

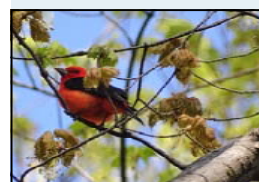
Finding my way ... to Crieff Hills

As I write it is raining outside and so I have to forego a visit to Crieff Hills Conference & Retreat Centre, a place I have come to think of as my spiritual refuge from the busyness of life.



Blue bird

I first visited Crieff Hills in 2016 on its Bird Banding Day. I had never heard of it before, even though I had lived in Guelph for 30 years. That day I met some of the wonderful staff of Crieff Hills and they encouraged me to visit again.



Tanager

That's when I began making regular trips to Crieff Hills. I attended their Blue Bird Walks, started walking

the hiking trails, and began walking the sacred path of the labyrinth. For me, walking the labyrinth became a peaceful rhythm in my day, a chance to slow down and pray, meditate and to heal. After a series of losses in my life I was seeking solace, and the tranquility and natural wonder of Crieff Hills was just what I needed.



Barn Swallow

Having recently taken up photography as a hobby, I now like to visit this little corner of Eden to photograph birds and wildflowers, as well as to walk the labyrinth and trails. I enjoy the peacefulness of nature and revel in the unfolding of the seasons. It gives me such joy and wonder, and I know I will keep returning.

Margaret Boyd

Mother's Day at Crieff Hills

On Saturday, May 13, 2017, our family had a delightful Mother's Day celebration at Crieff Hills. There were four generations from my parents to my grandchildren. To help us enjoy the day, we rented a lovely suite in the Pines.

In the morning we participated in the bird banding, hiking and rock painting activities that Crieff had organized. Then after lunch we enjoyed hiking and exploring the various gardens, amphitheatre, labyrinth and prayer shelter as a family. To my surprise, no one except my husband and I had ever walked a labyrinth so it was incredible to share this experience with everyone. It was a beautiful day!



I would encourage everyone to bring their family and friends to Crieff Hills. The fields, birds, trees, gardens, trails and all of the activities will truly renew and uplift everyone. We could feel God's presence and love and we know you will too.

Ann Marie Lorenz



Walking the Labyrinth as a family on Mother's Day

Upcoming Events 2017

- Fall Bird Banding & Hikes** - September 30th 2017 (8:30 am - noon)
- Manna Day** - 'What the Reformation Can Teach Us About Change' - October 12th 2017 - Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald
- Retirement Retreat** - 'Living with a Spirit of Adventure' - Rev. Dr. Andrew Irvine - October 29th - 31st 2017
- Women's Retreat** - 'Living a Life of Prayer' - Mary Jane Bissett - November 10th - 12th 2017
- Christmas Buffet Luncheons** - December 5th - 8th; December 12th - 15th 2017 (reservations required)

Upcoming Events 2018

- Young Mom's Retreat** - February 3rd - 4th 2018 - Rev. Kristine O'Brien
- Manna Day** - February 15th 2018 - Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie
- Church Administrators Conference** - May 14th - 16th 2018
- Music Ministry Conference** - 'Seeking (un) Common Ground - Music Ministry & Reconciliation' - June 1st 2018

All Financial Donations to Crieff Hills Retreat & Conference Centre are appreciated. Thank you for your support in maintaining this ... *place apart*.

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Crieff Hills Retreat & Conference Centre
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Crieff News 2017 1

A Glimpse Into Life - Crieff Hills 150 years ago

Maclean Hall - We treasure our history and with thanks to many people and resources we feel fortunate to recreate a picture of what life likely looked like on this property at the time of Canadian Confederation.

The 250 acres on which Crieff Hills Retreat & Conference Centre sits largely covers three of the original 100 acre lots on Concession 1. By 1867, this area of Ontario had been surveyed, settled, cleared and was being farmed. Most who settled here were from the Highlands of Scotland. Just east of Crieff Hills is the village of Crieff. In 1867, this village consisted of personal dwellings, a hotel, a shoemaker, a church and manse (Knox Presbyterian Church), two general stores, two blacksmith shops while just west of the village, a school, Puslinch S.S #6. Crieff was a hub of activity!

Education was important to those who settled here. Maclean Hall was built in 1874 as the third one room school house built at this location. The first Schoolhouse used logs cut from the land as they cleared for pasture. This first log school was small, poorly heated and with very little light, but it was a school for the children.

As more families settled in this area, a larger school house was needed. Building construction had moved from log to frame and so in 1856 a new frame School was built - 30 feet by 24 feet. Unfinished boards were nailed lengthwise and the roof was cottage style. It was a brighter building with three small windows per each side. On the north wall, two large boards were painted as the blackboard. Not wanting the students to be distracted by people going by on the road, the south end had no windows. There was no bell but the teacher would announce the beginning of school by hitting the side of this wooden building with a long stick. Inside, there were three aisles. Desks and seats were made of long boards all set on four legs and only differed by their heights. Each desk held 6 to 8 students and each had their own slate.



Frame School House - Puslinch S.S. #6 1856 - 1874

During these years, the teacher never really knew how many students would turn up for school each day. The following is an excerpt from Crieff School History, Puslinch.bravepages.com.

It was customary for young people who had left school to return during the winter, when they had fewer chores at home. At one time, one hundred and twenty pupils were in attendance. There was no well on the school property, so the children brought water from a well at the foot of the hill, east of the school.

It is interesting to note that at the time of Confederation (1867), Col John Maclean – child of the Crieff Manse, founder of Maclean's Magazine, who bequeathed these 250 acres to the Presbyterian Church in Canada – was five years old and would have been attending this frame school, Puslinch S.S. #6.

Puslinch S.S. #6
Stone Schoolhouse
built in 1874
Renamed to
Maclean Hall



Thank you to our Volunteers!

The staff at Crieff Hills along with our dedicated volunteers make Crieff Hills the special place it is. Over 80 volunteers in 2016 / 2017 worked along side Crieff staff in many areas: wood cutting, trail clearing, painting, mending, sewing, cleaning, gardening, mailings, program design teams, board members (MEC), program leadership, as well as student volunteers. A special thank you to Laurence Christie for his continuing trail and garden maintenance and to the Robertson family for their leadership in our Blue Birds, Bees, native trees and pollinator gardens. Thank you to all for your work, support and wisdom. Volunteers are always welcome. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities at Crieff Hills, please contact the Crieff office.

1.800.884.1525 info@crieffhills.com



Hermitage

The Hermitage at Crieff Hills is ready to warmly welcome guests. With a new septic system, new shingles and a fully refreshed interior, this quaint, historic Milk House is the perfect get away for one person who is seeking solitude.

This little building was the Milk House when Col JB Maclean raised his prize Highland cattle in the 1930's. Milk was stored here until picked up by a milk truck. Stone remains of the barn can be seen from the study window while the original Stone Farm House, House of Dove, is set behind the Hermitage. Once the farm laneway to the east, now leads to the Orange & Red Trails.

Crieff Hills Hermitage - Suitable for one person

- Single bed
- Desk
- Single Hot Plate / Microwave
- Dishes / Small fridge with freezer
- Comfortable chair
- Ensuite with shower / Bedding / towels / bar soap
- \$87.00 / night - single occupancy only

No Pets



... Ready for Guests

Environmental Initiatives at Crieff Hills

In 1950 Col JB Maclean bequeathed 250 acres of his farm to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Col Maclean had cared for this land with a vision toward protecting the land and actively promoted reforestation. One of the mandates of his will was the hope that this would 'operate as a model and example to other communities.' In order to be faithful to this vision, Crieff Hills strives to be a leader in promoting environmental initiatives working in partnership with local volunteers. Crieff Hills is in a unique position to model environmental practices to approximately 20,000 yearly visitors on the property.



Swallowtail on the lilacs



Haying at The Pines



Eastern Blue Bird



Caring for the Hives

Ongoing initiatives:

- Cultivated fields at Crieff have been converted to pasture helping control runoff as well as using fewer chemicals.
- Pollinator plantings on the north slope of the amphitheatre provide for endangered butterflies. (Prickly Ash, Hop Trees, Spicebush, Pipevine and Swamp Milkweed)
- A Monarch Garden has been established between Luke and the Conference Hall.
- Our Blue Bird trail now has 30 nesting boxes and is home to Tree Swallows as well as Eastern Blue Birds.
- Over 100 native trees were planted in 2016 thanks to a grant from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.
- Crieff Hills chefs use honey produced from the six bee hives on our property.
- Future projects planned for Crieff Hills are: Meditative Garden; continued native tree plantings; removing additional buckthorn.



Removing Buckthorn near the Conference Hall - in December no less!

A Mom's Getaway ... Finding time for rest

About a year ago, I was interviewing the director of Crieff Hills Community Retreat & Conference Centre, and mentioned that I'd love to attend a retreat for moms with young children at Crieff. His reply? "Well, start planning one!" And so I did.

"Rest, Renew and Relax" took place on Jan. 14 and 15 at Crieff Hills, a beautiful retreat centre just south of Guelph, owned by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The expansive property was donated years ago by Col. J.B. Maclean (being the good Presbyterian that he was), of *Maclean's* magazine and is now used by all sorts of groups, both church and non-church.

"Crieff Hills wants to offer opportunities for people at all stages of their lives to take some time apart in a natural setting," said Fiona van Wissen, program coordinator, who helped plan the event. "For moms of young children, I see it as a chance to set aside the constant busyness for a short time, to connect with their spiritual life and share experiences with others who understand."

A small group of women gathered at Crieff and were led by Rev. Kristine O'Brien, minister at Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, Ont. Herself the mother of four children, O'Brien blogs at bloomingreverend.com, where she writes about her gardening adventures and on learning to stop and smell the roses.

She was the perfect choice to help us rest and reflect, and to remember that God loves us fully. O'Brien invited us to find our breath; to be in the moment; to take time for God; to realize that we, as mothers especially, need to take time for self-care. She shared the story of Jesus healing the woman who was bleeding (Mark 5), using it as a metaphor for a mom's life. "It was a wonderful event of healing," she told us. "It was life-changing for that woman and her family. But something else happened. Jesus felt energy leave him. He loved and he healed, but it cost him something."

Such is the love and life of a mother. As mothers, particularly in the midst of the craziness of life with young children, we sometimes forget that all the giving we do for other people is, yes, wonderful, but it costs us something in return.

"I have four children who are now teenagers but I remember vividly how much I longed for rest when they were very young," O'Brien told me. "I knew this retreat would offer women the opportunity to be quiet and listen for God's voice, give and receive encouragement from one another, and maybe a good night's sleep!"

O'Brien also reminded us of Ecclesiastes 3 — where there is a time for everything in life, including rest. She had us share with each other why we are so tired; and then spoke to us about keeping Sabbath in a way that fits into our lives. "Sabbath can be observed in all kinds of ways," she told us. "It could be a half day, an hour, a moment. To observe Sabbath is to have time set aside...to intentionally do nothing except inhale."

She said we have to notice when our lives are out of balance; when we are only exhaling (or expending energy) and not inhaling (resting).

"I wanted to come to the retreat because I have a toddler and a preschooler at home and I needed a break for the sake of my sanity," said Allie Hyndman, a member of Paris Presbyterian Church in Paris, Ont. "The topic of rest was especially appealing to me."



Rest

"The busy world creates very high standards for mothers," said O'Brien—and, I would argue, for all of us—"and places little value on replenishment and renewal."

Wayne Muller's book, *Sabbath: Finding rest, renewal and delight in our busy lives* was a fitting reference for our weekend, though his message applies to anyone whose life seems hectic and out of balance. "Jesus, for whom anything was possible, did not offer 'seven secret coping strategies' to get work done faster, or 'nine spiritual stress management techniques' to enhance our effectiveness," read O'Brien. "Instead, he offered the simple practice of rest as a natural, nourishing, and essential companion to our work."



Relax

To help us find this rest, we practiced breathing and praying; we walked the stone labyrinth in the dark; we made finger labyrinths and then sat on our own and slowly traced the lines we had drawn, breathing deeply or repeating a word or phrase or question in our head.



Renew

We also had time for yoga - led by Amy Donais, a registered yoga teacher trained in the practice of Christian yoga. We enjoyed a movie night, and quiet walks along the trails at Crieff. We also wrote our own morning blessing—something that had meaning to each of us, and could be read each day before leaping into work mode.

"Every parent needs to remember that they themselves are a beloved child of God," said van Wissen, a message O'Brien reminded us of during worship.

Crieff Hills is planning a similar event February 3 - 4 2018. For more information on this event, go to www.crieffhills.com or email info@crieffhills.com.

Amy MacLachlan was managing editor at the Presbyterian Record until it ceased publication in November 2016. She has two daughters, and is currently a freelance writer and classroom volunteer.

<http://www.christiancourier.ca/.../a-moms-getaway-finding-tim...>