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welcome to the winter 2016 edition of WWOOF UK News

Just to reassure you – it’s WWOOFing as usual in the UK – welcome everyone! The result of this year’s EU Referendum (Brexit) will not affect WWOOFing plans in the immediate or near future.

Winter’s definitely on its way now – as I complete this issue of our newsletter the last of the leaves are being ruthlessly shaken from the trees and the bright sun has given way to lowering clouds in an early darkening sky. I’ve been glad to look back at so much done and achieved through WWOOFing this year – our Members Weekend was a great success and enjoyed by all, see pages 4 and 5 for Host Contact Taryn Field’s report. Director Nim Kibbler reflects on the completion and achievements of the innovative LLOOF project, pages 8 to 10, while host and RHC Bryony Huntley shares the joy and apple-ness of weekend WWOOFing. Holly Cross, our Organisational Administrator, reminds how to make the most of WWOOFing, page 11 (it’s all about communication!). Sue Coppard has sent us an appreciation of Richard Hazell, our retiring Chair, page 3, and there’s a spotlight on Tony Chalcraft, WWOOF UK director and newly appointed Chair, who shares his experience of and vision for WWOOFing.

Kevin Gaffney, RHC for Scotland Central describes his enjoyment of a ploughing championship, page 10, while Mr Fluttergrub provides his wisdom about Brussel sprouts – although we think we may have a new name for them, page 6! And last, but by no means least, we remind you that you can give a meaningful and ethical seasonal gift by purchasing gift memberships of WWOOF UK, see page 12.

Please send me your news, comments and experiences, we love to share them. Elaine Koster, Editor

stay in touch

Please send contributions for our print editions to editor@wwoof.org.uk or by post (address page 12) by the following dates:

- 31st January for Spring 2017 issue
- 30th April for Summer 2017 issue
- 31st July 2017 for Autumn 2017 issue
- 31st October for Winter 2017 issue

The deadlines for material to be included in the next four electronic updates are:

- 6th January 2017
- 7th April 2017
- 10th July 2017
- 6th October 2017

We particularly welcome your photographs and letters as well as your WWOOFing tales

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and Instagram: @wwoofuk
Contact: socialmedia@wwoof.org.uk
And don’t forget members can always post adverts, question and comments on our members’ forum www.wwoof.org.uk/forums/forum

cover: our ‘formal’ AGM, photo: Chris Schmidt-Reid

what is WWOOF UK?

- WWOOF UK holds a list of organic farms, gardens and smallholding, 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, café and education centre.
- WWOOF hosts should follow the IFOAM organic principles but need not be registered with a certifying organisation.
- Hosts do not expect WWOOFers to know a lot about farming and growing when they arrive, but they do expect them to be willing to learn and able to fit in with their lifestyle.
- The list of hosts is available, either online or as a book, 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.
- WWOOFers do not pay to stay with hosts and hosts do not pay WWOOFers for their help.
- The ethos and mission page of our website gives full details of what is expected of hosts and WWOOFers.
- WWOOF UK is a charity registered in England and Wales 1126220 and in Scotland SC045524.

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those held by WWOOF UK
From Mike Hammer:.
We have recently made improvements to our website’s functionality and photos can now be stored in such a way as to be able to be viewed full-size. Previously when looking at hosts’ photos, they could only be viewed in a fairly small format. Hosts who have joined since the end of August 2016 will have automatically been given this function. It’s a great opportunity to share photos of yourself, the beautiful views of your place and its surroundings and WWOOFers taking part in inspiring activities.

I would like to urge hosts to take time this winter to upload new photos onto your listing. The photos will still be displayed in the same collage style on your listing but now when a photo is clicked-on it will enlarge to full-size. Photos from your listings are a great source for my work as WWOOF UK’s Social Media Liaison person – if I can draw on good quality photos from our website I should be able to have greater effect. I hope you agree that the ‘picture tells a thousand words’ and will seriously consider updating your listing with fresh photos whenever you get the chance.

I hope to be able to convey to the public just what a vibrant community WWOOF is and how rewarding the dynamic of this type of exchange can be.

Contact Mike Hammer by using: socialmedia@wwoof.org

Richard Hazell—an appreciation

Sue Coppard, founder of WWOOF, was unable to join us for the Members Weekend this year but sent this appreciation to be read out at the AGM meeting, where Richard officially let go of the reins.

Richard joined WWOOF in 1976 – forty years ago! – and we owe him a great debt of gratitude. He has helped and worked for WWOOF in so many ways; indeed he’s been propping up WWOOF for over three decades!

Richard’s first job, if I recollect, was to take over from me the job of running our annual conference get-togethers. During this time a crisis arose: two WWOOF members (that is David Holman and I) were threatened with a court case over an alleged £3,000 that WWOOF UK owed for printing our Working Organic Reference Manual and Sourcebook (WORMS for short!) – a project to publish a DIY organic training manual as so little organic training was available at the time. The brilliant David Holman, together with his solicitor friend, got us off the hook by pinpointing all the flaws in the printer’s case, and he dropped it. (Sadly, the excellent WORMS manual was never published; however, it is being partly recycled in the newly launched, universally accessible Erasmus/WWOOF organic training website.) This crisis taught us an important lesson: if you are an unincorporated association anyone can sue any member they care to pick on! In his role as WWOOF’s in-house solicitor, Richard masterminded our transformation into a limited liability company in September 1993, so that no one could threaten us in this manner again. (Just imagine the situation if a WWOOFer had lost a leg or worse!) Later, in 2008 after several attempts, he managed to acquire charity status for WWOOF UK. He has also been Chairman of our Council of directors for many years.

What a hole will be left in the WWOOF UK structure by Richard’s ‘retirement’. Thankfully, however, he has agreed to continue helping us in an advisory capacity. So, Richard, our very grateful thanks for all you have contributed to WWOOF, we wish you many happy times ahead with us.
members weekend

Host Contact Taryn Field was on duty throughout the Members Weekend taking notes to make sure she could bring you the details of our celebratory event.

Whilst travelling up to Cumbria on one of the most scenic train rides I’d been on for a while, I was reflecting on everything that makes WWOOF one of the greatest concepts I’d come across. This weekend was not just a normal members’ weekend and AGM, but also a celebration of 45 years of WWOOF UK! I arrived at the Kepplewray Centre, nestled in a wooded valley in Broughton-in-Furness in Cumbria, or Lancashire depending on who you speak to, and was welcomed by the smell of wood smoke from the open fire which instantly added to my good mood. Luckily I was just in time for dinner; Kepplewray had put on a spread of plentiful, wholesome food, and we were treated to an array of desserts too. After dinner we gathered in one of the lounges and, with the sound of a fire crackling in the background, we began the introductory circle to welcome everyone who’d arrived.

As there was no formal agenda for Friday evening we used this time for a general open forum, where members could discuss anything they wanted. WWOOF posed several questions: ‘Why choose WWOOF UK over other organisations such as HelpX and Workaway?’ Members responded by explaining that they would rather support the organic movement, others noticed a lack of support or human contact with the other organisations, whereas WWOOF UK offers plenty of support. ‘How will Brexit effect us?’ Over fifty per cent of WWOOF UK’s WWOOFers are European, but no one really knows how it will pan out. ‘What improvements can WWOOF UK make?’ There were a few website improvement suggestions offered, which we gladly took note of. Then later on, guests began thinning out, no doubt on their way to bed after what presumably was a long day travelling. I was not far behind although I managed to get in a couple games of table tennis before hitting the sack myself.

Saturday morning began with, once again, a glorious spread for breakfast followed by our usual three hour Council meeting. Whilst directors and staff were in the ‘games room’ talking about all things WWOOFy, a separate discussion ‘The WWOOFer Experience’ was running in the lounge. This was a chance for hosts and WWOOFers to consider aspects of the WWOOF exchange that worked well, or didn’t work well and what they would change or improve about the organisation. Many post-it notes were used and displayed under the various topics of discussion. Then lunch was ready, and Kepplewray once again treated us to a delicious meal, the dining room filling up as more members arrived for the weekend.

The formal bit of the weekend, the official AGM, began with a lively round of the different groups of directors, staff, hosts, WWOOFers and guests all standing up to introduce themselves.

Two lovely PhD student WWOOFers from Newcastle University attended and, besides having WWOOFed in various countries, they were involved in Organic Food Quality research. You can read about their extensive research and findings here: https://goo.gl/BqVaMD.

WWOOF UK’s longest standing director, Richard Hazell, stepped down from his post after so many years supporting WWOOF and being invaluable to its success. Sue Copbard, WWOOF’s founder, sent an
appreciation of Richard, which Scarlett (Penn, our Chief Executive) read out to the group, see page 3, and then presented it to him with a humorous, framed cartoon of himself, drawn by his talented fellow director Trudi Warner.

We wish Richard all the best for the future although we will still no doubt call upon his trusted wisdom as an adviser to WWOOF UK going forward. Thanking Richard for his hard work and service led nicely into hearing stories, memories and reflections from hosts and WWOOFers about their experiences.

We listened with interest about recipe sharing, teaching and learning from each other, love and friendships that can blossom between WWOOFers and hosts, and also WWOOFers and WWOOFers, and WWOOFers turning into hosts; so many magical moments that have been shared through the exchange, that might cause the eyes to well up. (I don’t think it was just me...)

What is a celebration without cake? And what a cake it was! As you can see, a lot of care and love went into making this birthday cake for us, and we thank the local bakers of Broughton-in-Furness for their artistry and skill, it tasted great too!

In the latter part of the afternoon there was an informative and inspiring presentation by Adam Cade and Nim Kibbler who have been heavily involved in creating LLOOF (Living and Learning on Organic Farms). This is a partnership involving national WWOOF organisations from ten different countries coming together to produce, develop and promote an open learning resource for adult learners about organic food production. Do read the article on page 8 explaining what the LLOOF project has been all about!

Once the presentation was over, we enjoyed a bit of free time before dinner and the day was nicely finished off with a WWOOF quiz; this pleased me greatly as I love quizzes!! We divided ourselves into teams of four, pen and paper in hands and Amanda (Pearson – our Volunteer Liaison), who had amazingly thought of all the questions (AND had mentioned all the answers smoothly and sporadically throughout the day to all) began the quiz. I was pretty confident my team would do well, however some of the questions were quite tricky but we managed to score a respectable seven out of ten. I think there was a tie at the end, but we’re all winners to me.

Sunday morning greeted us with warm sun and crisp air and a cooked breakfast! While we were enjoying filling our bellies, Holly (Cross – our Personnel and Organisational Administrator) informed us of the logistics for our excursion to Laya Point, the nearest WWOOF host to Kepplewray. I was very pleased we were going there, as I love meeting new hosts and had not been in the area before.

The short drive there was beautiful. The scenery was breathtaking, and the weather being on point really accentuated the beauty of the area. Tom, who runs Laya Point with his partner Rosie, gave us an in-depth and informative tour around the site. Although Tom’s dogs were a bit of a distraction (as they were super friendly) we had a good walk around asking questions and chatting, sunshine warming our bodies.

Laya Point hosts all sorts of courses; yoga, basket making, meditation and, of course, permaculture, and much more. To see what else they are involved in, have a look at their website: www.layapoint.com.

We finished the tour and the morning off with a closing circle with members recalling their favourite moments, or what they enjoyed most about the weekend. Rosie cooked us all an impressive lunch; this was served in the main room which has the most gorgeous views, so it was a real treat.

Alas, the time came to leave; there were a good few of us that were on the same train so we headed off to the station, all beginning our journey home. I always feel like this after a WWOOF AGM, a little tired, but inspired and refreshed, and really glad I had the chance to be involved with what is the most amazing concept ever... WWOOF! Special thanks must go to Holly, who worked tirelessly organising this amazing event and to Chris Schmidt-Reid for the photos. Thank you!
on the plot with Mr Fluttergrub

perhaps we should call them ‘Brexit sprouts’?

Visiting other plots I seldom see many with Brussel sprouts growing. Other ‘brassicas’ (the genus of the cabbage family) seem more popular. The fashionable black Tuscan kale (Cavolo Nero) now seems just as common as the Brussel sprout in home gardens. This is a shame as sprouts have a lot to offer, both from a nutritional point of view and as a crop to harvest over quite an extended season.

It has to be said that growing good quality Brussel sprouts isn’t easy. Sprouts are not difficult to grow as plants, but to get them to carry tight, blemish-free button sprouts up a long stem is quite a challenge. I’ve cultivated sprouts for years and usually manage to produce a worthwhile crop. The buttons may not look as perfect as those bought from a supermarket, but they are perfectly acceptable to me and, I trust in the absence of complaints, to my veg box customers.

From my experience if you want quality sprouts it is necessary to grow an F1 rather than an open-pollinated variety. F1 sprout seed is expensive but the plants are more vigorous and uniform and the buttons less likely to ‘blow’ (become loose and open). My current favourite varieties are the new Crispus and the older Cascade. I grow the former as it has resistance to the debilitating clubroot fungus that can afflict brassicas on parts of my plot. Cascade lacks resistance but is a more compact plant with bigger buttons that usually crops well from November through to the New Year.

Just as important as the type of seed is an early start. I sow seed late March/early April in modules. Plants are grown on in a cold greenhouse until three or four proper leaves have formed. After hardening off I plant into the plot, usually in mid-May. Sprout plants need plenty of space. I set mine out 60cm (two feet) apart in and between rows. An open and sunny site is essential. Sprouts are one of those veg that will just not perform in an enclosed or shady position.

Sprouts also need a fertile soil. I always dig a generous quantity of manure into the planting site in winter. I also add lime as this gives some control of clubroot. Once plants are established I rarely water, even in dry weather. Neither do I support the plants as sometimes advised. Unless you have a very windy site or grow the tallest varieties they should stay upright without assistance.

Wood pigeons are partial to sprout plants at any stage of growth so I net mine immediately on planting. I’ve now taken to using butterfly netting as this has the added benefit of preventing caterpillar damage in late summer. This is quite an expensive option though, as four metre wide netting is required to encase the tall sprout plants. The butterfly netting is removed in autumn and replaced by conventional bird netting. This is propped up above the plants to prevent hungry pigeons sitting on top and pecking at the leaves.

Another pest that usually affects the plants is brassica whitefly. By autumn clouds of these billow up as the plants are brushed against. Although this looks alarming, there seems to be little impact on growth. The secretions of the whitefly can lead to a sooty coating on the outer leaves of the sprouts, but as these are usually peeled off in the kitchen the affect is mainly cosmetic.

It’s said sprouts need a frost to bring out their best flavour. As I write in late October this is still awaited, but there are already sprouts of edible size on the plants. As soon as the weather feels suitably ‘wintery’ we’ll take our first harvest and by December sprouts should be in full production. Providing the pigeons don’t find a way through the defences, the plants should continue to provide tasty buttons right the way through to early March.

photos: Brussel sprout Crispus, Kings seeds https://goo.gl/sMGexH

Mr Fluttergrub is the pen name of someone who is close to the heart of WWOOF UK. Based in the north of England he’s a very experienced grower and has agreed to write a regular column for us. Let us know if his suggestions work for you or if you have other ideas for your region, please get in touch using: info@wwoof.org.uk.
Bryony Huntley is a host and an RHC in south Somerset. For a couple of years now she has arranged WWOOFing weekends to help with her apple harvest and here’s what she says:

Huge thanks to all the Wonderful WWOOFers, friends and family who came to help with the apple harvest this year. We were a very international crowd each weekend in October and have delivered over four tonnes of cider apples to Thatchers in Sandford, Somerset.

We will be celebrating the bounty of the trees, as well as hoping for a good crop next year, on Saturday, 14th January so keep an eye on the website for details.

Drink up thee zyder !!
LLOOF—the project completed

The making of ‘Living and Learning on Organic Farms’ (LLOOF): two years working on an EU farming project without actually getting dirty hands. Our director Nim Kibbler has been involved in this far-reaching project since day one and reflects on its progress and impact.

It was back in 2013 at the first WWOOF UK AGM I attended that WWOOF UK made the decision to employ a fundraiser, to see if it was possible to make some of the hopes of diversifying the WWOOF spirit into relevant projects. Although this didn’t manifest as anything domestic, it did result in WWOOF UK proposing to apply for the old EDVORG European Union fund, now called ERASMUS+ (not to be confused with that semester-abroad-thing that undergraduate students do). To speed the story along our fundraiser, Adam Cade, with experience of running his own sustainable education business, began an application for around £125,000 and looked for WWOOF European national organisations with the skills, time and interest to be project partners.

Success for the bid arrived in the summer of 2014 just as we were getting ready for the global WWOOF meeting in Western Turkey. The first of the project’s transnational meetings was tagged on to this meeting and for the very first time all ten EU WWOOF national organisations sat down in a room and discussed what was in store for us and what we had said we could achieve.

Therefore, our project (later to be named LLOOF because clearly we can’t help but name everything with an acronym!) began in earnest, with our partners from Ireland, Italy, Czech Republic, Serbia, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Norway and our lovely hosts Turkey. We faced some initial changes such as the coordinator and sole employee of WWOOF Norway bringing in her neighbour, border wise, Sweden to assist with the workload.

Our brief was to create a lengthy, detailed learner’s guide incorporating the core aspects of farming, land management and food production; those we know to be the core of smallhold/farm life. Additionally, this guide would be translated into our nine native languages and we would ensure it was available online for WWOOFers and other rural/farming learners to find. Of course, the EU, which was providing the money, had its own specific outcomes it wished to see delivered; these included:

- collaboration between the various national groups
- experience of each others cultures and working practices
- creating a guide that would prove useful for volunteers on small organic enterprises enhancing materials for training and education
- open access to resources, no barriers to learning.

WWOOF UK’s role was to coordinate the project; Adam was employed in this role, I joined him as a director for assistance but had less time I could dedicate when I returned to Scotland in 2015. Later, we were also joined by Alex Lee, a director with a background in IT and online learning—very useful indeed.

One of the first conversations that Adam had with other WWOOF UK team members was about WORMS; a training manual developed by Sue Coppard and others back in 1984. It laid out a number of competencies that a WWOOFer would gather as they WWOOFed about the UK on a variety of smallholdings, farms and garden enterprises. WORMS was used as the basis for the subjects
built into the learning structure of what became LLOOF.

When we reached out to the wider WWOOF community on the continent we were pleased with how well received the idea was and a number of WWOOF national organisations came forward as partners. We then had the difficult task of choosing those with the most fitting skills set.

Partners came with a broad range of skills, ranging from professional/community arts, social media/communications management, IT systems/web development, professional translation and farm/sustainable education. All partners were committed to monthly online meetings, spreading the workload between us. Each area of workload, for example ‘needs analyses’ of the potential learners, was assigned to a WWOOF national partner with suitable experience and skills.

In total the project has involved three transnational meetings, two of which would be tagged on to the back of other international WWOOF meetings. These were:

- Western Turkey in October 2014, after the global WWOOF meeting
- Northern Italy in September 2015
- South West Ireland in April 2016, after the European meeting.

One of the biggest areas of challenge was managing ten partners’ expectations and hopes for the project and what it could achieve. Our brief was to create just a PDF learning guide but it was quickly observed that there was more potential. This included the ability to branch out into non-written learning materials, formalised online learning tools and more subjects than those already chosen. Tensions in the team were sometimes high in relation to this potential to expand our output from the project. From the UK perspective it was critical we kept to being able to achieve the basics so we could ensure we received the funding (as lead partner this was our responsibility) and distribute to each of the WWOOF national organisations their share.

We decided to create a Moodle website using the online PDF with the original areas of learning which would act as a formalising tool for all that text and allow people to explore online via on-screen text, images, videos and external links. Additionally, we would create a video channel on YouTube where people could submit videos, related to the same topics that were in the PDF.

The first year of the project really focused on the needs analysis of learners, this was done by a large survey which resulted in around 6,000 responses. This data was sifted through and the key messages and online resources extracted.

The second year was focused on the creation of these materials; the PDF, its many translations, the Moodle site, the YouTube site and some initial videos to kick it off. The latter part of the year saw us hold a press day in Ireland and begin the process of sharing the work. Importantly, it also opened up the opportunity for others to begin to contribute videos which are a rich addition to the learning material.

We have found that the type of learning we provide with LLOOF has chimed with a good number of people, with their feedback suggesting that this was the type of resource they needed when they were learning, now that they are learning or for volunteers whom they teach or mentor. We also found that it fitted into a lot of political conversations, which involved ideas on theories and values of land use and food systems and we added a section to the PDF to explore these, neutrally.

Now, after many months of working together remotely and very occasionally face-to-face, we find ourselves with finished and developing learning materials online that will continue to grow and develop. We see those materials being handed over to FoWO (Federation of WWOOFing Organisations) where they can become global – which is very exciting. As I write this Adam has finalised the big bureaucratic report/summary that heads off to the EU and will hopefully see the project awarded all its funding. It’s sitting in my inbox ready to read!

If I look back at the two years, it feels strange and sad to realise that my life won’t so often encounter all my teammates from this project, in fact I’ll have to wait until 2019 to see them again at the next European WWOOF meeting. This, I guess, shows that we’ve met one of the
main outcomes of these types of projects – that of fostering relationships between different EU citizens. It feels odd to reflect that as I’ve settled into being part of a European team, learning from them, that I’ve also encountered ‘Brexit’ – which is achieving the exact opposite.

One of the wider advantages is what has been achieved in parallel to the LLOOF project – the awareness of WWOOF has grown and now it is more commonly recognised as a legitimate exchange service for farmers, horticulturalists and food producers. In fact the EU commission in 2015 recognised the WWOOF movement as the largest farmer exchange scheme in Europe.

But this has led to something even more important for many WWOOF national organisations; if they’re recognised at top level government then maybe our WWOOFers may be able to be more candid about their activities when they cross borders and are met by inquisitive border officials. It helps to visualise and underpin the educational nature of WWOOFing, which we all recognise exists, but was so often questioned by officials with statistics on their minds. Some WWOOF national organisations have to fight to show their educational or charitable benefits in order to prove their right to exist and operate – we hope that with a globally owned and maintained education tool this proof is easier to demonstrate.

Kevin Gaffney, RHC for Scotland Central, recently attended a major ploughing championship and shares his impressions.

An early start for my journey to Scotland’s East Coast, where I will attend the prestigious ploughing championships that are being held during this, thankfully, dry week in late October. My base is the charming coastal town of North Berwick – with its vibrant community cafes, deli’s and shops and views of the Bass Rock and the Isle of May.

The 33rd European Reversible Championships attracts top class ploughers from Denmark, Estonia, Russia, Switzerland and many more countries. This is the first time that Scotland has hosted the European, and it will be followed by the 54th Scottish Ploughing Championships, at West Fenton Farm.

Here, over 150 ploughers compete in different classes for Vintage, Modern and Horse ploughing and the champions in each section will go on to represent Scotland at the European, World, Five and Six Nations competitions around the globe in 2017. Judges in each class score the plots, where the highest placed ploughers will go through to a plough off. The plough has been a basic farm implement for most of recorded history, though I was recently surprised to learn that written references in English do not appear until 1100.

The art of ploughing is still seen as highly important and traditional. My great grandfather, like so many farmers in the early 1900s, cultivated his land on the Baltic Coast with heavy horses. I gather it would take you a day to plough one acre, with horse and plougher walking around eleven miles in total!

At the competitions the ploughing plots are drawn fairly and each competitor will have signage displayed, allowing spectators to learn more about who is ploughing. I see that the heavy horses are down in plots from 166 on so I make my way there. What a sight to behold! Graceful, calm, strong – they are inspiring and I spend a number of hours quietly watching; in awe of the teamwork between man, horse and plough as they steadily cultivate the soil. The scene goes back to the roots of heritage farming, which I think we need to sometimes see while we battle our own modern, rushed lives.....
Thoughtful communication from start to finish of a WWOOF partnership can make all the difference to whether volunteer and host become firm friends or part indifferently. First impressions really do stick, and seeing as the majority of hosts and WWOOFers get in touch via e-mail, the whole WWOOF experience can become coloured by a well put or word here or a misinterpretation there (or even by a lack of words!).

All WWOOF partnerships should be based on mutual trust and respect; the Ethos and Mission page of WWOOF’s website affirms this principle and also has lots of guidance about what WWOOFers and hosts can expect of the exchange.

WWOOF UK takes a firm stance on hosts responding to WWOOFer contact, and we require hosts to reply to all messages within two weeks. It’s entirely up to hosts to choose or refuse WWOOFers for their own reasons and to keep those reasons to themselves if they prefer but it’s only fair that every host they contact gets back to each WWOOFer in good time, if only to say ‘No, sorry, we don’t need your help right now’.

When a host is considering whether to welcome someone into their home and into their working life, they’re far more likely to accept a WWOOFer who has made the effort to read their host profile and point out why it is appealing. And the more detail WWOOFers give about themselves, the more chance they have of hearing back from a host.

It may be obvious to say that hosts are busy people; and as well as being eager to share their lifestyles with visitors, they want or need help from willing WWOOFers. The only quality which WWOOF UK requires all WWOOFers to have is a willingness to get involved in hosts’ activities. Even repetitive tasks can be interesting if you’re interested in them and understand why you’re doing them – yes, even weeding!

Hosts continue to find no-show WWOOFers one of the most frustrating and disappointing things. In most cases, a WWOOFer has simply failed to keep in touch with the host when their plans have changed. Such carelessness in communication can harm a host’s opinion of WWOOFers in general and we’d all love to find a way to stop it from happening. There’s no foolproof solution but it’s almost certainly less likely to happen if the initial communication is good, if ‘personal’ contact is made with a phone call or video chat, and if hosts reaffirm arrival times and travel arrangements a couple of weeks before the exchange is about to start.

spotlight on: Tony Chalcraft

Tony Chalcraft is one of WWOOF UK’s volunteer directors and our recently appointed Chair. We asked him to share why WWOOF is so important to him.

I became a director of WWOOF UK in 2011 after escaping from half a lifetime working in higher education. Becoming a director enabled me to begin repaying the huge debt I owe to WWOOF. As a long term host with my partner Jane on a suburban smallholding and nearby field and woodland on the edge of York we have gained immensely from WWOOF. For twenty odd years we’ve been privileged to receive hundreds of WWOOFers from the UK and across the world. Being hosts has transformed our lives, informed our growing activities and opened up a new world of contacts and ideas.

In trying to repay WWOOF my focus is on how we can develop and build on its values and aims in a changing world, what is sometimes grandly called ‘strategy’. Having a longer term view is important but we also need to focus on the here and now and I’m also helping ensure we remain financially sustainable and, as a host myself, never lose sight of the needs of hosts. Above all I’m always conscious that the strength of WWOOF lies in its members, hosts and WWOOFers, as well as its excellent staff team.
Classifieds ads are free up to 50 words at the editor’s discretion. WWOOF UK 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. editor@wwoof.org.uk

Housesitter/s required from 3rd - 11th March 2017 to look after 1 horse and 2 cats in beautiful Highland Glen. Wonderful walks, bike rides etc. Will need own transport and some knowledge of horses care. Tel Juliette: 01349 884440 or email: juliette@dalreoch.co.uk

Seeking a long-term WWOOFing/exchange, any UK location considered. Please contact me by email at: theparrog@gmail.com Thank you.

Any land farms/properties currently available in Derbyshire area. I am a holistic therapist looking for a property that can tie in with my AYURVEDIC practice. The way we live, our surroundings, organic food and a well being approach to our everyday life. Contact: Judiththurston@hotmail.com

Wanted place to stay in our cosy yurt temporarily whilst re-locating North Mid-Wales/Borders. We are a mature couple with four year old daughter. Can pay rent for space and provide references. Interested in low-impact living, growing fruit, vegetables, green wood-working, bees and music. canurcoed@yahoo.co.uk Bettina 07908 474669

We are looking for an enthusiastic/ethical single or couple to join HeavensGate for a long term WWOOFing exchange next year. Location: rural Aylesbury Vale but only one hour from London or Oxford. We have been successfully hosting for 4 years but feel we need continuity and longer term planning now. If you are interested email: karen@heavens-gate.org.uk

We are always interested in hearing from people who would like to be more involved with the WWOOF UK steering group. Please contact scarlett@wwoof.org.uk

Wanted land in Wales. Ideally 4-6 acres, south facing, gently sloping with some woodland, natural water supply, good access (not too remote) for beekeeping and permaculture project. All areas of Wales considered if a suitable site. Contact: Jeff 0797 6091425 / Bettina 07908 474669, or by using email: canurcoed@yahoo.co.uk

Free holidays for tired WWOOFers. Large shed with woodburner, cooker and necessary cutlery etc, separate shower, loo, and upstairs bedroom, free for short breaks in our six acre wildlife home in rural North Cornwall. No dogs. Email: alison@zanzig.plus.com

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