

## **Faith Retreat Eco News April 2011**

A warm welcome to our spring newsletter. As we enjoy the brighter days, we are delighted to tell you about an exciting nomination for Holland House near Pershore in Worcestershire. We also have news from Ministeracres, Northumberland including their plans for bio-mass installation, caring for former battery hens, and the creation of a Peace Garden, and to round off, the offer of a contemplative prayer day for young people at Glenfall House, Gloucester.

### **A. Eco Guidelines**

Firstly we have had several inquiries from retreat centres about developing guidelines to help follow an eco-friendly ethos. Some people have said that, while they know they are doing quite a lot in this area, it would be extremely helpful to have a list of principles and actions that they can check to see that they are doing their best to be faith-consistent. We would very much like to hear from those of you who are trying to develop eco policies as well as retreats who already have a policy in place. Any experiences or examples you could share with us would be really appreciated. Please let us know if you can help - either by sharing your policies, or by telephone conference later in the year to develop a general list that could help anybody. Please send your responses to: [nicki.mchugh@arcworld.org](mailto:nicki.mchugh@arcworld.org) no later than Monday, 16 May.

### **B. Holland House: Footprint Award Nomination**



You may recall in our winter newsletter we had news of Holland House in Evesham becoming the first Retreat House to join the Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA), and how, in joining, the Retreat had gained access to resources about providing sustainable hospitality. Since then, we have received an e-mail from Rev Ian Spencer, the Warden at Holland House:

*"...some great news ... We've been nominated by the Sustainable Restaurant Association for a "footprint award", which recognises "those in the foodservice industry that have made a positive impact in the realms of sustainability". The SRA has nominated only 34 of their 200 + members for the national awards, and we're one of them!"*

If you would like to improve Holland House's chances of winning, please vote for them by visiting: [www.footprint-awards.com](http://www.footprint-awards.com). Click on the large "VOTE" icon, and select Holland House from the list of 34 candidates. The votes must all be in by 1 May.

Ian adds: *“Clearly we’d like to win an award, but either way it’s an honour for us to be put forward by the SRA, and I’d like to let as many people know about it as possible. I don’t know whether this news may help ARC a little, it’s certainly a positive story of a faith-based business working towards sustainability and being recognised for its achievements thus far”.*

The Awards ceremony will take place at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London on 19 May. Please visit <http://www.hollandhouse.org/index.html> for more news of Holland House.

### **C. Ministeracres Retreat Centre: bio-mass plans; happy hens and a Peace Garden**



Lya Vollering at Ministeracres in Northumberland has sent an update:

“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share about our experiences here at Ministeracres. We are in the process of becoming more eco-friendly, but it takes time to change an organisation with a lot of traditions. We are planning to install a woodchip boiler, but unfortunately due to the government’s cuts the funding has been

turned down. However we are not giving up and are hoping to find alternative funding so that we will be able to install the bio-mass next summer.

We have started keeping our own hens, rescued from a battery farm. This is a great success, it provides us with eggs, our visitors enjoy the presence of hens and they are really happy hens now. We have changed all our cleaning products for eco-friendly ones, we use Fairtrade products whenever possible and are in the process of having more sustainable meals, using local organic produce. As part of it we have started a new garden – the Peace Garden – aiming at becoming self sufficient in organic fruit and vegetables by 2013.

The idea of the Peace Garden Project began in 2007. Refugees from the drop-in centre at Byker, Newcastle, paid a number of visits to our centre with the aim of indentifying their needs and interests. They expressed a particular interest in growing fruit and vegetables and came up with the notion of a ‘Peace Garden’, saying that they would like to be called the ‘peace gardeners’. Other groups of refugees that came for a short summer break in 2009 also indicated that they would like to get involved in the growing of vegetables and fruit and the preparing of their produce during their stay. They made initial designs for the garden in a 1.7 acre field on the south side of an old walled garden. In Victorian times there were espalier fruit trees growing along this wall and

there was also a greenhouse. The peace garden is not only a new development, it is also bringing back in use what has been lost.

The Peace Garden offers the opportunity to get involved in growing fruit and vegetables and to (re)connect with nature. It also provides a space to raise awareness about environmental issues, giving insights particularly into the benefits of organic food growing and the importance of a sustainable future.

This year we started to use the Peace garden in our retreat programme. One of the clients of the Medical foundation for the care of victims of torture wrote in the Peace garden journal:



*'The Peace Garden is where we all have a nice time together and is really peaceful because we work together in harmony, share our worries as we work together and laugh it off'.*

Children from deprived areas that came to Minsteracres for a week holiday got involved in potatoes picking. Some of them had never seen a potato plant. They loved the experience and have asked if they can come back next year to plant potatoes. We also organised a couple of very well attended community gardening days for volunteers, refugees and parishioners. One of highlight was a work party on 10/10/10 with 25 people from different walks of life. We harvested potatoes, apples, onions and turnips and built a compost bin out of plastic bottles and willow. We had lots of fun taking pictures with 350 on them, raising awareness that the CO2 in the atmosphere should be brought down to 350 parts per million (currently it is 392 ppm). It was encouraging to notice how quickly a sense of community developed among people that had never met before.

In future we hope to integrate the Peace garden as part of all our retreat programmes.” For more details visit: <http://www.minsteracres.org/>

#### **D. Glenfall House: An invitation for contemplative prayer**



Glenfall House is a Christian Retreat nestling in a quiet wooded hillside near Cheltenham. It is set in four acres including a croquet lawn, herbaceous and rose gardens, water features, shrubbery and orchard. On Sunday, 8 May, all at Glenfall House will be joining with the Gloucester Diocesan Youth Team to run an introductory day titled ‘Immerse’ for young people (15-21). Glenfall runs regular “quiet garden days”, every Thursday, from Easter until August. Intended to let people open themselves up to

being inspired from nature, they are times for reading, reflecting, painting or sleeping.  
<http://www.glenfallhouse.org/events.html> Like Holland House it is a supporter of the  
Quiet Garden Trust. <http://www.quietgarden.org/>

In our next edition we hope to bring you some news of ARC's Faith in Food Programme  
and barn and bat developments at Millhouse Retreat.

With best wishes,

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