Many people, reports and policies have pointed to a perceived lack of food culture in our town. At the same time Aberdeenshire has in the past two years resettled over hundred people from Syrian communities forced to leave the Middle East. How can we bring these communities together through the sharing of experiences and skills, beneficial to us all?

The aim of the No. 11 café is to work with the vibrant food culture of the Syrian New Scots to explore ways of influencing and diversifying the local diet and food choices in Huntly, whilst providing opportunities for classes and workshops to improve people’s languages, gain experience in cooking and hospitality, and learn from other cultures.

At the heart of the project is the space opened at 11 Gordon Street, a multi-faceted platform: an office, cafe and event space to work, learn, eat and share. No.11 is established from the belief that all aspects of food - from growing and exchange, to cooking and eating together - are an integral part of how we come together and learn from each other as a community.

This is a pilot project. Its goal over the next few months is to sit down and speak with as many people in Syrian community in Aberdeenshire, to find out about their lives in Syria, their journeys to Scotland, and their experiences of building new lives here, in order to understand their needs and priorities. Meanwhile, we are speaking with local organisations and community groups in Huntly in order to understand the needs and priorities of people here, as well as map initiatives already in place so that we might usefully develop a shared programme for the town.

No. 11 CAFÉ

The No. 11 café is a community food initiative funded by the Aspiring Community Fund, started in 2017 by anthropologist Marc Higgin with Lebanese-British artist Aya Haidar and two trainees from the Syrian community in Aberdeenshire: Abeer Alhalabe and Hayat Shahoud.
MAKE No 11 YOUR OWN

WHAT TIME SHOULD NO11 OPEN? WHAT TIME SHOULD IT CLOSE AT NIGHT?

WHAT MOVIE SHOULD WE SCREEN? WILL THE SPACE BE DARK ENOUGH FOR THE SCREENING? DO WE NEED CURTAINS?

HOW MANY MUGS, CHAIRS AND TABLES DO WE NEED FOR A COMMUNITY SPACE? HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOULD WE EXPECT? FAMILY? TEENAGERS?

WHAT KIND OF FOOD SHOULD WE COOK? HEALTHY FOOD? WHAT IS HEALTHY FOOD?

WILL THE PLANTS SURVIVE?

DRAWING BY KATY STEWART
Marc Higgin and Aya Haidar in conversation

MH: My first question: what was it that interested you enough to come up with your boys to north east Scotland and the snow?

AH: Community engagement and storytelling sit at the heart of my practice. My work is socially and politically engaged and I always place myself in situations and environments that contribute to shape it. This project deals with Syrian refugees, a diaspora that I am very familiar with from a region that is my home. Exploring language and cultural disparities is also a fascination of mine and this is central to the development of this project. Without doubt, food, nutrition, sharing and heritage are attributes that we are trying to pull on as a channel to tell stories and overcome barriers, which is an intrinsic part of my life anyway. Moving up here with my two kids was an easy decision. The project is inspiring and dynamic and I always bring my kids with me because I feel it is important for them to see me working and to follow this journey with me so they can grow as mindful individuals too (even if they are just 3 and 1).

As an anthropologist who has researched and explored artists and their practices, what is the greater pull for you? The social element to this project or the creative?

MH: That’s an interesting question. For me, the social and the creative are impossible to tease apart: making something always involves exchange and encounter, even if it’s just with yourself; and social relations always have an element of improvisation, they are necessarily creative. And this project, along with many of the projects here at Deveron, is a good example of that. So the short answer is both: how can I be part of creative and productive ways of bringing different communities together and helping people build their lives.

AH: When dealing with a group of Syrians who do not speak any English, how are you finding the language barrier and what have been the greatest feats in your communication with them?

MH: I won’t lie, the language barrier has been difficult and frustrating. But in some ways, less than I expected. Firstly, because having you on board has allowed us to speak with ease and warmth with the families, to find out their experiences and what might be helpful for them in terms of learning the language, the customs and culture and finding work. But secondly, every day working with our trainees - Hayat and Abeer - becomes an exchange of language and humour. Asking the name for coffee becomes a lesson on the Arabic alphabet, trying to get my tongue and ear around really unfamiliar sounds. I’ve been given the name of Abu Ben now, which I love.

AH: If you could choose ONE person to walk through these doors and into this space (dead or alive, from any point in history/today/future), who would it be and why? Also, what would you serve them?

MH: Local hero Michael Forbes, who refused to sell his farm to Donald Trump for the future president’s golf course, and endured years of threats and bullying. And I’d serve him one of Hayat’s spicy lentil soups to warm him and give courage for him to carry on the fight against those who presume they can buy anything and anyone. And a slice of Katy’s butternut squash cake.

AH: How candid they are about experiences most of us could never imagine, let alone live through. Despite all this, their warmth, positivity, acceptance and wanting for betterment is inspirational and motivational. I find their humour quite beautiful, their reactions and reflections on western society, how comparatively watery and weak instant coffee is to theirs, how astonishingly admirable western work ethic is, and how insurmountably freezing Scottish weather is to them always makes me laugh! They have charm and warmth and that transpires without even being able to understand them!

Thank you to Marc Higgin and Aya Haidar for having this conversation.

What is your favourite aspect about this space? Literally, a teapot? Mug? Piece of furniture? Feature? What floats your boat?

MH: You mean apart from the Hawaiian sunset wall clock (kindly on loan from Gordon Rural Action, along with all our furniture and tableware)? It’s a close call but if pressed it’d be the blackboard that covers half the space. It doesn’t concern food directly but instead holds the traces of the conversations that take place here: maps of ideas and places, to do lists, children’s drawings, telephone numbers, the day’s menu....

AH: That reminds me of one of the stories Hayat told us over a lunch of falafel at her home, in which she said that one of the only things she took from their home in Homs when they fled the fighting was her falafel press. It served her for five years in the camps in Turkey and was one of the few things she brought to Scotland. A piece of kitchen equipment, and food, so much a part of her and her family’s way of life that they wouldn’t live without it.

MH: What has most surprised you in the conversations we have been having with the Syrian families?

AH: Also, this shared work space between us and The Town is the Garden can only be linked through food. From source to process to product. And lastly, food is enticing, it is a necessity and is enticing for locals to take the first step in. We sit down at the table and engage with the public, over a slice of butternut squash and thyme cake. Crazy and wild. A bit like our project!
Events Calendar

/ January

Friday 12, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Aya Haidar, The Fabric of Memory

Saturday 13, 10am, meet at Brander Kitchen
Walking Without Walls
Slow Marathon Training Session - 8k

Saturday 13, 17, Battle Hill Lodge, At Home
Claudia Zeiske shares her reflection on her Home to Home project.

Wednesday 17, New Moon

Thursday 18, 7pm, No. 11
The Town is the Garden
Field Notes on Surviving the Future series: Community Energy

Friday 19, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Dr Emily Savage (University of St Andrews), Medieval Herbals

Saturday 20, 10am-3pm, No. 11
The Town is the Garden Workshop
Planning for the Growing Season

Friday 26, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Aastha Chauhan, Home Remedies and Free Advice in a Small Community Radio in the Upper Himalayas

Saturday 27, 12 - 4pm, No. 11
Huntly Meets Syria
A celebratory afternoon of music and food

Wednesday 31, Full Moon

/ February

Friday 2, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Ruth Lamb, Govan Community Project

Saturday 3, 11am, No.11
Syrian Coffee Morning
Meet Katie R Johnston @ Farmers’ Market "Katie Rose Johnston will be joining Deveron Projects for a two month residency, exploring our relationship with ceramics in the home.

Thursday 15, New Moon

Friday 9, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Alastair Wilson, Future of farming in Rhynie

Saturday 10, 10am, meet at Brander Kitchen
Walking Without Walls
Slow Marathon Training Session - 15k

Tuesday 13, 1pm, No. 11
Pancake Tuesday

Thursday 15, New Moon

Thursday 15, 7pm, No. 11
The Town is the Garden
Field Notes on Surviving the Future series: Future proof housing

Friday 16, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talks
Sue Beveridge, Art and FGM

Tuesday 20, 7pm, No. 11
Walking Without Walls
Weeds and Self-heal: What can plants do for our health? Meet the herbalist

Friday 23, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talks
Ffion Smith, Cofé Project (Glasgow)

Saturday 24, 10am-3pm, No. 11
The Town is the Garden workshop
Tree care

/ March

Friday 2, 11am, Village Hall, Braemar
Claudia Zeiske, From Home to Home @Braemar Mountain Festival

Friday 2, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Elena Romero Passeri (University of St Andrews) The botanist, the tea-bush, and the Scottish weather: tales of aclimatization in eighteenth century Edinburgh botanic garden

Friday 2, Full Moon

Saturday 3 - Friday 9
International Women’s Week
A series of events and actions around Huntly will punctuate the week to reflect on what it means to be a woman in 2018.
In collaboration with No 11 Café

Friday 9, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Shizia Nadeem, Amina Muslim Women’s Resource Centre

Saturday 10, 10am, meet at Brander Kitchen
Walking Without Walls
Slow Marathon Training session - 24k

Thursday 15, 7pm, No. 11
The Town is the Garden
Field Notes on Surviving the Future series: Future proof housing

Friday 16, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
MLitt Students from Aberdeen University

Saturday 17, New Moon

Tuesday 20, 7pm, No.11
Weeds, biodiversity and Climate Change: What can weeds do for the well-being of the planet?

Friday 23, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Alecia Neo, Brak (Singapore)

Saturday 24, Brander Garden, 10am
Spring celebration
In collaboration with The Town is the Garden and Walking Without Walls

Friday 30, 1pm, No. 11
Friday Lunch Talk
Katie R. Johnston, Community Crockery

Saturday 31, Full Moon

/ March
Gardener’s Report: The Joy of Planning

Winter is a wonderful time for veg plot planning and contemplating what to grow in 2018.

We were delighted with how many people were keen to join the project and to grow more of their own veg last year. This year, with the addition of a little planning time during the dark months of January and February, we hope to grow enough fresh fruit or veg for every day of the year, whether garden grown, bartered with other growers or foraged from around Huntly.

With this in mind our first workshop of the year, January 20th, is to be a veg plot planning day. There is something very satisfactory about drawing your plot, deciding what to grow and working out your rotation, even if you don’t always stick rigidly to the plan.

As well as thinking about individual’s gardens and growing at the allotment and Brander Garden we are keen to build on good work done by previous projects. The Community Orchard, planted 5 years ago by Networks of Wellbeing and the ‘Bite on the Side’ project initiated by artist Norma Hunter, began a legacy for Huntly, where public space is transformed into edible landscapes, available for everyone. We would like to expand the existing orchard down by the meadows as well as develop further sites across town where food is available or where the community can grow more of their own. Our second workshop, February 24th, will be at the orchard with pruning expert Vicky Flood. We have also been working with the secondary school in Huntly and are in the process of supporting them to make a plan for their allotment and create a new composting site.

We will be holding an information evening in February to let people know what we are planning and to gather any further ideas people may have about planting edibles around Huntly.

For those of you who are already part of our project, or would like to join, we are hoping to form a steering group, a group of growers who will influence what the project does, help form ideas and push forward our plans to make Huntly a more sustainable and self-sufficient community. If you would like to be part of the group please let us know. townisthegarden@deveron-projects.com

Winter Garden Jobs

Apart from the sorting of last year’s seeds and ordering for next year there is plenty to do get ready for the new season. Winter is a good time to look at the shape of your plot or garden. Time spent thinking and planning now could save lots of hard work later in the year.

Make sure your tools are clean and sharp. If necessary have them professionally sharpened. Dave Simpson of Simply Sharp will be at our January workshop to give advice on tool care.

Order, or even make, propagators to give seeds a head start. You could also be making cloches, raised beds and even cold frames. Make sure all your pots and seed trays are clean.

If weather permits: continue to remove any perennial weeds ready for spring. Mulching with a layer of landscape fabric, cardboard, or a thick layer of manure or compost will keep most weeds at bay for the start of spring, warming the soil a little too for early plantings. Now is a good time to feed the soil. Manure or compost laid now will be incorporated into the soil by worms and so reduce the need to dig.

Pruning apple trees and other fruit bushes can be done now while they are still dormant and should lead to better crops.

Bare root fruit trees can be planted up until early March and soft fruits can be planted as long as soil is workable. They will benefit from a good manure feed too.

As March approaches choose which seeds you are going to start early in the greenhouse or on windowsills. Seed potatoes should be chitted around February for early sowings.

Finally: don’t forget to sit back and enjoy catching up on some good garden reading. If you are short of a good garden book we have a library at our new base at No11 Gordon Street. The café will be open Wednesdays and Fridays. Feel free to pop in at other times if you see the lights on.

Compost Heap Jelly

A great recipe for using up apple scraps and citrus skin, all for the cost of a bag of sugar.

500g apple cores and peel
500g citrus fruit peel (unwaxed lemon, orange, grapefruit and/or lime), cut into roughly 1cm shreds
Granulated sugar
Juice of 1 orange, lemon or grapefruit (optional)

Put the apple cores and peel and the citrus peel into a saucepan. Add sufficient water to cover. Bring to a simmer and cook slowly for 45-60mins. Turn the fruit into a scalded bag or muslin and leave overnight to drip.

Measure the strained liquid and weight 450g of sugar for every 600ml juice. Return the juice to the pan and add the orange, lemon or grapefruit juice, if using. Bring to the boil, then add the sugar. Stir till dissolved then boil rapidly until setting point is reached, about 10mins or so.

Remove from the heat and stir, always going in the same direction, until all the bubbles have disappeared. Pour into warm, sterilised jars. Seal in the usual way. Use within 12 months.

Adapted from a Pam Corbin Recipe, River Cottage Handbook No.2
Our Guests

Sam Trotman (SSW) - Dr Loren Holm - Fadi Abu Shammala (General Union of Cultural Center, Gaza) - Samar Issa (Syria) - Dr Leslie Mabon (Robert Gordon University) - Neil Tailor (Forestry Commission) - Simon Walker (University of Strathclyde) - Valerie Ross (Gordon School) - Cornelia Offergeld (Museum of Peace, Erlauf, Austria) - Stuart McAdam - David Blyth (Gray School of Art) - Mahmoud Alkurd (artist, Gaza) - Federica Bartolini (The Fife Arms - Braemar) - David Simpson (Huntly) - Joshua Msika (Hutton Institute) - Gerda Ross (Netherlands)

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.

People

Welcome
Alix Rothnie, Intern
Josephine Pierrel, Intern
Abeer Alhalabe, Intern
Hayat Shahoud, Intern

Goodbye
Anna Reid, Intern
Sandra Messow, Intern

Gift / Swap / Share
Every Fri, 9.30am - 5.30pm
No 11 CAFE
A food sharing scheme

No. 11 Cafe
Deveron Projects
11 Gordon Street, Huntly
Open every Wednesday and Friday
10am - 4pm

SLOW MARATHON
Saturday 21 & Sunday 22nd Apr
Tickets on sale from 1st January: £35 (£25 Early Bird ticket)
The first Slow Marathon was conceived by Ethiopian artist Mihret Kebede in 2012. Slow Marathon 2018 is based on the collaboration between artists May Murad from Gaza and Rachel Ashton from Huntly. Inspired by the botanical collections of pacifist Rosa Luxemburg, the artists are mapping out their respective routes by drawing inspiration from the wild plants they find in their respective places. Through Walking Without Walls, Rachel and May will be discovering how we can collaborate artistically and socially despite restrictive political situations.

FOOD CHAIN WORKSHOPS
Evening Workshops Connecting folk and food.
6-8pm, Brander Kitchen, Limited places £5

22 Jan, Koussa Mehshi (stuffed courgettes) with Aya Haidar
19 Feb, Clooty Dumpling with Alison Cockburn
19 Mar, Tiramisu with Elisabetta Rattalino

Contact Us:
Deveron Projects
The Studio
Brander Building
The Square, Huntly
AB54 8BR, Scotland

T: 01466 794494
E: info@deveron-projects.com
www.deveron-projects.com
www.walking-institute.com

Follow us:
on Facebook, twitter and Instagram

Craft Connections
For more info call NOW on 01466 793932 or find them on facebook.

Follow us:
on Facebook, twitter and Instagram

Pins & Needles
Suzanne Gray
01466 568031
8 Castle Street
Huntly
AB54 8BP