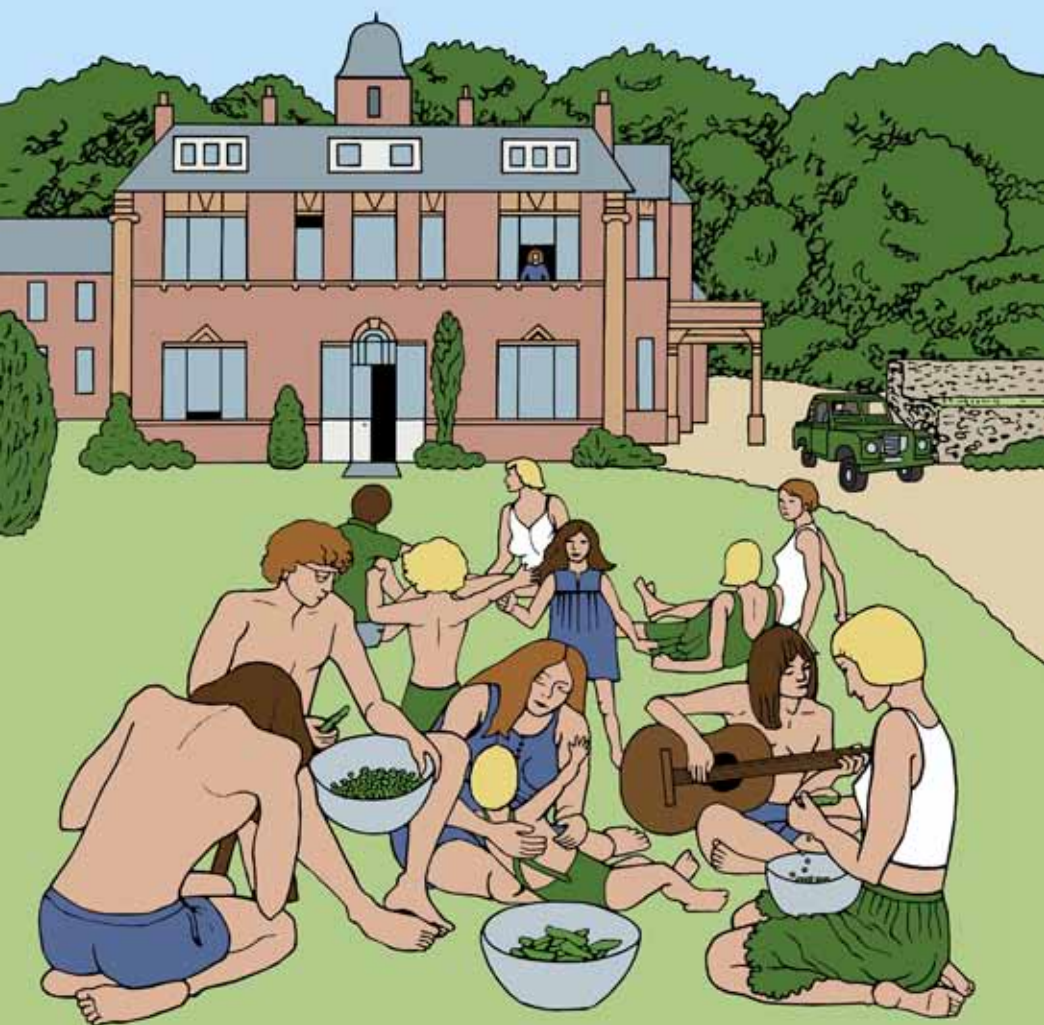


ANATOMY OF A COMMUNE

Laurieston Hall
1972 - 1987



A Diggers & Dreamers History

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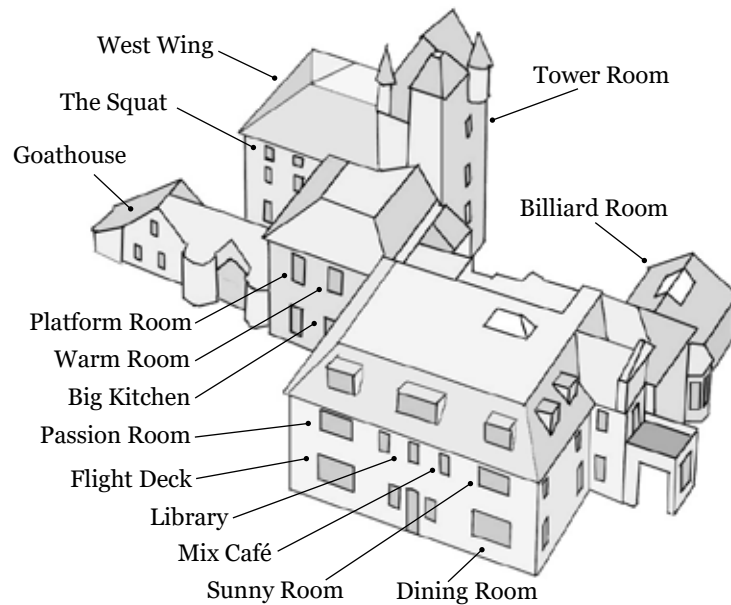
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Key dates

1972 April	Our bid for Laurieston Hall is accepted
1972 July	First arrivals at the start of the commune
1973 March	Army surplus auction for bedding etc Work starts on Billiard Room kitchen
1973 August	People Centre: LARFFS and Women's week
1973 Dec	Commune moves into the Billiard Room
1974 Spring	Launch of Freefall project - 3 or 4 kids groups People Centre: Peace News Potlatch People Centre: Legal Frameworks Conference
1974 Summer	People Centre: Alternative University A visitor introduces hepatitis Jøtul installed in the Billiard Room
1975 April	Publication of Legal Frameworks Handbook
1975 July/Aug	People Centre: Connections
1975 Autumn	Aga kitchen finished Communes Network formed
1976 January	Mike sets up Mix Café
1976 Spring	Financial crisis and endless meetings
1976 Summer	Hot summer of '76 busy with events Tim and Bridget build The Squat Julian sets up ATAC
1977 April	Red Therapy week
1977 May	WOW breakfast
1977 Spring	Exodus begins (Julia, Carol, Mike, Tina, Jay, Patrick, Jonathan and their children)

1977 Summer	Last Freefall and many People Centre events including the first Gay Men's week
1977 Sept	Equinox beach trip to Rascarrel First Rapid Transformations trip (Glaneirw) Torness Nuclear Power Station demo
1978 April	Meeting to set up Fairground
1978 Winter	Extreme winter, burst pipes, snow lasting weeks
1979 May	Commune splits into Platform and Sunny Room
1979 Sept	First International Communes Festival Launch of International Communes Network
1980 July	Laurieston Housing Co-op set up Start of woodstove project
1980 Sept	Baby Group in cottage with Finn and later Josie
1981 January	111 acres of land bought from neighbour
1981 July	Laurieston Hall transferred to the co-op First sauna built (Hedonism/Land Benefit week) Fairground registered and prospectus published
1982 July	Tenth Birthday week
1982 October	The hydro electric system goes live
1983 Spring	Commune and Co-op form separate entities
1984 June	Rapid Transformations to Christiania
1984 Winter	Big Kitchen rebuilt over the winter
1986 October	People Centre: Housing Co-ops Conference
1987 Spring	Income sharing commune is dissolved People Centre is set up as a workers' co-op

Diagram of rooms in the house



Laurieston Hall before we bought it

The communards

Forty adults lived in the commune at Laurieston Hall at various times between 1972 and 1987, plus a few others who lived separately, and about thirty children.

Here is a brief introduction to those who figure prominently in this book, more or less in the order in which they joined.

Laurieston Hall was bought in 1972 in the names of Alice, Tina, Maureen and Carol, using money loaned by its members. Ownership was transferred to Laurieston Hall Housing Co-operative in 1981.

Alice and **Paul** with daughters **Sonya** and **Polly**, were founding members. Alice still lives there (Chapter 1). Paul left in 1989 but still has Summerhill in the forest behind the Hall (Chapter 4).

Tina and **Mike** with their children **Joel** and **Sophie** were also founding members. Mike left in the spring of 1977 (Chapters 3,11,13). Tina followed in the Autumn (Chapter 2). Joel returned for a couple of years without his parents in 1979 (Chapter 23).

Dave and **Carol** with daughter **Tiffy**, were founding members, and **Tam** was born soon after (Chapter 27). Carol left in 1976 (Chapter 8), and Dave in 1987 (Chapters 5,17,20,30,34).

Gerry and **Maureen** with **Jemma**, **Zoe**, and **Morgan** were in the original group but left within two months.

Stuart was in the group that bought the house but never fully arrived, leaving altogether in 1975 (Chapter 6).

Nicky joined in the summer of 1972 and left a year later.

Julia and **Richard** with children **Billy** and **George**, joined early in 1973. Julia left in 1976, living locally (Chapter 22). Billy also writes (Chapter 24). Richard still lives there.

Patrick joined in 1973. He left in 1977, rejoined with Sarah two years later, and still lives there (Chapters 9,12,36).

Tony with **Ali** and sometimes **Litty** became our first long-stay visitor for a year in 1973, and eventually joined with **Gilly** in 1984, leaving in the early nineties. Ali lives in the village.

Bridget and **Tim** with their son **Angus** lived as semi-detached members from 1973 to 1978.

Jonathan joined in the autumn of 1973 and was the last to leave during the exodus in 1977 (Chapter 7).

Julian parked his waggon down by the stables in November 1974, and finally left in 1985 (Chapter 18).

Catriona joined early in 1975 and had **Finn** in 1980. She left in 1982 (Chapters 15,19,29).

Lesley and **Jay** joined with daughter **Molly** early in 1975. Lesley (Chapter 35) still lives there and had **Meredith** with Richard in 1990. Jay (Chapter 10) left in 1977 to live with Tina and Jonathan, who set up Kollontai Housing Co-op. Meredith recently returned as part of the new group.

Lizzie moved into one of the cottages with her partner Arthur in 1975, joining the commune in 1976, and leaving in 1988 to become Rev Myfanwy at Throssel Hole Zen Buddhist Abbey.

Meg joined in 1975 and had **Robbie** with Paul in 1976. She left in 1979.

Nigel joined in 1976, and left in 1979, initially to live in a tipi at Bargatton with Pete (Chapter 31).

Flick was a long-stay visitor in 1976 (Chapter 14).

Linda joined in 1977 and had **Josie** in 1981 (Chapters 16,21,28). They left in 1989 to live in Kirkcudbright. Josie and **Ewan** with their children **Kieran** and **Rowan** joined as part of a new group of members in 2019 (Chapter 37).

Pete D joined in 1977 and still lives there.

Cheryl joined in 1977 and left in 1982 (Chapter 33).

Blue joined in 1978 and still lives there.

Maggie with **Daska** and **Jessica** joined in 1978. They left in 1981 and Maggie later moved to Honduras with Nigel.

Jenny joined Paul in 1979 and helped him turn the Goathouse into a place to live, where they had **Aaron** in 1989.

Barbara joined with **Kali** in 1979, and moved to Laurieston village in 1983.

Sarah and her daughter **Hannah** joined in 1979 from Crabapple. Hannah left in 1983 (Chapter 25) and Sarah (Chapter 32) left in 1983 to live in the village with Andy.

Penny and **Paul T** (Chapter 22) joined in 1983 with **Maya** (Chapter 26) and **Kieran**, and Penny had **Annie** in 1984. They left in 1990 and Penny and Paul live in nearby Castle Douglas with Julia.

Others played a significant role, but get little mention. They include **Neil** and **Rosie** who lived in one of the cottages in 1975 and 1976; **Syvie** and **Stevie** who lived in a caravan as part of the co-op 1978-86); **Dug** and **Maggie** had **Frankie** in 1979 but never joined; **Charlie** with **Joe** (1980-90); **John V** (1979-82); **Gem** (Pete McS) (1979-84); **Jude** who has mostly lived there since 1980 and her son **Tom** who returned as an adult with **Pavlina** in 1996 and had **Natalia** and **Jacob** and now runs a wholefood bakery in Castle Douglas; **Genevieve** (1980-85); **Dirk** (1981-84); **Kate H** (1982-85); **Calum** (1982-87); **Peter K** (1982-84); **Al** with **Jo** (1984-87); **Dennis** with **Joby** and **Jesse** (1984-87); **Evi** in 1985 and still there, with **Tamsin** who recently rejoined as part of the new group; **Sandy** (1985-87). We were also closely involved with **Alice B** at nearby Grobdale Farm, and **Jamie** and then **Priscilla** who followed as shepherds there.

In addition to these, it has been home to more than 100 who joined since the income sharing commune dissolved in 1987.

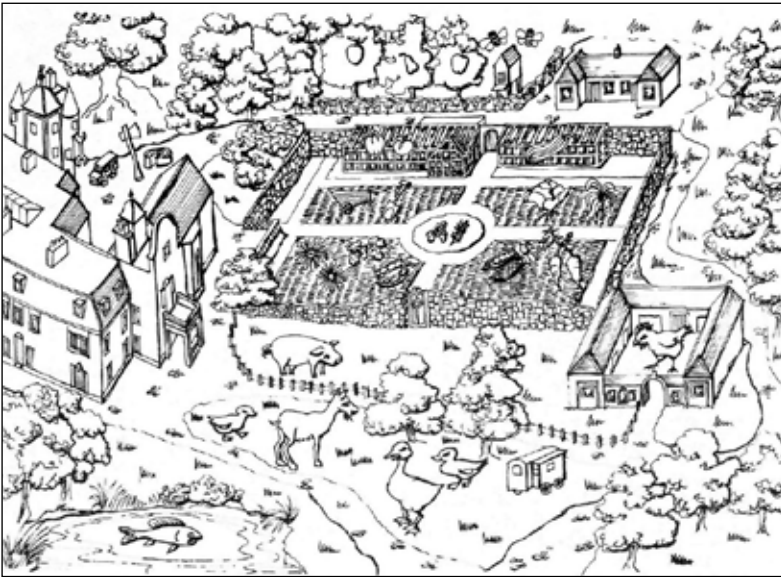
Foreword

This book charts the growth of a commune set up in the early 1970s in the beautiful countryside of Galloway in South West Scotland. A group of us each gives our perspective on the joys and pain of living and working collectively, our achievements and our failings. Some still live there almost 50 years later, while it remains an important part of the lives of another 40 adults and a couple of dozen children who eventually moved on. Laurieston Hall has evolved over the years and remains a thriving community.

This account mostly focuses on the first 15 years when it was an income-sharing commune, inspired by the women's movement and seeking a sustainable lifestyle by living better on less. We ran a conference centre exploring new approaches to community politics, in education, health care, housing, the workplace, and the way we conduct our everyday lives. We also hosted disadvantaged children and community workers from the cities. Thousands of people attended conferences and events over the years, or visited and worked with us during that time.

Mike, who was one of the founding members, wrote a book about the commune in 2008 that so divided opinion at the time that he only published it in 2019 as *Mix Café: a memoir of Laurieston Hall 1972-77*. As you will see from the extracts included here, it tells a compelling story. But Mike had a very particular way of looking at things. We all did. And that is the point: communal living is a collective experience, but it affected each of us differently. It is a testament to how much it meant that almost half of those involved have contributed to this book.

A novelist might be able to tell a more coherent story, sketching little anecdotes to introduce each of the characters and bring them to life, and this would probably get closer to the reality of living in a commune than any number of more



The house, walled garden, cottages, and stables

analytical approaches. You will get to meet many of us through these pages, through what we say in the chapters each of us have written, and the way we crop up in other people's stories.

We reveal something of ourselves in our writing: our passions, our sensitivities, and the very different ways in which we see things. It is not just what we say, but how we say it. Some are poetic, or show a wry sense of humour, or paint a revealing picture of daily life. Others seek a more objective evaluation of our successes and failures: how did we decide things, organise the work, the child care, and our daily lives, and what was it like pooling our money into a common kitty? How did we cope with the jealousies and the emotional turmoil of multiple-relationships,



Gathering in the hall at WOW Week in August 2019
Seated: Linda, Lesley, Paul, Frieda, Tam
Standing: Richard, Pavlina, Jay, Tom VR, Tom

and what was that like for the kids? What did we achieve with our conferences, and just how self-sufficient was our economy?

We fell in and out of love, admired, respected, envied, and comforted each other, sometimes overwhelmed by despair but often overcome by joy. We had a lot of fun, and created a place

that gave pleasure, and sometimes a life-changing experience, for a great many people.

This book is not a prescriptive account of how to run a commune. But it might encourage a new generation to try something similar, on their own terms, addressing the agenda of a new generation, just as we were inspired by some of the books we read 50 years ago.

Dave Treanor, Catriona Stamp, Linda Mallett, Patrick Upton

1 How it all began Alice

Alice and Tina were the driving force in setting up the commune. Sharing a place in the country with other families would open up new ways of living and working together, allowing them to put ideas from their women's group into practice without waiting for the rest of society to catch up.

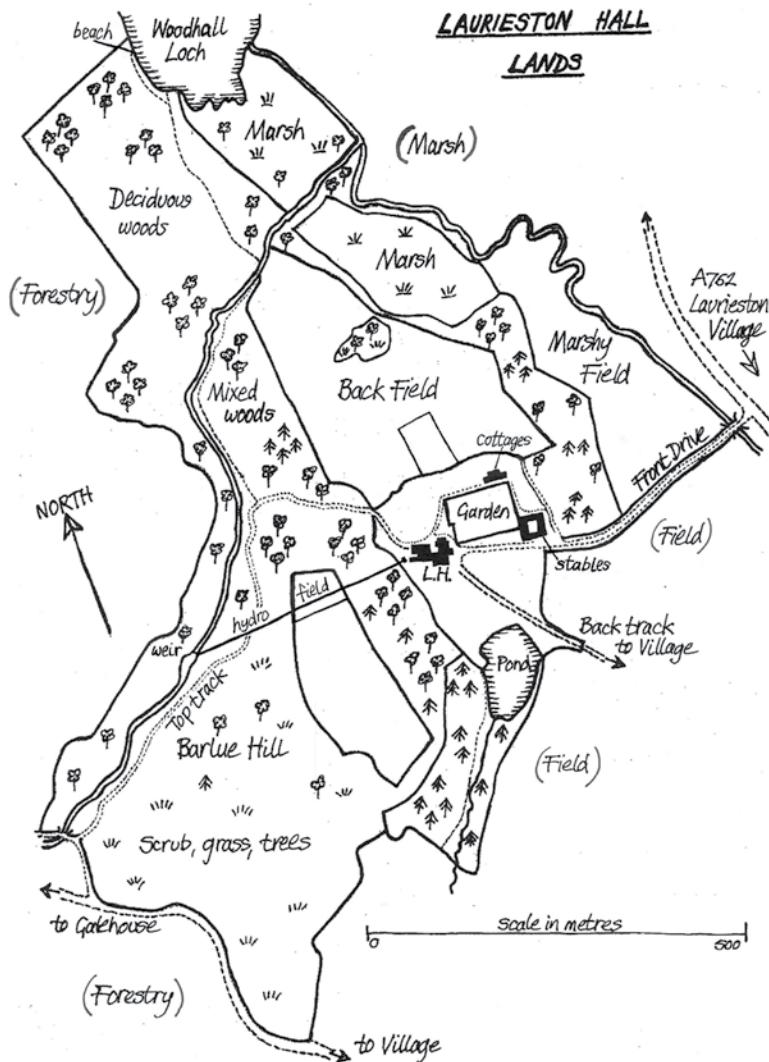
This is an update of a chapter Alice wrote in the book "'68, '78, '88 From Women's Liberation to Feminism" edited by Amanda Sebestyen and published in 1989.

Alice still lives at Laurieston Hall and continues to take an active part in its development.

Notes from 1988

I was no stranger to muesli, self-build housing, or financial insecurity in my childhood. Maybe because of the latter I sought out a straight marriage while still a teenager. I soon felt trapped. One evening, returning from one of the Grosvenor Square demos against the war in Vietnam, I was invited to join the Tufnell Park women's group and it started me off on another road.

The surge of energy in the Women's Movement in the early seventies was tremendous. One evening the office collective (who helped to produce and distribute *Spare Rib* in its early days), were locked out, and 15 of us managed to meet in the Ladies' waiting room on Waterloo Station. Revolutionary politics and actions were everywhere: in our women's meetings we discussed our personal oppression and the directions we could take. Soon a split occurred. Tina and I wanted a living situation where there would be no distinction between money-earning work and support work; where all income and expenses were shared and everyone was expected to cook, clean, and collect fuel. We wanted to enjoy childcare, mealtimes, and living space with more people and less isolation.



Map with the land we bought in 1981 (by Linda)
We acquired the back field a few years later and
have just won a bid for another 45 acres between
the back track to the village and the Gatehouse Road

Many from the early days met up with existing residents of Laurieston Hall at a WOW Week in August 2019 when we agreed to produce this book



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This is a wonderful first person social history for anyone interested in communal living, or in Laurieston Hall. It may not be a 'how to do it manual' – but it is a 'how we did it/what it actually takes to do it!' manual. The ups, the downs, the pitfalls the pratfalls, the real achievements, and all the more honest and enlightening for it than most commune books I've read. And I've read a few.

Chris Coates, Diggers and Dreamers

This book offers varying perspectives on the same events, in the way some Japanese films do... For us, as for so many, it was such an important place, both individually and as the place we met nearly 40 years ago.

Clive Newman and June Statham

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