lifestyle and working patterns, growth of other places like Inverurie which back then were the same size as Huntly. All of those are reasons why people don’t come to town and why businesses don’t thrive like they used to. Our lovely town centre needs to find a new purpose.

CZ: When I came to Scotland in 1995, Huntly was by far the most pretty, most lively looking town in the North East. But it feels sometimes we have lost the battle against the tide of globalisation since then. With the bank, tourist information and many shops closed, the old post office shut and the Square reduced to a car park; how do you/were you imagine it to look like in 2, 5, or 10 years’ time? What do we want Huntly to be known for? You’ve travelled a lot, lived in other places – what kind of ideas do you have in your rucksack? What are your most colorful dreams for Huntly?

DB: Our Square and adjacent streets are fantastic - they create a real feeling of being in the heart of a community. But the buildings and the public realm do need some TLC. And greener! We need to create experiences for people, things that they can’t easily access online or elsewhere. We have to create engaging reasons for people to want to choose to live here or visit us. The Huntly Hairst event was a good example of what could be done. In the early 2000s I lived through the transformation of Delft in the Randstad of The Netherlands. While a totally different context, they had a vision of improving the quality for all in the city centre. They did this by reducing the need for private cars through supporting infrastructure (public transport, cycle lanes, etc), so it was easy to nip in without giving up civic space to parking. More and more places are doing this and Huntly lends itself well to that type of approach too. Oh, and maybe install a retractable roof over The Square to protect us from the rainshowers! What are your thoughts?

CZ: I am still fetching ideas. Talking about ‘Square Deal’: the term was first coined by President Theodore Roosevelt to work against plutocracy and for a more substantial equality of opportunity “a square deal for every man, big or small, rich or poor”. This kind of seems a good starting point for us, but how do we implement this for today’s situation? Have you seen any places in Scotland or elsewhere where people took their fate in their own hands? What would you love Huntly to be known for? A green town, an eco-town, having an orchard or a forest on the square?

DB: I’m not attached to the idea that Huntly must be known for one thing or the other. When we did the Room to Roam branding with you those years ago we all felt it impossible to squeeze Huntly into one thing. It felt artificial before we found a holistic description of our town identity. Yes, I want Huntly to be a green town, an eco town, a cycling town but I want all places to be like that - and I believe that in time they will have to be so.

CZ: Secondhand shops and upcycling seem to have a good footing at the moment... What you have been doing in Huntly for nearly 25 years now has certainly helped put Huntly on the map.

DB: I think people are actually starting to look to Huntly just now for the work that is going on here. At the Development Trust Scotland conference recently we had lots of name recognition and good feedback. I think others are talking a better game than us but we are actually doing it! There is the Greener Kirkcaldy initiative, Fintry is keen on renewable energy, but we are active in Huntly on so many fronts! In Europe there are also interesting examples but their different institutional structures make comparison difficult. Flexibility is important, we must be agile and able to adapt.

CZ: The solution is to talk a lot to each other, about all kind of things. I believe in Joseph Beuys’ mantra, that ‘everyone is an artist’. We just need to unlock the ideas. Talking, walking, cooking and eating together help form fresh thinking. We need to give ourselves the time to do this with fun, friendship and creativity in mind.

DB: Huntly is the type of settlement that we need in the 21st Century: compact layout, easy to get around on foot and bike. Strong community, authenticity. There is a place for everyone here, but we need to work hard to make that clear.

CZ: Donald, I thank you for this conversation. I look forward to our walk next week.

DB: Thanks Claudia. I agree to the making time part. This is a good start!

CZ: You are a poet! I know it!

Illustration: Jacques Coetzee
Deveron Projects at Huntly Hairst 2019: Cooking in a Cataclysm with Stephen Brandes; Future Fruit Stall with Jonathan Bates and Stuart Greens; Peoples Assembly with Huntly Climate Action Group; The Weeping Willow Tree with Clemens Wilhelm.
/ Events Calendar

/ October

**Thursday 3 - Saturday 5**, Strokkurhóls to Schloss-Meyerburg, Kiltfestival March. Claudia Zeiske and Partnerlook! artist Gabrielle Konor lead a 3-day discursive walk through the German countryside.

**Friday 4**, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen. Hillary Musgrave: Books Abroad

**Saturday 5**, 9am-1pm, Huntly Farmers Market. Cafe philosophy with Neep & Okra. Start a conversation with Kawther Luay, our Neep & Okra Chef-Artist

**Wednesday 9**, 10am-12pm, 8 Castle Street. Flax ‘Rippling’ workshop with Christine Borland. Join us to remove the seeds from the test crop of flax, and find out more about the ideas behind Christine’s project over coffee and flax cake. Booking recommended.

**Wednesday 9**, 8pm, Förderverein Corbusierhaus Berlin. Schottland meets Havelland discussion event. Part of Partnerlook! project.

**Friday 11**, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen. Haworth Hodgkinson: Music from the Environment

**Friday 18**, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen. Leo Gibson: Brexit and other films: a filmmaker’s response to politics

/ November

**Friday 25**, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen. Joss Allen: Safe European Home

**Monday 28**, New moon

**Monday 28**, 6-8pm, Brander Kitchen. Food Chain cookery workshop: Welsh Cawl (soup) and Ploce are y maen (Welshcakes) with Rhian Davies. Booking essential / £5

**Saturday 2**, 9am-1pm, Huntly Farmers Market. Orchard maintenance session, as part of Sarah Gittens and Jonathan Baxter’s Future Fruit project. Pruning with lunch. Booking recommended.

**Tuesday 12**, Full moon

**Friday 15**, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen. Claudia Zeiske: Rail/Walk to and in the Balkans’ Accursed Mountains


**Tuesday 26**, New moon

**Friday 29**, 1pm, Brander Kitchen. Dawn Tuckwood, Public Health Coordinator for the Marr area: What is public health?

/ December

**Date TBA**, 8 Castle Street. Nurturing social action workshop with Tripod. Details to follow online. Booking essential.

**Friday 6**, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen. Andrea Chappell: The interpretive kilt: representation of identity in traditional dress

**Saturday 7**, 9am-1pm, Huntly Farmers Market. Seasonal Sourdough with Heritage Baker Robert Singer. Learn about making your own starter, plus take some home, along with a recipe

**Thursday 12**, Full moon

**Friday 13**, 1pm, venue TBA. Small Business Lunch. A chance for small businesses to gather, network, and enjoy a festive lunch out. Booking essential. More information online

**Monday 16**, 6-8pm, Brander Kitchen. Food Chain cookery workshop: Zambian Christmas with Muka Simpson. Booking essential / £5

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/ Wishing you a merry Yule from all at Deveron Projects.

Illustrations Rhian Davies
Deveron Projects is based in the rural market town of Huntly, Scotland. We connect artists, communities and places through creative research and engagement. The town is the venue describes the framework in which we work and contribute to the social wellbeing of our town. We have engaged with local people, and their clubs, choirs, shops, schools, churches, bars and discos since 1995.

Our Guests


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