

wwoof uk news

worldwide opportunities on organic farms

issue 225

winter 2009



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www.wwoof.org.uk

editorial

Welcome to the Winter edition of the WWOOF UK newsletter!

One of my favourite things to do at this time of year is curl up by the woodstove and pour over the seed catalogues planning and dreaming of next year's delicious bounty, the hard work of this year all but forgotten.

In this issue Kath Hallewell takes us on a fascinating tour of all things seedy and encourages us all to save and share

our wonderful seed resources. We also hear about the new WWOOF movie currently in post-production and news about WWOOF UK and Commonwork's flagship big lottery project. This issue we have lots of your lovely letters. We really enjoy receiving them so please keep them coming!

Season's greetings and see you in the Spring!

Alissa, Editor

write to us!

We're looking for interesting host features, WWOOFing stories, your letters, international news, Transition Initiatives news from food and farming groups, seasonal stories – recipes, customs, food storage, book reviews and classified ads!

Please send contributions to editor@wwoof.org.uk or by post to the office, by the following dates:

- 31st Jan for Spring 10 issue**
- 30th April for Summer 10 issue**
- 31st July for Autumn 10 issue**
- 31st Oct for Winter 10 issue**

Please note the new classified advert payment rates - see page 11 for more details.

Don't forget you can always post adverts, questions and comments on the forum at www.lowimpact.org

what is wwoof uk?

WWOOF UK holds a list of organic farms, gardens and smallholdings, all offering food and accommodation in exchange for practical help on their land. These hosts range from a low impact woodland settlement to a 600 hectare mixed holding with on-site farm shop, cafe and education centre. Hosts do not expect you to know a lot about farming when you arrive, but they do expect you to be willing to learn and able to fit in with their lifestyle.

The list of hosts is available by joining WWOOF UK for a membership fee. Once you have the list you can contact hosts directly to arrange your stay. Your host will explain what kind of work you will be expected to do, what accommodation is on offer and will discuss the length of your stay.

WWOOF is a charity; WWOOFers do not pay to stay with hosts and hosts do not pay WWOOFers for their help. Charity number: 1126220



news from the office

News from the WWOOF AGM

- The main office are finding it easier to work with the new IT system as more and more changes and improvements are made. The priority has been to give hosts the ability to edit their own details and, although the long-term solution is still in the pipeline, the first part of this functionality was made available in October.
- Membership will soon be 'online membership' by default. This means the price will stay the same, and all new members will have the ability to search for hosts on the internet. The printed book will continue to be available, but will cost £10 extra. This decision has been made to reflect the additional cost of compiling, printing and shipping the book.
- We need more hosts! There has been such a massive surge in the popularity of WWOOF worldwide that we need more hosts to accommodate enthusiastic WWOOFers. If you know of a farm that could benefit from having WWOOFers, spread the word!
- We were very sad to hear that one of our wonderful long-term trustees – Edward Acland - will be standing down at the AGM next year. If you're passionate about WWOOF and would like to know more about

becoming trustee, please contact scarlett.penn@wwoolf.org.uk

- There has been a big debate about whether WWOOF UK needs to introduce a tick-box stating whether a host is a) certified organic b) or simply 'organic mindset'. At the moment it is up to the host to state that they are organically certified in their host description, as this only really affects farms that are selling their produce to the general public.

It's a very interesting question though and we would welcome feedback on what you think about this issue, WWOOFers and hosts alike.

Do you want to see a clearer differentiation between organic certified and organic mindset? Please email your thoughts to scarlett.penn@wwoolf.org.uk

Our development worker is busy co-ordinating lots of regional host gatherings. Look out for one in your area, and contact kath.hallewell@wwoolf.org if you would like to help

We still need more of your wonderful photos for our image library. Send them to michael.mcandrew@wwoolf.org

poor LILI!

Some very sad news. LILI (Low-Impact Living Initiative), the organisation that handles WWOOF UK's administration, has been the victim of theft - over £30,000 - by someone they knew and trusted.

Working relationships at LILI have always been based on personal contact and trust, and it is desperately sad that an organisation doing so much good has had their faith shattered in such a harsh way.

The situation is now in the hands of the police, but LILI are unlikely to get a large percentage of the stolen funds back. They have very little money left.

If you'd like to see this wonderful, worthwhile organisation back on its feet and prove that we won't let one bad apple turn things rotten for the rest of us, here are a few practical ways in which to help:

- ➔ tell friends and colleagues about LILI and get them to visit the website at www.lowimpact.org
- ➔ buy a course, book or gift voucher for a friend/loved one this festive season
- ➔ if you have anything to do with any publication, however small, consider letting LILI advertise for free
- ➔ make a donation (visit the website)
- ➔ become a friend of LILI (visit the website) - www.lowimpact.org

Any UK wwoofers or hosts who use twitter please follow <http://twitter.com/WWOOFUK> and tweet '@WWOOFUK hello! My name is ... and I am a wwoofer/host in the UK'

your letters

Dear Editor,

Having read the WWOOFing tales section in the Autumn issue where a WWOOFer described "five star accommodation where the posh lady of the house is telling you off all the time because of the way you are using the spoon or drinking your tea!" I thought that I would write and tell you about the WWOOFers we've had in our luxurious five star accommodation where the lady of the house may sound "posh" but is very down to earth and wouldn't dream of telling off the super people who help us so much when they volunteer.

As I have Multiple Sclerosis I can't do anything physical to help maintain our 60 acres and my husband looks forward with relief to the arrival in winter of any WWOOFers who volunteer as he simply can't make enough hours in the day to keep up with things.

The work we have is often really hard and when volunteers first contact us we explain quite clearly what's involved, and then often never hear from them again. Of course, the ones that we do hear from again and arrange to stay with us bring their hard work, different experiences and general good humour to our home. Having said that, it isn't always hard, the weeding is just monotonous!

Last year we had two girls from Canada and New Zealand who came to us after meeting up at another host farm. Despite the snow, wind and mud during their stay they worked tirelessly singing songs as they did so, even when we were telling them to take some time off. I don't think that they stopped smiling during their stay and their cheerfulness brightened a rather dull couple of weeks.

Then there were the two strong young frenchmen, one of whom could even drive the tractor competently. The other one was a master at cooking french tartes, an added bonus indeed. They laughed and joked whilst shifting stacks of logs, making it seem so easy, then

came indoors and livened us up with their banter and guitar playing.

Of course some hosts have WWOOFers who don't suit, and some WWOOFers find hosts that they're not happy with too but we've been lucky with all of ours to date. What I would say though is that if you are a WWOOFer thinking of volunteering, take time to consider how you would feel away from home for a length of time. We did have one delightful young girl come for a month who was terribly homesick. Hosts might take a leaf from our book as we now always advise volunteers who ask to come for a long period that we will take them for two weeks and we'll decide between them and us during the second week whether we all want to continue. That way they are not committed to longer if they're not happy and we're not either.

This year we have two young men booked to WWOOF with us in September and are looking forward to meeting them and any other volunteers that we can get this winter. The work that they do is such a bonus to us but it isn't only that, they also bring different humour, different outlooks on life and much more. It's a great experience all round.

Wendy Charles-Warner, Hafod Elwy Hall

Dear Editor,

At a talk entitled 'Water and the Land' hosted by the West Wiltshire Green Party in Bradford on Avon on 14th October, Julian Jones, Director of Water 21, outlined two relatively simple and inexpensive techniques which could answer world water and food shortages - as well as burying our carbon footprint:

(1) The creation by local communities and landowners of small scale water catchments and reed beds throughout the landscape would cleanse and store slow-release water and prevent flooding downstream (and avoid disease-bearing spray from overflowing sewers).

(2) The film 'Regeneration - an Earth Saving Evolution' demonstrated how the amazing microbial fertilizer EM is speedily restoring microbial life, fertility and structure to the soil in Australia. In addition to bountiful harvests, EM helps plants 'manufacture', with phototrophic bacteria, water from the air, even in times of drought. And the greatly enhanced root growth captures and stores carbon.

The evening ended with refreshments and much useful networking. The film is available from The Lifeworks Foundation (www.lifeworksfoundation.com). EM is available in the UK from Effective Micro-organisms Ltd. (www.em-naturally-active.com). Water 21's very informative website is at www.water21.org.uk.

Sue Coppard

Dear Editor,

I thought you might be interested in my recent trip throughout the UK. After thirty five years I returned to the UK from April to September and WWOOFed/cycled my way from London to Lands End to John O'Groats to Orkney and Shetland. Staying at ten host placements along the way I enjoyed the hospitality of rural Britain. At fifty seven I am a late comer to WWOOFing and cycling long distance but proved an old dog can learn new tricks.

WWOOFing provided an opportunity to meet local people and experience country life main stream tourists never will. From trout farming to raising pigs and chickens. Building dry stone walls to restoring a sailing boat. Making sausages to repairing furniture. Cooking to nursing babies. Building raised veg boxes to sharpening tools. My tasks were many.

Will I go WWOOFing again? More than likely.

John Sandilands, Australia

feedback from the AGM

I really enjoyed the gathering of like minded folk; it's nice to come together and feel that you fit in with friendly people straight away. It was good fun, inspirational and beautiful place to be."

Alex Armstrong (host from West Scotland)

"it was really good to meet everyone behind WWOOF (not to mention the other hosts and wwoofers) over the weekend."

Jeffrey Lam, WWOOF's new twitterer

What fun we had at the AGM for WWOOF,

What dancing we did, on our merry little hoofs.

Oh and sometimes in the daytime - we discussed things that mattered,

Of all WWOOF did and does and will, for ages people nattered.

Adam Greenman author of The Practical Guide to WWOOFing

"I arrived wondering if I could really manage to enjoy a weekend spent amongst complete strangers; I left wondering how I could possibly manage to drag myself away from such wonderful new friends.

And in between, I learned a lot, laughed even more, and loved every minute of the WWOOF AGM!

I danced the most fabulously funny, chaotic ceilidh it has ever been my joy to take part in, blasted out a rousing chorus of 'Big Spender' in the middle of a farm track, to a fellow WWOOFer who made the mistake of confessing to not knowing the words.

I stayed up way too late having way too much fun with the wonderful people who make WWOOF work and met kindred spirits who will remain in my heart forever, and had my passion for WWOOFing well and truly reaffirmed."

Silver

Dear Editor,

Growing up in the Sonoran Desert of South Eastern Arizona—closer to Mexico than to any American state—has made fields of green and oceans blue into the stuff of fairytale settings, a vague idea of a distant land worlds away from the tans, reds, and browns of my arid home in Tucson.

The emeralds and jades of Britain were merely myth to me. This May, I decided to WWOOF in Wales in order to travel and to work with horses. I knew little about my destination other than its general location on a map. As I struggled to keep my eyes open on the train from London to Aberystwyth (13 hours of travel proved to be somewhat taxing), I was inundated with the vibrant colours of early summer in the countryside.

White and black ewes with their lambs grazed solid green fields, and rapeseed lit squares of land on fire with its yellow blossoms. And, as I arrived on the West coast of Wales, I entered a world so green it would put Irish tourism brochures to shame. During my two-week stay, I was introduced to narrow, winding country lanes (deftly manoeuvred by local bus

drivers in vehicles that seemed far too cumbersome); thick hedges that boasted a dozen different types of greenery in its tangled shield; ivy that wound its way around trees that would shade the road beneath their canopies, creating cool, dark tunnels. From my temporary home, I could see the ocean—not the murky, grey-brown waters of popular Californian beaches, but a deep sapphire as blue as the hills were green. I felt that someone had spilled vibrant paint all over the landscape. I was educated about the hardy Welsh cob and spent many afternoons lounging on New Quay's wide, sandy beach, enjoying the uncharacteristically warm, sunny weather. I rode the bus throughout most of West Wales, drinking in the postcard-perfect scenery, exploring castle ruins in Aberystwyth and even hopping on a ferry to Rosslare, Ireland for an afternoon.

My two-week stay ended all too quickly; I was quite reluctant to leave behind the greens of the fields, the blues of the ocean, and the rainbow of colours that are the harbour side houses of Aberaeron. I found the Welsh to be the warmest, most genuine and welcoming of people, and as I bid them good-bye, I knew that I'd

be back.

Michelle Tanaka

Dear Editor

We have recently had some correspondence in the newsletter about contact by email. On the face of it, email sounds like the answer to the maiden's prayer; but in practice, it doesn't turn out like that. Email is impersonal and easily discounted on both sides – it's more like dipping your toe in the water to feel the temperature, rather than making the commitment and jumping in. Consequently, we get lots of enquiries; take the time to reply, never to hear from them again. A phone call is a much more effective way of communicating one's nature, personality, and aspirations through the medium of the voice, much easier to sum up the person's capabilities and expectations, again on both sides – a letter does something similar. Email has its place in modern life, and I have no doubt that the use of it will multiply in ensuing years, but still better used with caution in certain circumstances.

Margaret Jones, Host E17

Faith in a Seed

By Kath Hallewell

My seed collection is split between two big biscuit tins. I've been saving and collecting seeds ever since I started growing food 7 years ago. Each year I promise myself that I will plant the seeds I have before acquiring any new ones.... And each year I get seduced by new entries in the Real Seed Catalogue and my promise goes out of the window. There is something about seeds that brings out the squirrel in me.

I believe that this is perfectly natural behaviour, given that for almost 10,000 years, since the first crops were planted, saving seed has been the key to survival. Seeds are quite literally the foundation of the human food chain, yet many people today would have trouble associating a handful of wheat grain with their morning slice of toast.

When the only way to get seed was to save it, growers would carefully choose to collect seed from the plants that did best in their garden: the ones that grew strongest and healthiest, or produced the most delicious and plentiful fruits. In this way, over thousands of years, humans have harnessed the opportunities provided by natural variation to produce thousands of edible plants.

Vandana Shiva estimates that we have eaten over 80,000 food plants and used more than 3,000 regularly throughout our evolution (1). Today, we rely on just 8 plants to provide 75% of the world's food: wheat, rice, corn, potatoes, barley, cassava and sorghum (2). The UN estimates that more than 75% of the world's food plant diversity has been lost in the last 100 years. This includes the extinction of 80% of maize varieties in Mexico, thousands of varieties of rice in the Philippines (only two are cultivated today) and many, many more (3).

These figures matter to all of us, not only for their impact on our dinner. Narrowing the genetic diversity within our food crops means a dramatic reduction in the ability of our food systems to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Seeds of Change

Seed supply companies emerged over 100 years ago and since then, they have been in the business of persuading farmers and growers to buy something that they used to produce themselves. Most of their money comes from selling to large scale growers, so they focus their breeding programmes on producing a small number of varieties to suit that market. For example, uniform plants that ripen at the same time, so that whole fields can be harvested at once; tomatoes whose fruits have tough enough skins to survive a bumpy ride to the (super) market; pea plants that grow low to the ground and have fewer leaves, so that they can be easily harvested by machine.

One study carried out in 2005 found that the 4 main criteria in modern plant breeding are yield, general growing ability, herbicide resistance and patenting (4). Taste and nutritional value don't get a mention, somewhat

worrying given that we are discussing the seeds that are widely used to grow the food that most people eat.

Small scale growers are basically offered a tiny slice of the seed that has been designed for commercial growers, but marketed in a different way. But the needs of us folk that dig our own dinners are completely at odds with those of large scale growers – we want a big harvest, spread out over a long period, of tasty plants with good natural resistance. Perhaps most importantly, we want the option of being able to save the seed of our favourite plants that just love the growing conditions in our own patch.

It would seem that the large seed companies have a different idea...

A Seedy Business

Increasingly, seeds on sale through the major seed companies are F1 hybrid varieties rather than the traditional Open Pollinating Varieties (OPVs). 'Open pollinating' means that the plants pollinate naturally where they grow and produce seed that can be saved and grown on the next season. Lindy Sharpe explains on the Seedy Sunday website: "By pollinating freely and making seed, plants constantly experiment with the genetic material available to them, and adapt opportunistically to new conditions."

In contrast, you cannot save seed from F1 hybrid varieties. F1s are the product of an artificial pollination of 2 heavily inbred parents. Much of the seed they produce is sterile and those seeds that do germinate grow into weak plants with unpredictable traits (3).

Producing hybrids is an expensive process and the 'recipe' for each one is a closely guarded secret. To continue growing a hybrid variety, farmers and growers must buy new seed each year. Obviously this is very useful for the seed company, who need to make back the money they invested in developing the variety. But this is the first time in history that growers have been required to buy new seed every year.

A look at the seed catalogues of the last 40-50 years reveals a worrying trend – OPVs are being gradually replaced with F1 hybrids. Peter Brinch, a freelance gardener who has an ongoing involvement with the development of biodynamic seed, estimated that 80% of all seed for sale today is hybrid seed (5).

Since the 1970s, multinationals have bought or taken control of nearly a thousand once-independent seed companies. The global seed trade is worth several billion pounds annually, and is now controlled by a small number of giant companies. As Peter explained somewhat ominously, to them it's a game of survival: seed companies are striving to make themselves indispensable, by creating dependence on their hybrid varieties and controlling the market.

To us, the loss of OPVs is much more important: it's the loss of a fundamental right to grow and save seed. It also means that choices about what we grow – and ultimately our food security – are in the hands of fewer and fewer people whose motives, putting it generously, are questionable.

Heritage Seeds

UK and EU legislation introduced in the 1970s has unintentionally made matters worse for OPVs by making it illegal to sell varieties that aren't on the National List. Unfortunately, getting seed on to the National List is an expensive business. The upshot of this legislation was that small seed companies started disappearing, whilst large seed companies stopped listing those varieties that didn't sell in profitable quantities.

It was in response to this legislation that Lawrence Hills of Garden Organic (at that time HDRA) set up the Heritage Seed Library (HSL). His aim was to safeguard the genetic diversity represented by the huge number of traditional varieties that wouldn't make it on to the National List.

In partnership with Horticultural Research International a seed collection and growing programme was started. Although seeds appear to be dry and lifeless, they are actually just in very deep hibernation. They carry on internal metabolic processes at a very low level, at some point running out of energy and ceasing to be viable. Collecting seed isn't enough – you have to keep growing it.

Rachel Crow is the information officer at the HSL, and is passionate about its work. She told me that it became a membership organisation in the 1990s. Today members pay an annual fee of £20 to support the work of the Library. In return, they can choose up to 6 varieties of seed from the catalogue to grow themselves. Some members return seed to the Library to add to its stocks. Others simply savour the fruits of these varieties that narrowly escaped extinction, knowing that they are doing their bit to keep it alive.

Today there are just under 10,000 members who have access to around 800 varieties that are regularly rotated in the pages of the HSL catalogue. A further 200 varieties are in the processes of being trialled for inclusion in the catalogue. They are all open pollinating. It's thanks to the HSL that many of our traditional varieties didn't disappear in the 1970s. And as Rachel pointed out, once a variety is lost, there's no getting it back.

Seeds of the Future

There are still small seed companies out there championing OPVs and the needs of smaller growers. Kate McEvoy of the Real Seed Company proudly distributes their seed catalogue each year consisting entirely of OPVs. Each pack of seeds contains instructions on care and seed saving. She sees seed saving and swapping as the best way forwards, but would love to see it go one step further: "We would love to see more people breeding new varieties at home." With a little bit of guidance, this could be your most

exciting growing project for the coming years.

Thankfully there is also a strong grassroots movement encouraging seed saving and seed swapping in the UK. 'Seedy Sunday' is probably the most famous seed swap. It began in Brighton and Hove in 2002 and now regularly attracts over a thousand people. Their website is fantastically informative (details below), and explains the reason behind all the swapping: "The Seedy Sunday campaign is to protect biodiversity and protest against the increasing control of the seed supply by a handful of large companies." (3) Couldn't have put it better myself. There are plenty of other seed swaps going on around the country, some are listed on the Seedy Sunday website. If you know of one that isn't listed, why not put it on there?

Other interesting projects tracking down local varieties are springing up. The Dyfi Valley Seed Savers' 'Welsh Seed Search' is just one example. They are on the look-out for vegetables that have been grown from saved seed in Wales and that are well adapted to that beautiful green climate. If you know of any, get in touch (details below).

Sowing Seeds of a Revolution

Most of us will probably continue to buy some of our seed from seed companies. Support the small ones wherever possible, and avoid buying F1 hybrids if you can. They are a dead end in evolutionary terms and spell disaster for our food supply globally. We need to grow more open pollinating varieties with their genetic diversity, their ability to adapt opportunistically and their incredible habit of returning to us massive quantities of viable seed. And if the big seed companies don't change their ways, there's no need to worry – just pop along to your local seed swap and start taking back control over your own food supply. It's probably the most radical thing you can do.

References

1. Resurgence
2. <http://www.edquest.ca/component/content/article/108/>
3. Lindy Sharpe, http://www.seedysunday.org/page_id__2_path__0p1p.aspx
4. 'A Seedy Business Indeed', Peter Brinch, 2005
5. Peter Brinch, personal communication

Interesting Links

Seedy Sunday www.seedysunday.org

Dyfi Valley Seed Savers www.dyfivalleyseedsavers.co.uk

host news

My partner, Jan, and I rejoined as WWOOF hosts in January 2009 after doing other non-WWOOFing things for a couple of years. We are now leasing the farm where I had previously been the manager. We were in the position of being partners in business as well with all the responsibilities that go with running your own enterprise. We knew that from the start we were going to need extra help to keep on top of everything that growing vegetables requires.

With a late start in actually taking over (lease signed, getting loans, blah, blah, blah) we had managed to get an advert in the first newsletter of the year. After an initial slow response to it we had our first WWOOFer in place for June. Unfortunately we were not ready to take anyone until this time. Luckily we had extra local labour up until then. For some reason (my mind is a blank) the person did not turn up. Fortune struck upon us by a friend of a friend who had travelled with a guy who had been WWOOFing in Japan and South Korea who was looking for his next opportunity to WWOOF. His 'path' had led him to us that same week, whereby he appeared at the farm with no formal arrangement with us and ended up staying for two and a half weeks and worked his socks off in glorious sunshine. It was hard to make him stop some days!

Our WWOOFing successes continued with people from New Zealand, Belgium, Spain, Germany, England and Canada.

Our set up (for some people) would be considered rough and ready, but people seem to come with an open mind to what they are getting into. Most of our lot were first time WWOOFers, of all ages, some from urban areas. It is somewhat humbling to have strangers come to your place and be ready to weed, weed, weed, in the rain and mud (only kidding) then get fed as much delicious wholesome food as they can eat and then say what a wonderful experience they have had.

We are very clear that without WWOOFers, our vegetable growing business would not be able continue to provide our local eateries and community with the produce that everyone wants to buy i.e. LOCAL FOOD.

We had to turn down a lot enquiries last year; no doubt it will be the same again, but hopefully these people are able to find WWOOFing elsewhere (new hosts where are you...??). It is fantastic to see this movement grow into bigger things, just as we all need it from every aspect. All of the WWOOFing team (past & present) at WWOOF UK have done a great job. I was privileged to spend time with some of them at Old Hall in October for the AGM as well as other WWOOFers and members from Europe too. We discussed issues, talked shop, ate well, enjoyed our surroundings, danced to merry tunes with merry local beer, and I left feeling refreshed, invigorated and inspired to continue with what I enjoy doing most of the time up 'ere on me plot of land....

Alex Armstrong, Ardfern Organics, Argyll, Scotland



grow2grow@WWOOF

In September this year WWOOF was successful in winning our first National Lottery Grant for a project called Grow2Grow. Grow2Grow is about growing food and growing people. The idea is to offer young people aged 16-25 with mental health difficulties, in particular young care leavers, the opportunity to work on organic farms and receive psychological support during their placements.

We hope these structured placements, 2-3 days per week, for up to two years, will lead to lifestyle changes, social experiences, qualifications and employment for young people who can often struggle to find their way into meaningful learning and work. At the end of their placements, these young people will also be able to go WWOOFING in the UK and abroad, with the confidence and skills that more advantaged young people can take for granted.

I am a clinical psychologist and part-time WWOOFER, and had been fantasising about a different way of life, and how to combine my experience in mental health with my love of the outdoors, growing and farming for some time. However, the Grow2Grow seed finally landed on fertile soil over a very tasty curry with three of my WWOOF colleagues one evening in London, about a year ago. Following that evening I couldn't stop thinking maybe, just maybe this could become a reality.....and only a few weeks later, my husband pointed out a new funding stream called Ecominds, saying very casually, "what about putting in a bid for your idea about young people, mental health and farming?"



Ecominds is a pot of money (£7.5 million to be precise) given by the National Lottery to the largest mental health charity in this country MIND, to support projects which bring together the environment and mental health, to promote opportunity and reduce stigma. I didn't mull this for very long, in case I lost my nerve, and over Christmas last year put in my application. Then began the long, long wait for due processes, panels, finding the right farm, site visits and at last the final decision on 16th September this year – We had been successful, in partnership with WWOOF and Commonwork Farm, in winning one of only five Flagship Grants!

Commonwork is a very beautiful organic dairy and vegetable farm, at Bore Place near Edenbridge, Kent. Commonwork has a study centre on the farm and offers education programmes for people of all ages and abilities. These include hands-on learning opportunities for vulnerable people, so Commonwork is a good match for Grow2Grow with fantastic possibilities.

The project will begin in March 2010, offering placement opportunities working with the dairy herd and growing organic fruit and vegetables, to supply many events on the farm and study centre and in the local community. We will be evaluating the project, both formally, and informally through young people keeping video diaries of their experiences. We will share our experiences with you through this newsletter as we go.

Paula Conway - paula@wwoof.org.uk

Send us your pics!

We want give people an idea of what WWOOFing in the UK is like by showing them all the different ways in which people are WWOOFing. So we need your photos for the website please!

Please make sure that you get the permission of the hosts and WWOOFers in the photos.

Photos can be emailed to michaelmcandrew@wwoof.org

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those held by WWOOF or LILI

WWOOF The Movie

"Wwoof! The Movie" is about a collective of organizations that go by the acronym WWOOF: World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms. My wife and I have traveled around the globe for the last 5 months and videotaped our experiences within the organizations of France, Japan, Italy, and India. We are considering including more destinations in the film (specifically, Canada and the US), but right now, my priority is on editing and achieving funding. We will be making regular posts on www.cookingupastory.com and future updates will be available directly from the website: www.wwoofthemovie.com.

My wife, Rachel, and I were married in July, 2008. The month before, my soon-to-be father in law gave us \$15,000 to spend on the wedding. But Rachel and I have that old-fashioned, American entrepreneurial philosophy that if you want something done right, you do it yourself. So we made everything ourselves from the cake to the wedding video, and our friends and family lent their expertise for things like bartending, cooking the food, the photography, etc. Even the officiate was a friend of ours. When all was said and done, we still had about \$12,000 left over. Woohoo!

So before settling down and making babies, we decide we should see the world. Shouldn't be too difficult with \$12,000, right? First off, we consider plane tickets. "Let's see, we'll go to Australia, Japan, China, Thailand, India, Madagascar, Kenya, South Africa, all over Europe, Brazil, Ecuador, then come home. \$35,000?!?! Okay then, just Japan, India, Kenya, and all over western Europe. \$7,000? Okay that's do-able."

And then we go from there:

- Passports and visas- \$400
- Shots for Diphtheria, Typhoid, Yellow Fever, etc.- \$500
- Eurail passes- \$3,000
- Sony PMW-EX1 XD-Cam with 2 SxS cards and 2 inolithium batteries- \$7,000

"Excuse me?! You bought WHAT?" That's the wife talking, of course. I tell her it's a business expense. I mean, this is the trip of a lifetime. I owe it to us to capture it in HD. Besides, I come home with all this amazing footage from around the world, I make a small fortune selling it to stock footage companies, I post a few brilliantly artsy montages on my website, then I just sit back and let the customers flock to my door. That's how it works, right?

Now we're in debt before we get off American soil. And we haven't booked our hostels, travel through Asia or Africa, or taken into account how we'll buy all the little knick-knacks that we want to pick up along the way. You know...like food. And unfortunately, those magic plastic cards have their limitations. Especially in France, come to find out. Apparently they don't trust our American credit system. What's that all about, I wonder? Anyway, what do we do about this?

A friend of mine spent a Summer touring through Europe

a few years back and I remember hearing him talk about an organization called "Wwoof": World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms. He would work for a few hours a day on the farm in exchange for room and board, then he would go sight-seeing when he was done. It was a great way to explore local culture, learn about agriculture, and commune with nature... and a membership is "dirt" cheap.



So we look into it. Each country has its own WWOOF organization, so we join in Japan, India, France and Italy. We also join "Wwoof Independents" for countries that don't have their own WWOOF organization. This gives you access to places like Kenya, Greece, and Croatia. So we figure that into the budget:

- WWOOF membership fees: \$100
- Not having to pay for food and lodging: Priceless

Of course, we still manage to make room for the touristy things when we can. It is our honeymoon, after all.

Now, I'm the kind of person that works best when I have a goal. The idea that I was going to do anything worthwhile with my new toy while overseas was a little unrealistic without a true objective. WWOOF gave me that. Not only was it a fun project to shoot, the subject matter is pertinent and more important today than ever before. I only hope to complete the project with the urgency that it deserves.

That being said, here's where I'm at with "Wwoof! The Movie":

- I've made a trailer to exhibit the nature of the film in a nutshell.
- I've created a website where people can go to stay updated on the project.
- I've joined social networking sites to build the hype.
- And I send e-mails to WWOOF hosts, volunteers, administrators, and other fans of the movie on a monthly basis to maintain interest in the film.

Now the fun part: editing the 40+ hours of footage we've shot. In the meantime, I will be applying for grants, holding fundraisers, and appealing to investors, producers, and sponsors for funds. I'm also submitting a call for entries from other WWOOFers to incorporate their videos into the final project, assuming they give me footage that is rich and compelling enough to maintain viewer interest on the big screen.

the classifieds

Please note that a new flat rate of £10 for up to 50 words will be applied to all adverts in the classified section from the next issue. Please send adverts to editor@wwoolf.org.uk and cash or UK bank cheque to the main office: WWOOF UK, PO Box 2154, Winslow, Buckinghamshire, MK18 3WS. Payment must be received by the copy deadline in order for your advert to be printed. WWOOF accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of advertisements and does not endorse the products and services offered. You are advised to check before availing yourself of what is offered.

Winter WWOOFers wanted. Exceptional accommodation, lovely historic house, beautiful surroundings, quality food, friendly flexible household, couples / small groups welcome. Now the bad bits! Pretty remote and the work can be hard eg: walling, clearing brash and logging. It can also get very wet and muddy. Previous Wwoofers enjoyed stays. Contact: Wendy enquiries@hafodelwyhall.co.uk 01690 770345

HELP WANTED: Are you reliable and hardworking? We need help on our smallholding, 2 miles from Carmarthen, well served by local buses. We are offering accommodation in a camper bus with wood burner, in return for general help and house sitting. Non-smokers only. Interested? Contact: Allison/ Amanda: 01267 253465.

I am looking for a farm where I can keep my small caravan and come and stay on the occasional weekend to escape the city. I can pay a small rent of £20 per month in exchange. Looking anywhere within 100 miles of Bristol. Please contact Mary 0117 909 6506 or email :goodman.mary20@yahoo.com

Accommodation wanted for mature female and cat in return for rent and/or work. I can do gardening, decorating, housework, sewing, Do shop or admin work or deliveries but anything considered both for accomodation and work. Ring 07595906912 and I will ring you back.

'The Practical Guide To WWOOFing', by Adam Greenman is available to buy in paperback or as a download via: www.wwoolfing.co.uk . WWOOF Founder, Sue Coppard had this to say about it: "A delightful and informative

read, accessibly and humanly written - it almost reads itself to you!" More details at the website.

Wanted: Woodland/land acres + in Scotland to set up woodland crafts workshop. Prefer secluded, funds in place, or swop/trade my woodland in NB Canada - 100 acres with lake building lot 4 season highway hydro/telephone, also 2 acres with old house on otherside of highway. Would prefer scotland but anywhere and anything in UK considered. WWOOFer with refs, more info contact charlesrockylane@hotmail.com. Tel 07784 578288

Websites/online shops, £250. www.ethicalinternet.co.uk 0845 4582658

Female English speaking housesitter wanted from 1/12/09-31/03/10 on a beautiful 7.5 acre farm. Varied work - admin, cleaning and handy work, weeding and pet care. No pesticides used, we grow fruit, vegetables and lavender using plant based compost. Contact Sylvia Ashley, Primrose Cottage, High Wych Rd, Sawbridgeworth, CM21 0HH.

Friendly, young couple (seasoned WWOOFers) looking for cottage/yurt with own gardening space. Ideally work in lieu of rent. Permaculture design, organic gardening and conservation experience. Happy and enthusiastic pair wanting to live closer to the land. Norfolk preferable but other regions considered. wheesht@fastmail.fm 07909 735475

Soul mate sought by young woman, 50, presently living in rural SW France, surrounded by lovely acre of land and peaceful views. Thinking of moving to Normandy, set up gite, grow veg, keep chickens...but not on my

own. Open to ideas, please leave message 07835 660569 and I will call back.

Lonely young man, 29, tall, with moderate learning difficulties, working on farm in North Bedfordshire, seeks young lady of similar age, capabilities and interests. Box no JONES225

Opportunity for individual (and/or friend) who may like to start a small nursery garden in Pembrokeshire (nr Tenby). Accommodation available. Details: 01834 810157 or 07977 210250.

Vineyard near Hastings - 6 Ha vineyard near south coast resort of Hastings offers long or short-term self-catering working holidays in large mobile home. Wide variety of 'hands on' vineyard tasks all-year-round, as well as wine making and processing of fruit juices on site. Vineyard & Woodland Nature Trail plus wine tastings for visitors during summer. Free use of facilities such as shower, washing machine, local phone-calls and on-line computer. Email roy.cook@englishorganicwine.co.uk for more details.

Inspirational, commercial, organice, horticultural holding near Hay-on-Wye with permaculture principles, large forest garden and low carbon farming. Renewable energy and sustainable building. Interests: singing, chanting, sound healing. Very varied work for learning. Food and accommodation provided. Particularly suited to motivated people. Contact: Paul, Primrose Organic Centre; 01497 847636; paul.benham@ukonline.co.uk www.primroseearthcentre.org.uk

could you become a WWOOF volunteer in your region?

We are always on the look out for more people to help us with the very enjoyable work of keeping in contact with our network of WWOOF hosts. Read on to find out how you can get involved...

WHO CAN BECOME A REGIONAL VOLUNTEER?

Anyone over the age of 18 who is keen to support WWOOFing in the UK, likes meeting new people and is happy using the phone and emails to keep in touch.

WHAT WOULD I DO AS A WWOOF VOLUNTEER?

Your might get involved in screening applications from new potential hosts, or perhaps help to arrange a get-together for hosts in your region. You could be organising local WWOOFing days, or helping us to keep in contact with hosts around the country. These are voluntary roles, but expenses are reimbursed for phone calls, postage and travel.

DO I HAVE TO BE A HOST TO BECOME A REGIONAL VOLUNTEER?

NO. In fact, many hosts simply haven't got time to host AND volunteer for WWOOF! What we need are people who are passionate about WWOOF, who enjoy meeting and working with like-minded folk, and who would relish the opportunity to get to know hosts in their region.

DO I HAVE TO BE AN EXPERIENCED WWOOFer TO BECOME A REGIONAL HOST CONTACT?

Ideally you will have WWOOFed a few times and understand what makes for a good wwoof. We will give you all the training and support you need for screening applications from new hosts, and will be delighted to hear any other ideas you have for promoting or supporting WWOOF in your area. You need a willingness to attend the AGM each year, which is a chance to get involved in the running of the organisation as well as a good knees-up!

DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH TIME TO GIVE BUT WOULD LOVE TO GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested in volunteering but don't have masses of free time, please get in touch: we can find ways of sharing out the tasks to suit the volunteer.

These roles are really important for keeping the human-scale approach of the WWOOF UK network alive and well. Becoming a WWOOF volunteer is a great way of supporting the organisation, but it also gives you a great opportunity and incentive to discover what's going on in your own organic back yard.

If you would like to find out more, feel free to give me a call or send me an email. I look forward to hearing from you!

Kath.hallewell@wwoof.org - 01342 826235

Why WWOOF?

- ⇒ reconnect to the soil, get your hands dirty and get grounded
- ⇒ re-skill and help revitalise ancient knowledge
- ⇒ gain first hand experience of organic and biodynamic farming, growing and animal husbandry
- ⇒ find inspiration in like minded people
- ⇒ rediscover the relationships between local food production, social community and spirit
- ⇒ taste totally fresh produce
- ⇒ acquire a wealth of experience for a relatively small financial outlay
- ⇒ walk the talk - try it out for yourself

next copy deadline: 31st january 2010 editor@wwoof.org.uk
WWOOF UK, P.O. Box 2154, Winslow, Bucks, MK18 3WS