

Transform



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Farewell to Mairi

Leuchie House Chief Executive, Mairi O’Keefe will retire in November 2018. Here she looks back at her 15 years at Leuchie.

Everyone who knows me knows how passionate I am about Leuchie House and the very special service we provide. It was always going to be difficult to step down, but I know I can do so now feeling proud of everything we’ve achieved.

In this issue you’ll find some of the stories and statistics that highlight how Leuchie has grown and developed over the past seven years. I hope you’ll agree, we’ve come a long way.

On a personal level, the biggest reward has been to see on a daily basis just how much of a difference Leuchie makes to the hundreds of families we support every year.

It has certainly been an incredible journey. Over the past 15 years, we’ve gone from being an MS Society centre, to the threat of closure, the Save Leuchie campaign, the transition and set up of the new independent charity, and Leuchie’s establishment as a national centre for excellence in respite care.

Through it all I have had some wonderful experiences. I have also met amazing people and made great friends. So many people have bought into the Leuchie vision and supported us in fantastic ways. It is this belief in the value of what Leuchie does and the strength of support we’ve had from so many sources that has allowed us to come so far in such a relatively short space of time. Thank you to every single one of you.

Thankfully, my connection with Leuchie doesn’t end here. I was delighted to accept an invitation from Leuchie’s Board of Trustees to join Gavin Hastings as a Patron of the charity.

So this is hopefully not goodbye, but au revoir!



Mairi with Leuchie guest Colin Macrae

Leuchie at 7

On 4 July 2018 we celebrated Leuchie's seventh anniversary as an independent charity.

Since 4 July 2011 we have:

-  delivered 33,457 respite nights
-  supported more people with the highest levels of care needs than ever before – 45% of all our guests in 2017
-  grown from caring for people with 1 condition to over 35 conditions
-  secured £6 million in donations, grants and Scottish Government funding
-  subsidised the cost of every break by almost 50%



Leuchie guest Jean and general assistant Gillian, who joined Leuchie on 4 July 2011, cut the 7th anniversary cake

Ricky's 33 years of Leuchie breaks

Ricky Jack from Milngavie has been coming to Leuchie House for short breaks since 1985. Here he looks back at how his life and Leuchie have changed over the years.

Unbeknown to me, at a medical check in 1961 I had been diagnosed with MS but, as was often the way in those days, the doctor didn't share the diagnosis with me. It wasn't until 1965, when my wife Jean was pregnant, that it was revealed in a discussion with our doctor. It was a shock at the time but the progression was quite gradual and life carried on much as before. We had our two children and enjoyed a regular family life, while I worked as an accountant.

It was a much greater shock to find out 10 years later that Jean had MS too. She had secondary progressive MS, and in 1979 went into hospital where she was to spend the next 29 years.

Our first visit to Leuchie House in 1985 gave us the chance to spend quality time together. Although I visited Jean in hospital every night,

having a break at Leuchie meant we could do everyday things as a couple again, like going out on trips and having meals together.

Over the next 20 years, we enjoyed breaks at Leuchie two or three times a year. They were very special times.

When we first came to Leuchie it was run by an order of Servite nuns, who were supported by volunteers from home and abroad.



In 1998 when the MS Society took over the running of Leuchie, as you'd expect, they introduced more specialist care, with more qualified nurses and night shift staff giving 24 hour care, as well as a physiotherapy service.

When the MS Society announced Leuchie would be closing down in 2010, I joined in the campaign to save it, writing to Nicola Sturgeon and taking part in a meeting at the Scottish Parliament. It was too important to too many people to let it close.

Over the years, Leuchie has become a normal part of my life. I know the place so well and have a strong bond with the staff.

Although Jean passed away 10 years ago, I still enjoy coming to Leuchie. It's always a welcome break from being at home where I live on my own.

You are treated as an individual and know you'll be well looked after. It also gives me back some of my independence which is really



Ricky at Leuchie House with a photo taken in the same spot 20 years before

important to me. No one here dwells on your disability. They help you to do as much as you want to do.

I've made some great friends with other guests over the years and I really enjoy meeting up with them at Leuchie, as well as the social side of things.

I always feel better after a break at Leuchie and hope it will continue to be part of my life for years to come.

Supporter spotlight

Iain Elder

Iain Elder, who was diagnosed with MS in 2008, has been coming to Leuchie since 2017. This summer we took the opportunity to do a cheque presentation with him to recognise his incredible efforts to raise £5,000 for Leuchie.

Iain has done a sponsored microlight challenge, a hair and beard shave, has distributed collecting cans to local businesses and lots more.

One of the most important things for Iain about coming to Leuchie is that it gives his wife, Janet, a chance to recharge and have a proper rest. He wanted to raise money to enable others to benefit from Leuchie's respite service too.

Iain says: 'I can honestly say Leuchie has changed our lives. So after my last visit, I decided that I wanted to give something back. I was always a contributor when I was working so it's great to have something to contribute to again.'

Leuchie puts so much care and effort into looking after everyone who goes, I want to show them

that I really appreciate it. I'm loving every minute of the fundraising!

Since the summer, the support has kept coming in and his total is now at £5,725. We need a bigger cheque!





The Crerar Trust

As a charity, Leuchie House receives funding from a broad range of individuals and organisations, including grant-giving trusts and foundations. One of these is The Crerar Trust, who have been a great supporter over the years.

In 2016 the Trust donated £10,000 towards the purchase of a state-of-the-art pressure mapping pad, which enables our physiotherapy team to monitor guests in a seated or lying position and identify areas of high pressure. They can then make adjustments to guests' wheelchairs, equipment and beds to maximise their comfort and mobility, and avoid any pressure sores developing. This is an enormously valuable service which is rarely available in the community.

This year the Trust have supported us once again, this time with a generous grant of over £20,000 towards the salary costs of our team of professional physiotherapists. This enables Leuchie to continue providing our unique and hugely beneficial in-house physio service, which many of our guests see as the icing on the cake of their respite stay.

 We are great supporters of Leuchie and especially their fantastic physio programme, which we know has a very positive impact on their respite guests. It was clear from the application that the physio team at Leuchie is highly regarded in its field and we were thrilled to be able to help. 

Paddy Crerar



Nursing ambition

Senior Care Assistant, Sue Laird shares her story and explains how Leuchie has opened up a career she never imagined she'd have.



What brought you to Leuchie House?

When I left school at 16, I had a few Standard Grades but no idea what I wanted to do for a living. For the next few years I worked mainly in retail, and helped out in my dad's pub.

By 2012, I had three children and really wanted a change of career direction. When my best friend got cancer, it was the catalyst I needed to make a change. His situation inspired me to look for a job in the care sector.

I applied for a care assistant post at Leuchie House but was pipped at the post by someone with previous experience. They offered me a housekeeping post instead, and, looking back, I'm so glad that I took it! Four months later another care assistant vacancy opened up and this time I was successful.

With no background in care, how did you get to grips with the role?

The first week was quite daunting! Thankfully Leuchie House has a great induction and staff development system in place to make sure you get lots of support to develop the skills you need. Another carer was appointed as my mentor and he taught me everything I needed to know, from practical skills like manual handling, through to ensuring all care is person-centred. For me, the best thing about the job is enabling guests to achieve things they wouldn't be able to achieve at home, and seeing how happy that makes them feel.

You are now a senior care assistant at Leuchie. What does that involve?

I was promoted to senior care assistant in 2014, which means more caring and supervisory responsibilities. This involves supporting the nurses with the smooth running of a shift so they can focus on more clinical aspects. When guests arrive it is our role to meet and greet, have a chat and ensure their care profile is up to date so they get all the care they need. I also act as a mentor to new care staff, helping them develop in their role.

What's next on your career path?

I knew very quickly after moving into the care assistant role that I was on the right path and that I wanted to train as a nurse. Following an Access to Nursing course at college, I started a three year full-time nursing degree course in September 2017.

The Leuchie team have supported and encouraged me all the way. They've kept me on as a member of staff while I'm doing my course, changing my contract to part-time and adapting my shifts to fit round my studies.

And in the future?

I really hope I'll be able to continue working here when I qualify as a nurse. Leuchie is where I got my inspiration, where my journey started and what allowed my journey to happen. Without Leuchie there's no way I would be where I am now.

A round for respite

This summer Leuchie was chosen as an official charity partner of the Scottish Open golf tournament, and we were all proud to be part of this national event.

Leuchie House is located on Scotland's 'Golf Coast', surrounded by more than 20 golf courses, so we couldn't have been happier to be selected for the 2018 tournament. We shared the honour with the My Name's Doddie Foundation, set up by former Scotland rugby player Doddie Weir who has motor neurone disease.

We swung into action in June by holding our first media launch at Leuchie House, attended by top news broadcasters, with Leuchie Patron Gavin Hastings, Doddie Weir and professional golfer Stephen Gallacher talking about their support for both charities. A Scottish Open press officer brought along the Scottish Open Trophy and the Calcutta Cup for everyone to see – our guests were delighted!

A few weeks later we headed down to Gullane for the week-long tournament, where we had a Leuchie House information tent

located right at the entrance to the course. The Leuchie team was out in force, with 12 staff, 23 volunteers and 4 guests all interacting with 60,000 spectators over five days.

Day One was celebrity pro-am day and we entered a Leuchie team. Our 'pro' was Australian golfer Cameron Smith and our 'ams' were generous Leuchie supporters, one of whom flew in specially from the USA! Scottish celebrities Fred MacAulay and Andy Irvine, who were playing in other teams, visited the Leuchie tent to find out more about our respite work.

During the next few days we brought a little bit of Leuchie to the links: our lead physiotherapist Moni performed her weekly exercise class to the public, massage therapist Tara offered free relaxing massages, and Leuchie beautician Lynne came to give free haircuts and pampering manicures. She even cut Doddie's hair!

As most Leuchie guests use wheelchairs, we were keen to do something which promoted accessibility in golf. We got in



Leuchie guests, volunteers and staff with Gavin Hastings and Doddie Weir at the Scottish Open

touch with local Craigielaw Golf Club who lent us their fantastic 'paragolfer' unit - an electric all-terrain wheelchair which slowly raises the user from a sitting position to a supported standing position to enable a better golf swing. The response of Graham, one of the many members of the public who tried it out, was a highlight of the tournament for us. He had always loved playing golf but had to give it up after being diagnosed with ataxia. After using the paragolfer, he told us 'I never thought I'd hold a golf club again. I can't tell you what a wonderful time I had today - you made my day, week, year, decade!'

We were also lucky enough to be supported by the European Disabled Golf Association who sent professional golfer, Mark Taylor to provide some free golf coaching sessions for spectators, with all donations going to Leuchie.

Overall, the tournament raised almost £40,000, split between the two official charities. On top of this, we were over the moon to learn afterwards that both charities have been chosen as official partners for next year's tournament too. See you at the Scottish Open 2019!

So many ways to get involved...

Donate to Leuchie

Online

Visit www.leuchiehouse.org.uk and click **Donate now**.

By text

Text **LEUCHIE** to **70970** to **donate £5**.

By cheque

Make cheques payable to Leuchie House and send to us at the address below.



Volunteer with us

We're always looking for volunteers to help with everything from assisting at mealtime, gardening, activities, admin, bucket collections and event support.

Spread the word

You can help us by simply telling your friends about Leuchie House and the work we do. By following us on social media and sharing our news, you'll help us to reach new audiences. This means more people can benefit from a break at Leuchie and can help us promote the importance of respite.

Fundraise

Fundraising can take the form of so many activities from cake sales and quiz nights, to challenging yourself to run, walk, wheel... or even skydive!



The impact of my visit will be felt for a long time. It has been a **lifesaver** for me.



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NATIONAL RESPITE CENTRE