

## Could you be a WWOOFer?

WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), which holds its roots here in East Sussex, is a global exchange organisation which links volunteers with organic farms, smallholdings, gardens, woodlands and even vineyards. In exchange volunteers receive food, accommodation and learning on the land. In 1971, Sue Coppard and three other Londoners keen for some country air arranged a weekend at Tablehurst Farm in Forest Row, East Sussex. They helped out with tasks on the biodynamic farm and WWOOF was born.

Today, WWOOF is a global phenomenon with over 12,000 hosts in more than 100 countries, and 560 hosts in the UK, 12 of which are within half an hour's drive of Crowborough and the WWOOF National Co-ordinator, Scarlett Penn, also lives in the local area.



Most of the WWOOFing work undertaken nowadays is through longer-term arrangements. However, last November it went back to its origins of being a working weekend, giving 8 participants a chance to have a taster of what life is like on an organic farm local to them.

Kate Berry, a 36-year-old photographer who was one of the people volunteering at the weekend, explained how the gathering proved to be a good opportunity for WWOOF hosts and WWOOF volunteers to meet and share experiences. She said: "We were able to share knowledge, experiences and techniques for sustainable living and organic farming with like-minded people. Topics included water preservation, wildlife conservation and eco-friendly organic farming techniques - all subjects I would like to learn more about."

Amanda Pearson, Volunteer Liaison for WWOOF, explained why they re-initiated the local working weekend: "From a sustainable and economic perspective it



Planting out brassicas

seems appropriate to be encouraging more local WWOOFing right now, by which we mean connecting hosts and WWOOFers who are within a 50-100 mile radius of one another", Amanda said.

She added: "This was a pilot project, a toe in the water. Given the response we have had, we are keen to support the creation of more local WWOOFing opportunities, perhaps with an educational theme such as 'bee/chicken keeping' or 'organic principles', so that we can skill up as many of our WWOOFers as possible so they can grow their own food and help others to do so too."

The rewards of WWOOFing seem endless; it can give you new skills, knowledge, new friendships, fresh air, exercise and free meals, while the farmer/land owner benefits from a helping hand.

The success of this working weekend will hopefully set the stage for many more Working Weekends on Organic Farms, so that people around the UK and East Sussex can have their own, and free, taste of the Good Life.

To find out more and to become part of a growing revolution, whether that is through a long-term exchange or just a working weekend, visit [www.wwoof.org.uk](http://www.wwoof.org.uk). If you are interested in an organised local WWOOFing day or weekend, please contact [scarlett@wwoof.org.uk](mailto:scarlett@wwoof.org.uk)



WWOOFers needed all year