

## **Fairfield Farmhouse Community Trust**

### **Vision**

The single remaining building of Fairfield Steadings sits within the LEGUP(now Elder Farm) Community Garden 1019 Govan Road, G51 4AA. The Trust was set up to renovate the building for the benefit of the community. The project is being developed within, and as part of, the Common Good of the City of Glasgow and the people of Govan to whom the Fairfield Steadings and Elder Park were gifted.

Voluntary Workers in the Elder Farm Garden grow free food for the community, and encourage local community members to visit and participate as much as they are able, offering a living and working experience to many who do not currently enjoy a garden. The vision is to use the building as a space and opportunity for life long learning skills immediately transferable to the workplace and home, whilst concurrently upgrading the building, and continuing to use the space to explore sustainable living skills, designs and ideas, involving interested parties within the community in all aspects of the process.

*In an age of austerity, there is no better time to take note of what we have*

### **1 Common Good**

The Common Good is generally understood to be for the benefit of everyone. Philanthropic actions intending to allay the conditions of poverty were to be honoured and profit used for the continued benefit of all. Fairfields was donated to the people of Govan to allay the conditions of environmental poverty brought on families who were supporting heavy industries, which were in turn supporting the merchants and the nation.

Many nations pride themselves on a high standard of education and learning, based on a rich cultural traditions encompassing history, family, humility, honour, humour, compassion, vision, reason and a healthy fear of the Almighty. Scottish Universities produced key philosophers such as David Hume and Adam Smith, establishing the nation as a major contributor to that 18th century "Age of Reason and Enlightenment" and inspiring philosophers and philanthropists for the future. Indeed Scotland like other nations, has a wealth of inspirational figures past and present, many of whom are well known, while the majority pass unnoticed and outwith the Nation's ken and proud of that

The Common Good Fund has over 500 years of philanthropic tradition behind it and our garden and farm building is part of that. And it is only honourable to upkeep that traditions and reserve the space for that for which it was intended: a recreational educational site to encourage and inspire the local community to be the best they can be, and make the very best of their resources to improve their health and welfare, and the health and welfare of future generations to come.

### **2. Beginnings**

Fairfield remaining Steading building sits within the Elder Farm Community Garden. Buildings and site were formerly used by the parks department, but has been vacant for close on 20 years, leaving this B listed building, believed to be one of the Oldest, if not The Oldest, in Govan, to deteriorate through lack of use and occupancy.

A £2.5m project to build a Healthy Living Community complex of buildings on the site was stopped by community pressure as inappropriate. It was viewed to be too big, too commercial, and a threat to the Common Good Status of the site. It was considered that this vast sum could be put to better use within the community, creating jobs in an area which has been repeatedly EU funded to improve the economy, but which funds maddeningly seem to bypass the unemployed in favour of consultant fees and labour from outwith the region.

### **3. Inauguration**

Farmhouse Trust was set up January 2011 - the first AGM of the Fairfield Farmhouse Community Trust was held in the Pearce Institute - another Common Good Asset. The whole community was invited and around 80 or so attended. Fiftyfive members joined the trust and fourteen were elected to the management committee. A draft constitution was reviewed, agreed upon and the first committee meeting was held at the end of the month.

The basis of the Trust was to remain faithful to the Community and to the principles of the Common Good and the original Deed of Gift

### **4. Ethos**

A core team involved in this project were at pains to ensure any work carried out on the building would incorporate at all stages an educational, sustainable, self build ethos, incorporating skilled craftsmanship in the vein of the Galgael and would train local people in the various building skills, including : woodwork, brickwork, stone masonry, roofing, always keeping an eye on producing a building that will always prove to be a boon to the community and not a burden

### **5. First Phase**

The first phase of this work was to make good the roofing and stem the rain that had been seeping into the building over its 20 years neglect. This work would help to dry out the building timbers and enable assessment of work, and resources, ie what was damaged beyond repair and what could be salvaged.

A dedicated group set about this task and in 6 months had sealed off most of the roof from rain, making one of the two pavilions, positioned on either side of the main building, watertight and fit for use as a bothy in bad weather. Shortly after this work was completed, a fire attack destroyed the roof, setting the project back to minus one.

## **6, Tactics**

Clearly a new approach was called for to avoid failure at the hands of arsonists and vandals. The choices were to either secure the site at high cost and still risk failure, alienating the community further, or connect with the wider community and enlist their support. The site after all does belong to them.

So how to get the community to care about the project and adopt their own building? We talked about asking the community what kind of building they would like and / or need. The building is B listed and any upgrade should remain faithful to the original design. However since the conditions of the gift do not allow commerce, we know it is imperative to use modern day skills and knowledge to provide an economical and inexpensive space, that will not fail due to running costs, and will allow the community to share in the exciting journey towards a sustainable and environmentally positive future

## **7, Resources**

We ultimately wish to support

- Stonemasonry
- Woodwork
- Slating
- Sustainable Technology

The rebuilding of the farmhouse would operate as a training project on building skills. We have been in conversation with training projects on stone masonry, who would be interested in working on the building as part of their apprentice training. We have a local roofer who has been helping and advising on the roof of the farmhouse and is also interested in the idea of the project as a way of engaging local kids and young people in taking on some of the responsibility of the work needing done.

## **8. Sustenance**

Good Food is as important to Good Health as is Using Resources Wisely and Engaging with Nature, all of which nourish our bodies, our minds and our good health, saving cost to the public purse and NHS.

### **Note**

Patrick Geddes, an important town planner for the city of Edinburgh, believed in a direct transference of nurturing skills, learned in the garden, to the home and community. He understood the important connection between gardening and learning, and was famously more concerned that his own children should become good gardeners than have a formal education.

## **9. Science**

Engaging with the sciences will bring a useful understanding to subjects currently being discussed in the media and in school. And we believe a community living work experience space will allow people to share their knowledge and skills in much the same way that skills have always been taught, with hands on experience, will nurture real understanding of the subjects discussed in the workplace and the schools, and will nurture from an early age, creative, critical thinkers who will contribute to the well-being of their communities and find themselves working it out, instead of falling at life hurdles because they just don't understand

## **10. Nurture Responsibility**

We hope that once the cloud of failure is removed that young people will begin to accept real responsibilities within the community.

## **11. Built environment**

The architecture in Govan is spectacular and of especial interest recently in the discussion between the old and the very new.

Our building is old and we hope to incorporate both old and new technologies to arrive at a happy and pleasing solution which will continue to be enjoyed by visitors and community members for many many years to come, without having to enforce too much control over who uses what and when

The local buildings are mostly tenements, without gardens or workshops where by default generations teach other generations to fix and design. The first computers and engines were usually built in a shed or garage.

## **12. History**

The building in itself is of huge interest, with many carved stones set into the fabric, which may have come from some ornate and beloved church or chapel, pulled down for its ungodly imagery during the reformation when many ornate buildings were pulled down and used for homely practical purposes, such as byres and barns

We believe it may have been upgraded, with dormer windows fitted to accommodate the School for Domestic Economy for Govan Women, which may have been the first Colleges for Women in Scotland. Currently the address is not known but indications from the Deed of Gift and from articles discussing Lady Elder's Good Works point to this possibility

## Fairfield Farm History Brian McQuade

The land at Fairfield Farmhouse (as part of Govan) originally belonged to the Kingdom of the Britons of Strathclyde. By 1034, Govan and the Strathclyde area had been united (under Duncan 1) to the Scottish/Pictish kingdom of Alba to form what we today call Scotland. In 1136, Govan became a Prebend (associated church) of Glasgow Cathedral and king David 1 granted the area to the cathedral's Archbishops who rented the land out to various tenants.

The first named occupiers of the Fairfield area were the Rowan family who leased it in 1520. During the early 1600s King James V1 of Scotland sold the land to the same family who retained control of it until 1720 when the Oswald's bought it from John Rowen. The Oswald's then adjoined it to their holding of Shieldhall.

Simpson mentions that a Mr. Alex. Thomson rented Fairfield farmhouse and its steading in the early 1800s. Both Fairfield and Shieldhall were sold as one lot in 1837 to a Mr. Johnson, who was the MP for Kilmarnock.

## Govan parish Map 1852

The earliest map on which the farmhouse appears (as part of a complex of buildings) is the Govan Parish Map of 1852 where it is entitled Fairfield Farm Steading.

The northern, riverside section of the Fairfield Estate was bought in 1864 by Randolph, Elder & Co., while the southern Elderpark side, which still contains the farm, was bought by Elder's widow in 1883 as a gift to the people of Govan. It remains so to this day.

Ref : Simpson, A History of Govan, 1987, pp.8; 10; 11; 12; 15; 21; 33; 35, 64

<http://fairfieldfarmhousetrust.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.commongoodjoin.wordpress.com/>

## 13 Diary Progress Notes 2011

- **January 2011**- Inaugural meeting of the Fairfield Farmhouse Community Trust held in the Pearce Institute. Around 80 or so community members attended. 55 people joined the trust and 14 people were elected to the management committee. The trust's draft constitution was reviewed and agreed. The first committee meeting was held at the end of the month.
- **February 2011**- Roger Curtis from Historic Scotland agrees to be co-opted onto the committee to advise on the technical aspects of the renovation. Meeting held with John Gair from GCC to discuss possible scheme of works. GCC agrees to make £10,000 available to repair roof on main building. Trust volunteers to work on roof repairs for East and West pavilions. Two further committee meetings held.
- **March 2011**- Trust writes to GCC CEO to ask for permission to proceed with renovation and re-instatement of building. Trust receives favourable response naming Diane Walker as the new point of contact. Further committee meeting held.
- **April 2011** - City Building gain access to main building to start that building roof repair. No work was completed however as asbestos was discovered. GCC reported that they would arrange for safe disposal however cost would be offset against £10,000 set aside for roof repair. Further committee meeting held.
- **May 2011** - Trust reps hold meeting with Diane Walker to discuss Trust's renovation proposals and ideas for managing the building when complete. Meeting goes well and Diane agrees to draft more formal legal agreement for the parties to consider.
- **June 2011** -Local businessman donates money and the Trust invests in building materials, tools and safety equipment. Volunteers begin work on East Pavilion. Renovation sub-committee satisfied that as asbestos is confined to main building it is safe to proceed with temporary roof repair on pavilions. Further committee meeting held.
- **July 2011** -Bad weather starts to hamper volunteer's efforts. Renovation team insist that roof should only be accessed when it is completely dry. Volunteer safety considered paramount above all else.
- **August 2011**- Bad weather continues to limit access to roof. Volunteers turn their attention instead to inside the pavilions. Tonnes of rubble and debris are hand barrowed from inside building. Trust reps meet Diane Walker to review draft agreement between GCC and Trust. GCC contractor Reigart successfully removes and disposes of asbestos.
- **September 2011**- Decision is made to suspend work on East Pavilion due to overall condition of roof towards wall of main building. Scaffold is erected internally to act as prop and prevent risk of collapse. Work begins on West pavilion roof. Guest speakers invited to address committee to provide advice and assistance.
- **October 2011**- Bad weather again limits safe access to roof. North and West pitches boarded and felted. Garden area at the front building cleared.
- **November 2011** - Temporary repair on West Pavilion roof completed. Temporary polycarbonate windows fitted to allow LEG-UP volunteers to shelter and prepare food during winter. Committee meets again to try and finalise proposals for the Trust's legal identity.
- **December 2011** - Decision is made to suspend further roof work until Spring to ensure safety of volunteers. Storms hit at the end of the month. Damage caused to felted area on south pitch (front facing) of East Pavilion leaving board exposed.
- **January 2013** – In an effort to kick start the project, the Fairfield Farm Trust and LEGUP were both officially dissolved and Common

Good Glasgow formed. Fairfield Farm was renamed upon advice from within the community Elder Farm to connect with Elder Park and allow the community to map the site

- **February 2013** – A Way Forward meeting was held with some interesting and useful notes
- **May 2013** – Communications and discussions have led to 3 options
  - option 1 – to invite local tradesmen to partner up and upgrade the building
  - option 2 – to invite local tradesmen to join in partnership and instruct apprentices
  - option 3 – to offer the building as working experience to colleges teaching sustainable building practices

**Support** - Sincere thanks went to the following people without whom the achievements of 2011 would not have been possible.

- **Roger Curtis of Historic Scotland.** Roger regularly visited the site to provide advice and support. He also arranged for three donations of building materials.
- **Diane Walker of GCC.** Diane has been supportive of the Trust's aims and has helped develop our relationship with GCC.
- **Scott Crambe at Cruden Construction.** Scott arranged for a large donation of construction timber leftover from a local housing development he was managing.
- **John Roddie of JC Decaux.** John arranged for several pallets of recycled polycarbonate sheeting to be donated.

#### 14, Reflection

- Part of the process of doing and failing is in understanding the importance of building a network of partners and interested parties. We do not want to repeat our past mistakes but wish to support and cooperate with other people and groups to expand possibilities and create avenues of collaboration and mutual support.
- Experience in the garden has given us a direction as to the kind of approach we intend to take, creating a space to provide a diverse range of knowledge, experience and skillsets which can be immediately transferred and adapted, creatively to many many aspects of day-to-day living, in the workplace and in the community
- Continuing work in the garden and communication with local business, workers and community members has brought a mutual respect and understanding
- The unemployment in Govan has been an issue for a very long time
- EU money has allegedly been chucked at the problem, colleges have been filled consultants have sat in their offices and read the street life, but in all the projects in Govan paid for with EU money, less than 10% of the workers has had a Govan address. Of money supposed to regenerate an economy, less than 10% of that money has gone into the economy, which has infuriated many community members, and they laugh at the idea of being asked to work for free after "all the shannangans". The community is very suspicious of any project coming along and asking for volunteers

People do not like accepting charity. Most people want a job and do not understand why they cannot find a job, and cannot figure out how it is cheaper to keep them out of a job and on benefits and costing NHS in health, rather than employ them and let them pay their own rent and rates. Many people find it hard to spend days and hours going over and over and over the same resume in an attempt to upgrade it and suddenly become an employers dream, all the while knowing that most jobs being advertised are already rightfully earmarked for workers within the company who have worked their way through the company and have a clearer understanding of how the company runs and who can do what, which resources can be relied on. And despite all the hoo ha about data protection, the unemployed are generally giving out thousands of pounds of data information for free for the price of an advertisement in the local newspaper. Identity fraud is rife

This is not to say that consultants cannot open doors and provide insight to markets etc but they do not usually get close enough to the work force. Recommendations for secret worker teams puzzlingly have still not been taken up and could be much useful especially to check if middle management are ~~stifling~~ stifling the business

- At no time has any community member **ever** disagreed with the notion that wages paid on the project should go to local labour, and in a climate which is supposed to support minimum travel and mileage we do not understand why when unemployment is at a certain level all major contracts for work in that area should stipulate that while x% unemployment then y% of workers on that project required that area postcode – which if anything will assist members to move elsewhere and try their luck there instead of drinking their lives under the table or wasting away in front of the telly
- Meanwhile the Garden provides some respite from unemployment, and a workspace to learn new skills, batter and saw and meddle with engines without upsetting the neighbours
- The climate is right, the tv design teams are supporting sustainable cottagey solutions hippies are back in town and the light is green