

TRANSITION SHIRE NEWS

Issue 3,
December 2008

THE POWER OF FREIAMT

In a land far away, there is a community that is brave and committed enough to see a problem and do something radical about it.

Freiamt is a region comprising five hamlets with a total population of 4,300 in the Black Forest region of Germany. The area is 50% woodland with 1450 households and 150 farms (50 full time).

It is both politically deeply conservative and anti-nuclear with a strong historical tradition of freedom and self-management since the Middle Ages.

Freiamt is now an official (renewable) energy community and this has also stimulated eco-tourism. As of 2007, Freiamt produces 13-14.3 million kWh of renewable energy per year; a surplus of over 17%, which is fed into the grid at above-tariff (federally subsidised) rates.

There are four 1.8 MW wind turbines producing

around 11 million kWh per year, saving over 8,000 t of CO₂. The turbines are owned by a community co-operative with around 300 shareholders, who each initially paid between 5,000 and 35,000 DM.

There are about 130 PV modules on roofs producing almost 1 million kWh per year.

One farming family invested hundreds of thousands in a 30 kW PV system, which is enough to power 10 households, and generate a sizeable income each year.

One farming family has moved away from livestock to invest in two biogas turbines which generate both electricity and heat. They produce about 1 million kW per year, enough for about 300 households.

The waste heat is piped to 19 houses and a sports club. The family fuels the biogas digesters with grass and grains from their own 73 ha plus manures from four neighbouring farms.

Peter Lach-Newinsky

The left-over digester slurry is used as rich, organic, non-polluting fertilizer.

There are three micro-hydro power plants using the local stream. Two run sawmills and the other a flour mill, with the local baker producing most of his own electricity (60,000 kWh per year).

There are about 75 wood chip stoves. Those owning woods use waste wood chips for heating purposes (c. 100 m³ per household per year). Three local businesses provide the chipping services. The wood chip stoves cost about 25,000 euros, but are subsidized and have a pay back time of about 5 years.

More than 150 households have solar hot water systems and many also have heat pumps.

German Sources: *Der Spiegel* 2007, *Die Tageszeitung* 2006, *Giesener Anzeiger* 2007



Freiamt in the Black Forest... making energy to burn and sell

Inside this issue:

December in the food garden	2
Christmas holidays	2
Transition courses	3
Transition Exeter	3
Transition in the Highlands	3
A shared garden	4

IT'S OFFICIAL

Transition Shire Wingecarribee has just been awarded official transition status by the founding Transition Network; a recognition of a community's readiness to embark on the journey to a low energy future based on the Transition model. This

opens the door to many exciting possibilities: all sorts of wonderful support, guidance, materials, web space, training and networking opportunities with the other transition groups who are part of the fastest growing grassroots movement in the world. With its

Sandra Menteith

new listing, and that of Kenmore in Queensland, the number of official Transition initiatives in Australia grows to eleven, and globally is now 114. See the full list at <http://transitiontowns.org/TransitionNetwork/TransitionCommunities>

TRANSITION DIARY

Date	Location	Event
Sunday 7 December 9am	Couridjah (near Bargo)	Permablitz session. Contact phillip.arundell@bigpond.com
Sunday 21st December 8am	Harmony Farm, Canyonleigh	Working bee. Contact John Cranney 48771446

TRANSITION SHIRE NEWS

DECEMBER IN THE FOOD GARDEN



Continue planting silver beet for late summer picking

There is still much to do in the food garden. Continue planting beans, carrots, lettuce, silver beet and tomatoes for late summer crops.

Sow broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cauliflowers, endive, kohlrabi, parsnip, pumpkin, potato and sweet corn directly into the soil.

Stake tomatoes and remove lateral buds to ensure fabulous fruiting and remove lower branches to prevent diseases caused by excessive moisture.

Take care to pick up any fallen fruit to reduce fruit fly. Feed it to your chooks or

even run your chooks under the trees and let them take care of it.

Now is the time for summer pruning of fruit trees. Make sure there is adequate air circulation within the trees and reduce new growth of lateral branches. Prune vertical growth of pears. Remove any excess fruit in a cluster to enhance quality.

Make sure that your mulch is thick enough now that the hot weather is here and not a drop of water can be allowed to escape.

Fertilize your citrus trees with compost and dried

chick manure. Water generously during hot weather, especially if they are in pots.

Berries should be fruiting now. Tie up new canes as they emerge and cut out any poor canes. Dig up suckers and plant in a pot for a friend.

You'll be competing with all manner of wildlife for the berries, so make sure you have nets in place.

Nets that stop just above the ground are less likely to trap a snake. The more complex woven netting is less likely than the plastic type to damage flying thieves who get caught.

Do you know of a group practising Transition principles in the Southern Highlands?

Do you have a Transition-friendly event that you would like to have listed in TSN?

Would you like to contribute an article?

Would you like to subscribe to this newsletter?

Email kathy_biddlecombe@acenet.com.au

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

Across the country, people are preparing for their annual holiday. As the weeks of leave from school or work stretch before us, we start packing and head for the airport.

Or do we? Allow me to introduce the *staycation*, the holiday at home. This is the holiday you have when you are treading lightly on the planet, avoiding holiday airport madness or just saving some money.

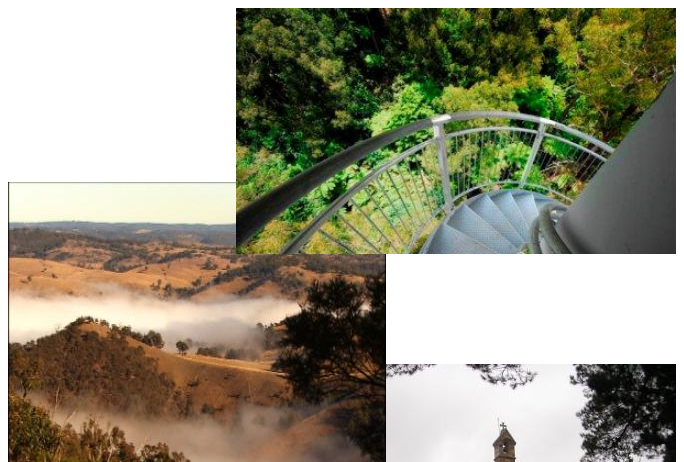
Many of us have fond memories of childhood holidays spent at home or close by. We seem to have fallen into the trap of believing that we need to travel further, do more, spend

more and get more passport stamps to give our children a rewarding childhood or ourselves a just reward.

Not true. You could easily spend weeks in the highlands and surrounds without getting bored. Just ask the many tourists who flock to our shire.

Take a picnic into the countryside, visit the Illawarra Fly, do a history walk through one of the towns or villages or just stay at home and work on your garden together.

You can get more information from Tourism Southern Highlands. Phone them on 4871 2888 or check out their website: www.southern-highlands.com.au/



Scenes from the Southern Highlands



TRANSITION SHIRE NEWS

TRANSITION COURSES



Transition Shire Wingecarribee has been confirmed as host of transition training in February 2009.

A 'Training for Transition' workshop will be held at Kerever Park, Burradoo 7-8th February 2009.

This is the Transition fundamentals course. It is packed with imaginative and inspiring ways to explore the theory and practice of Transition.

It will be a participatory process, with delegates

from many transition initiatives sharing their own experiences.

A four-day 'Train the Trainer' workshop will run 11-14th February. This will prepare participants to deliver the two-day 'Training for Transition' to other groups and regions. This workshop includes an additional networking day with members from the eleven official Australian Transition groups.

Transition Training is the work of Naresh Giangrande

and Sophy Banks. Both have been closely involved with the Transition Network, contributing to the development of the transition model. Check out the details of workshop content at www.transitiontowns.org/TransitionNetwork/TransitionTrainingDetail.

Places in these workshops are limited. TSW plans to run 'Training for Transition' workshops from April 2009.

Contact Sandra menteith@bigpond.net.au for more information

TRANSITION EXETER...AND BEYOND

The first Wingecarribee transition village has emerged.

Some enthusiastic Exeter residents have formed a group to address issues of peak oil, climate change and economic uncertainty in their village.

The newly formed team is planning to create local projects to educate themselves and other residents. They will also share information

about food growing, food preserving, renewable energy sources, and other techniques for creating a more sustainable and resilient community within the vicinity of Exeter Village.

If you're interested in participating, contact Jill Cockram at jilleroo53@hotmail.com or Jan Hainke at janlen@acenet.com.au

Other transition initiatives are being explored in Bundanoon

and Berrima.

Starting a transition initiative is as easy as chatting about it with a few like-minded neighbours. You don't need any particular qualifications and you may be surprised by how many people share your concerns about the future.

If you'd like more information or some support, contact Maree Byrne at gmbyrne@bigpond.net.au



Exeter...in transition

TRANSITION IN THE HIGHLANDS

Starting a transition initiative is not the only way to participate in creating resilience across the shire.

You can join one of several existing groups:

Harmony Farm Canyonleigh

Harmony Community Farm is a 60-acre organically-certified fruit salad orchard (over 100 varieties of heritage apples) with a large vegetable patch, being run by the local community via working bees.

1st Saturday of every month: 3pm - 5pm followed by BYO BBQ and organic salad from the vege patch.

3rd Sunday of every month: 8am - 12.00. Lunch and morning tea provided and a short educational event straight after lunch. (In November we learnt how to make Elderflower Champagne.)

Contact: Jill Cockram: jilleroo53@hotmail.com

Moss Vale Community Garden Railway St, Moss Vale.

Open to the public on Wednesdays from 9.30am till 1.30pm.

Our volunteers are food gardening in raised beds using organic growing techniques. Volunteers welcome. Surplus produce is

shared in return for labour and lunch is provided in the main from the garden.

Seedlings and a small range of fruit trees for sale to the public to raise money for garden necessities.

Just come along any Wednesday except public holidays.

Local Seed Network

The Southern Highlands has a locally acclimatised seedbank of food varieties (some heirloom varieties no longer available from seed companies).

We are always interested in backyard gardeners who

would like to become members (\$5 annually and a promise to adopt some varieties) and help us to grow out and save seed of heirloom veges/fruit, to keep our seedbank viable.

Currently we meet quarterly (once per season) to thresh our saved seeds and to allow access to the seedbank.

Contact: Jill Cockram: jilleroo53@hotmail.com

Permablitz

Home garden sharing. Spend a day in your garden or someone else's doing edible gardening.

Contact: Phillip 4872 2088

TRANSITION SHIRE NEWS

A SHARED GARDEN



Bonding over the chook shed...Leigh and Geoff

Geoff and Maree Byrne live in Bowral. With busy lives, they don't have a lot of time to spend in the garden.

Leigh Couchman and Jen Robinson live in a flat close by. They're keen to grow some food, but can't do a lot in such limited outdoor space.

What to do? Well, obviously, the two couples could get together and pool their experience and resources. Geoff and Maree could supply the space and Leigh and Jen a lot of enthusiasm and energy.

And that is exactly what has happened after the two couples met at a TSW event.

Maree had initial concerns that Leigh and Jen would feel like free labourers, but the mutual benefit is appreciated by all four.

Leigh and Geoff have been working on building a chook house and raised garden beds. Leigh has never done any building before and Geoff just loves quietly sharing his knowledge with an enthusiastic learner Maree reports.

"We share the spoils of war and fruit of our labour," explains Leigh. "But even more important is the community building and the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise that is taking place."

"It doesn't feel like work, and I gain so much from the interaction. We are setting what I feel is a good example for community interaction."

"For me it's primarily an education to learn how to be self-sufficient."

And with food prices on the increase, similar arrangements may start popping up across the shire.

Jen offers some advice for those entering into an agreement: "Be really clear about what the 'deal' is (eg who pays for what). Write it out."

Although there is little cause for friction in this group, it is easy to imagine disagreements over share of work and produce as well as different ideas about preferred techniques and gardening aesthetics.

Kathy Biddlecombe

The benefits of sharing a garden go beyond those that immediately come to mind.

"The relationship has increased our enthusiasm for the garden," said Geoff.

"It has inspired us and given us the courage and ability to tackle much more than we would have otherwise done. So we're feeling more energetic and healthy because of it."

The working sessions often include tea in the garden, where the team assesses their progress and makes plans for future work.

It's all quite relaxed in this quiet corner of Bowral and it's hard to imagine a more civilised arrangement.

On the topic of produce sharing, Leigh predicts a very relaxed exchange: "Do ye need any zucchinis this week? I have a boot full...".

If you would like to form a similar arrangement, email kathy_biddlecombe@acenet.com.au and we'd try to team you up with someone.

"Do ye need any zucchinis this week? I have a boot full...".



***Have a safe and peaceful Christmas.
See you in the February issue.***

Five Christmas things you can do for Transition...

- Buy gifts that the recipient will use
- Avoid 'disposable' gifts, including toys
- Plan your feast to reduce food waste
- Leave your Christmas tree in the ground
- Make a resolution to increase your community involvement in 2009

Join the TSW forum!
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/T_S_W/