



LONDON STUDY TOUR

**JULY 2000
A SHORT ACCOUNT**



Scottish Community
Diet Project

London Study Tour July 2000 *Programme*

Tuesday 18th July

- Arrival at Kings Cross Station around 2.30pm
- Visit to Calthorpe Community Garden Trip
- Millennium Eye and evening meal

Wednesday 19th July

- Visit to the Sustain Office
- House of Lords
- Brick Lane for evening meal

Thursday 20th July

- Visit to Spitalfields City Farm
- Visit to the Garrett Centre
- Final group session in Spitalfields Market
- Heading home!



“Say cheese” The group gather outside Westminster.

Why we went to London?

Between the 18th and 20th July 2000, the Scottish Community Diet Project's Development Officer, Lizanne Hume, accompanied six volunteers from community food projects around Scotland on a study tour of some of London's community food projects.

The Scottish Community Diet Project (SCDP) was set up in 1996 to support and help co-ordinate the work of community food projects throughout Scotland. One of its ongoing activities is to provide new networking and learning opportunities to volunteers and workers within community food projects. Already the project has taken two community food volunteers to a food conference in Canada, and last Autumn the project organised a small study tour of food initiatives in and around the Scottish Borders for volunteers working in community food projects from the north of Scotland.

The SCDP has strong links with another national food project based in London called SUSTAIN - The Alliance for Better Food and Farming. SUSTAIN also has a food poverty project with two staff members, Jacqui Webster and Victoria Williams. Both projects are keen for community food projects to learn from and share their experiences with other community food projects from throughout the UK. A study tour to London was consequently planned to set this information sharing process in motion. Victoria from SUSTAIN took lead responsibility for setting up all the visits in London over the course of the three-day tour, and guiding the delegation around the city.

What did the Study Tour hope to achieve?

Like the previous SCDP study tours, the tour to London was an opportunity for community food project volunteers and lay workers to meet new people from community food projects in both Scotland and, in this instance, from in and around London. It gave the group an opportunity to share their ideas about the work they are involved in, as well as to learn from each other and make new contacts.

Who took part in the tour?

Six community food volunteers from throughout Scotland took part in the tour. Places were originally advertised in the SCDP Newsletter, Fare Choice, and afterwards via individual enquiries following the Fare Choice article. Each participant was chosen due to their commitment to community food work and their desire to share their experience with others. Participants were also selected from as wide a geographic range as possible to ensure a better representation of community food activity throughout Scotland.

When each of the six participants were asked why they choose to go on the tour and what their initial expectations of the tour were, here are their responses:

Peter Menellis - Kirkcaldy, Fife

"My name is Peter Menellis, I live in the Linktown area of Kirkcaldy in Fife. I have been involved in poverty initiatives for the past 10 years, and lately have become involved in Community Food Initiatives. I am the secretary of the Linktown Development group, which is a poverty initiative in an area of priority needs. The initiative is looking at food poverty, which is why I was interested in attending the study tour, as I believe networking with others is the way to enhance success in a project. Before I left for London I was unsure how I would relate the London experience to my project. I felt that the experience of Sustain Staff and Lizanne of SCDP would be very helpful to my work with my own project."

Josie Mitchell - Edinburgh

"My name is Josie Mitchell and I live on the Calder Estate in Edinburgh. I am one of the volunteers who helped run our Calder Food Co-op, this is run from inside the Calder Community Centre. I have done all aspects of running the Co-op purchasing stock from cash & carry, stock rotation, accounts, restocking shelves, setting and clearing up, ordering dry goods and servicing. I am now solely responsible for ordering, pricing and selling the fruit and veg. I like doing this, but will do anything that's needed. I only joined the co-op about 5 years ago and was asked if I would like to join this study tour by John Brennan the health promotion worker from Edinburgh Community Food Initiative, I agreed to go once discussing it with my family. The main thing for me about coming on this trip was to get out and see what other groups had to offer, how they ran their projects and see if I could use any of their ideas either in our co-op or pass on to others."

Moira Carmichael - Hawick, the Borders

"My name is Moira Carmichael. I live in Burnfoot Hawick. I am a member of the working group for Burnfoot Community Health Project. I also work closely with the project worker Audrey Laycock in my work with community education and fairplay.

Audrey asked me as soon as she had the information about the tour if I would go along as I have been involved with the project from the beginning and continue to be now. I agreed straight away after checking play scheme dates did not clash. From the beginning I hoped to gain new ideas from the tour which we could use through the health project and in other areas of my own work. I was also very interested in the work and experiences of other members of the tour group."

Elizabeth McKay - Maryhill, Glasgow

"My name is Elizabeth McKay and I come from Maryhill in Glasgow. It was through the co-ordinator of the Maryhill Community Health Project, Michael Hardie that I found out about the Scottish Community Diet Project study tour to London. Before I set off on the tour, I was a little unsure about leaving my son Ryan overnight for the first time, but as soon we all met up I knew everything would be fine."

Gordon MacAlonan - Ferguslie Park, Paisley

"My name is Gordon McAlonan. I live in Ferguslie Park in Paisley. I am chairperson of the Renfrewshire Community Health initiative. I was asked to come on this trip by the Renfrewshire Health Forum. I agreed to come to make new contacts and find out what was happening in other parts of the country. I am easy going so I had no fears about coming on this trip - I take things as they come. I find this helped me in meeting new people are taking on new ideas."

Isabel Dalgarno - Aberdeen

"My name is Isabel Dalgarno and I am the chairperson of the Food Co-op Network North East and also a volunteer with the Fersands and Fountain Food Co-op in Aberdeen. When asked if I'd be interested in going to London to visit community food projects, I was both surprised and over the moon as I hadn't been outside Aberdeen since 1998 when I was badly injured in a road accident.

I was a little apprehensive before the trip as I had never been on a plane before, and I was dreading the flight due to all the recent plane crashes. However, I decided to be brave and trust that I would cope, and I did just that!"

Who helped organise the trip?

Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming is an umbrella organisation that represents over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. Sustain advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, promote equity and enrich society and culture.

One of Sustain's major projects is the food poverty project. The network is the foundation of the project and brings together community project workers, researchers and campaigning groups to create appropriate policies to tackle food poverty. As part of the network a database of community food projects has been developed to help support those working in their local community.

Networking across the four countries of the UK is a vital part of the work of the food poverty network. And over the years the project has developed close links with the Scottish Community Diet Project. The food poverty network was in a unique position to help with the organisation of the tour. In my role as the network co-ordinator, I was able, through the food and low-income database, to select a variety of projects to give the participants a taste of the range of projects happening in London.

The projects that we visited were picked for their diversity; project activity, ethnicity and approach. They demonstrated the variety of community food projects in London and the diversity of the ethnic make up of London as well as many of the difficulties people living on low incomes face. We also wanted to give a positive image of what can and is achieved with often small and patchy amounts of funding.

It was by no means a one way learning experience - all who took part, both community food project staff and volunteers in London and Scotland gained from the study tour.

Victoria Williams

Food Poverty Network Co-ordinator at Sustain

What did we do?

Day 1: Tuesday 18th July

After a mid-morning flight from Glasgow, the group arrived at Kings Cross Station in London to be met by Victoria and Jacqui from SUSTAIN. In the baking heat, everyone made their way to the first project on the tour's itinerary for a picnic lunch and the first taste of a London community garden at the Calthorpe Project.

Calthorpe Project, Kings Cross, London

"We believe everyone has the right to enjoy open space. We aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment that includes a range of activities" (staff member)

The Calthorpe project provides a unique 1.2-acre sized garden in the heart of London's Kings Cross for all its multi-cultural community to enjoy. This 'oasis in the city' is open 7 days a week, 360 days a year to provide a safe, relaxing space where all cultures and age groups can interact together with the support of the project's staff. The garden is surrounded by the hustle and bustle of city life. Indeed the fact that this prime space has escaped from office development is the result of a hard won local campaign fought in 1981, which prevented the land being sold by the London Borough of Camden.

The garden attracts around 40,000 visitors each year and up to 300 visits per day during the busy summer months. Our study group was warmly welcomed by the project's staff and was given a very informative guided tour of the garden. From beautiful coloured mosaic paths designed by local children to an array of vegetables grown organically in the garden, the group was impressed by the hive of activity taking place at Calthorpe. Despite recent attacks of vandalism to the garden, the staff and volunteers radiated with enthusiasm and determination about the vital role that the Calthorpe garden plays in the lives of many. **For further information, please contact:**

***The Calthorpe Project, 258-274 Grays Inn Road
London, WC1X 8LH
Tel: 020 7837 8019***

Afterwards, the group made their way to the Russell to settle into their overnight accommodation at the **Penn Club**, a very affordable and comfortable guest house in the heart of London run by the Quaker Society of Friends. For further information and booking details, please contact: The Penn Club, 21 Bedford Place, London, WC1B 5JJ. Tel: 020 7636 5516

The evening's highlight was a trip on the **London Eye**, courtesy of SUSTAIN, which ended the first day of the tour on a high.



Calthorpe Community Garden



**'Smashing view up here'
The London Eye**

What did we do?

Day 2: Wednesday 19th July

Staff from **SUSTAIN** and the **London Food Commission** welcomed the group to their joint office base in Islington on Wednesday morning to find out more about the different activities the London projects' undertake. The group shared with them the range of work taking place within Scotland's community food initiatives as well as find out about **Sustain's Food Poverty Project, the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill Campaign, the Five Year Freeze Campaign on Genetic Engineering, and the Child Poverty Action Group**. Contacts for these groups are contained at the end of the report.

The aim of this session was to give an overview of the work being done at national level by public interest organisations and how it links into work at local level.

Due to a bomb alert in the London Underground, the afternoon programme unfortunately had to be abandoned. The tour was scheduled to meet with Lord Rea, the chairperson of the **Associate Parliamentary Food and Health Forum**, at the **House of Lords**. By the time the group arrived at Westminster, Lord Rea was already in session. As an alternative, the group had the opportunity to listen to part of a parliamentary debate from the public gallery in the House of Lords, which was an experience in itself, followed by a brief tour of the magnificent building.

Later in the evening the group ate at an Indian Restaurant in London's Brick Lane, which is situated in the heart of the city's East End and gave a proper flavour of London's multi-cultural diversity.



BIG BEN

I'm sure it's around here somewhere!

What did we do?

Day 3: Thursday 20th July

The final day of the tour focused on a range of London based community food projects.

Spitalfields City Farm is located in one of the most deprived and densely populated wards of Tower Hamlets in London's East End. Spitalfields is a vibrant, multi-cultural area with strong community networks. The farm is situated in the heart of this community, and since 1978, has provided a square mile of tranquillity in the midst of urban life. The farm began as a small allotment scheme and was set up by local people as a community enterprise. Spitalfields City Farm now offers a wide variety of activities and opportunities to the local community as well as visitors, which total over 18,000 per year. The farm is home to a range of animals from pigs to goats as well as being the site of a wildlife garden and blooming allotments of herbs and vegetables. Horticultural training is offered to the local community by the farm's staff and volunteers, which is often used as a form of therapy. The group were given an in-depth tour of the project and learned about the different approaches to growing and harvesting crops.

"It was amazing - the Bangladeshi ladies at the project only harvest the leaves for cooking rather than the fruit of the crop as we would expect."

For further information about this project, please contact:

Spitalfields City Farm, Weaver Street, London, E1 5HJ

Tel: 020 7247 8762



Email: spitalfieldsfarm@hotmail.com

Spitalfields City Farm, London

The **Garrett Centre** is located nearby and operates a lunch club one day per week as well as a thriving Women's Group and a micro-credit scheme. The idea for weekly community lunches began over a year ago, although the centre has been in operation for the past three years. The lunch club aims to bring isolated people from all sections of the local community together to eat a healthy, nutritious meal together.

"Breaking down barriers whether they be ones of race, poor English speaking skills, poverty, or loneliness is the fundamental aim of this project." (worker)

The group was warmly welcomed by the project's staff and volunteers, and was invited to share a fantastic meal of vegetable curry, Indian bread, and dahl followed by rice pudding with fresh cinnamon. So far, the lunch club has attracted from 15 to 30 people, which have sparked off a highly successful ethnic mixed cookery class. A local community dietitian involved with the project explained that a huge number of cooking skills has been passed on from the Bangladeshi participants to the white group members. This sharing has not only improved the eating habits and cooking skills of the group, but has established good friendships between group members and staff.

To find out more, please contact:

Wahinda Haque

The Garrett Centre, 117 Mansford Street

Bethnal Green, E2 6LX Tel: 020 7729 1231



Sharing a multicultural lunch at the Garret Centre, London

Before setting off back to Scotland, the group took some time to think about their short experience of London, which for some was their first visit, never mind their first time in a plane. Each was asked to reflect on their overall impression as well as the activities, places and people, which had the greatest impact on them. Here are a few highlights described by each member of the group.

The group reflect on their trip at Spitalfields Market, London



Peter Menellis - Kirkcaldy, Fife

"Before I left for London I was unsure how I would relate the London experience to my project in Kirkcaldy. I would now like to diversify from food issues alone to food growing as a result of the tour's visit to the Calthorpe project - a community garden near London's Kings Cross where herbs, vegetables and plants are grown and made available to the local community.

I feel that my expectations were met and I am now sure that the London and Kirkcaldy experience can be brought together as much of what I have learned is transferable. Being in London during the Queen Mothers Birthday celebration will always be something I will remember, as well as the bomb hoaxes!"

Josie Mitchell - Edinburgh

"I loved the whole idea of the community gardens as I have never seen anything like them before. I feel there is a great need in all cities for community gardens as it would teach everyone to respect the environment more, take pride in their work and help pull whole communities together. It will have a lasting affect on me, as was the friendliness of everyone we met.

The tour also helped me realise that no matter where you live there are people who have a poor diet, and that like the work I'm involved with in Edinburgh there are lots of other groups trying to help to change this. I also learned that at home the pace of life is much slower than everyone down in London. as it's rush. rush. rush all the time! "

Moira Carmichael - Hawick, the Borders

"I was most impressed by the green spaces in the middle of the inner city, small areas of earth being used for every type of growing, the enthusiasm of workers and volunteers at all the projects and lots of new ideas."

Elizabeth McKay - Maryhill, Glasgow

"I feel I have had the opportunity to gain support and enthusiasm from the other members of the group. I enjoyed the community garden at Calthorpe the best. It was hard to believe that there was a garden between all the houses and factories. It was a beautiful place, very peaceful and well maintained. I feel I will have a lot more ideas to bring back to Maryhill. I think I will now be more confident with people that I have not met, like when I go out on to training days and courses. Having now been in London means that I will have lots to talk about - the millennium eye, the tubes, and the fast pace!"

Gordon MacAlonan - Ferguslie Park, Paisley

"On reflection the thing I found most interesting on the tour was the community garden at Calthorpe, as it is the something I think will be able to do in Ferguslie Park as it is different from other community garden schemes I have been to before. I like the idea of the plots for children and adults and I will take this idea back to the environmental group, which we have set up in Ferguslie Park. It would mean we could have a community garden in each area as well as a farm on the outskirts of Paisley."

I found the tour has given me some useful ideas and has more than lived up to my expectations. I have enjoyed meeting everybody and getting to know them and finding out what kind of work they are doing in their area. "

Isabel Dalgarno - Aberdeen

"In terms of what made the biggest impact on me, I think I would have to say the gardens at Calthorpe as they were out of this world. I was so impressed by each volunteer having their own little plot to cultivate and being given the opportunity to learn about growing as well as having the chance to try it out. I thought I knew everything about fruit and vegetables, but after listening to all the different types of vegetables grown and their uses, I realise I have lots still to learn! The project also involved so many different people of all ages and needs - it really was a community garden. I will bring back to Aberdeen a lot of general knowledge, new ideas and motivation to get things done. The trip has opened my eyes to a different way of life, but for me London is fine for a few days, but too fast to live - I think I'll be staying put in Aberdeen!"

To find out more.....

If you would like to find out more about the experience of the London Study Tour Group, each group member can be contacted via the following addresses.

Moira Carmichael

C/o Borders Community Health Project
3 Kenilworth Avenue, Hawick
TD9 8EG
Tel: 01450 375 730

Elizabeth McKay

C/o Maryhill Community Health Project
Napierhall Street Centre
Maryhill, Glasgow G20 6EZ
Tel: 0141 357 4696

Isabel Dalgarno

C/o Food Co-op Network North East
The Foyer, Marywell Street
Aberdeen AB11 6JF

Josie Mitchell

C/o Edinburgh Community Food Initiative
22 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5ND
Tel: 0131 467 7326

Peter Menellis

C/o Linktown Development Group
Westbridge Mill, Bridge Street
Kirkcaldy, KY1 1TE
Tel: 01592 644048

Gordon MacAlonan

C/o Ferguslie Community Health Project
The Tannahill Centre, 76 Blackstoun Road
Ferguslie Park, Paisley, PA3 1NT
Tel: 0141 848 1915

More London Contacts....

To find out more about the work of Sustain, here are some contact details. All are based at 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.
Tel: 020 7837 1228.

Email: sustain@charity.vfree.com

Website: <http://www.sustainweb.org/homefra.htm>

Child Poverty Action Group

It calls for the extension of entitlement to free school meals to all families receiving the new tax credits; the maximisation of the take up of free school meals; and the introduction of minimum nutritional standards for school meals and the development of nutritional education in schools.

Please contact Sue Brighthouse for further information in London (Tel: 020 7837 7979), or contact the Scottish branch at:

Unit 425, Pentagon Centre, Washington Street, Glasgow G3 8AZ

Tel 0141 204 1069

Email staff@cpagscotland.demon.co.uk

Five Year Freeze Campaign

The Five Year Freeze campaign is supported by an alliance of over 50 national organisations who share the public's deep concern over the speed at which genetic engineering is being introduced into food and farming. The alliance encompasses a wide range of interests including environmental campaigns, local authorities, development charities, religious groups, retailers and consumer bodies. They are united by a belief that we must stop and think about the huge implications of this new technology. For further information, please contact:

Clare Devereux, Co-ordinator , 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF

Tel: 020 7837 0642

email: gealliance@dial.pipex.com

Web: <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/gealliance/>

THANK YOU!!

The Scottish Community Diet Project would like to extend its thanks to all those who both took part and helped organise the tour. We would like to give special thanks all the staff at Sustain, particularly Victoria Williams, for helping us arrange, organise and support the group before and during the tour.

Thanks to all the groups and organisations we visited, and for the wonderful reception each gave us, and last, but by no means least, thanks to all the group members for their enthusiasm and interest throughout, making it all worthwhile.

**Lizanne Hume
Scottish Community Diet Project**



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