Written by Gai Longmuir

"If a man loses a third of his skin he dies. If a tree loses a third of its bark it

too will die.

And I submit that if the Earth loses a third of its Green Mantle of Trees, it will die. And the water table will sink beyond recall."

Richard St. Barbe Baker, Men of the Trees.

Living with less



Some of the community's residents wait for the birthday party feast to begin \cdots

Our industrialised civilisation has made us so estranged from nature that we fail to realise we are squandering our finite planet, Earth, which gives us the chance of life.

The economist E. F. Schumacher[•] used the analogy that "a business would not be viable if it was rapidly consuming its capital". Yet we are engineering a disastrous future for our children by depleting our non-renewable resources and creating massive pollution.

Sensing that with this rapid squandering of fossil fuels, the threat to civilisation some people feel the need for a change in values and are actively exploring ways of living in which voluntary simplicity guides new patterns of consumption based on small scale, non-violent technology.

In our highly governed times it has become unusual for people to take responsibility for the life processes of birth and death, for education, housing, road repairs, sanitation and other living conditions.

road repairs, sanitation and other living conditions. The creation of rural hamlets, akin to village society, offers the possibility of such a decentralised, integrated community, reversing the trend of the drift to the cities.

One such community, formed with twenty shareholders and their children, has been slowly evolving over the past four years on 200 acres in the forested hills west of Lismore, in Northern NSW.

Here farm life challenges people to a resourceful way of living in which to develop a wide range of physical and other skills.

Working individually and in groups of varying sizes, people have been constructing homes, workshops and communal buildings, laying and burying polypipe to carry the water supply to the individual houses over the thirty acres which has been settled, planting fruit trees and clearing lantana for further orchards.

They are creating gardens, cooking, cutting firewood, maintaining vehicles and access roads, caring for young children, building fire pits (a safety precaution in case of fire), organising washing facilities, attending the pump and water supply and collection of hay and animal manure for gardens and orchards, all of which gives an active pace to daily life. Inorganic chemicals are not used. Working with nature's balances demonstrates a respect for all life, a veneration for the land and its

Food production has an increasing focus as people's need for basic shelter is satisfied.

Sustained energy has been necessary in the construction of the twelve domestic dwellings over the past years. Without the speed of power tools construction is relatively slow, offering many possibilities for craftsmanship and innovation.

Building sites were agreed upon by group consensus.

Tallow wood poles are gathered from the forest, second grade timbers are generally used, stained glass and other windows, often obtained from demolition sites, imaginative use of a variety of building materials blend together.

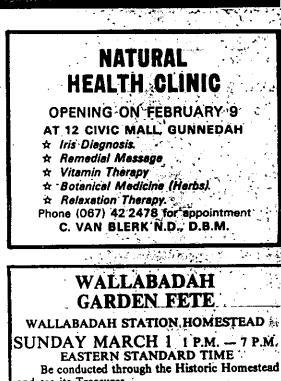
Making mud bricks for one home was a slow but happy process with a team of three-year-olds also helping out.

These bricks, with their excellent insulating qualities, are ideal in the often damp tropical climate.

Each household has its own kitchen facilities, with bathroom and washing facilities being shared by immediate neighbours and also available in the community area.

Despite the conflict with the local council for contravening Ordinance 70 and its strick building code, the homes are extremely solid.

During a violent wind storm, which occasionally ravage the north coast area, several nearby houses lost their roofs while only one of the houses in the community was damaged. Despite a



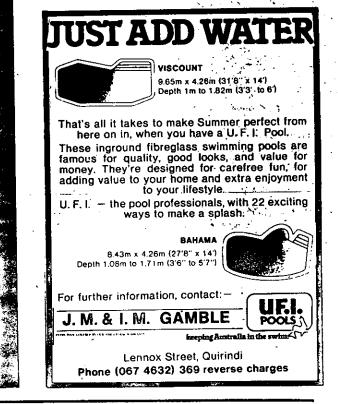
and see its Treasures. See the fashions exhibited by Town & Country Boutique Tamworth.

Come to the Quirindi Jockey Club Cup Meeting on Saturday, February 28, and Monday March 2, and be entertained at th Wallabadah Garden Fete on Sunday, March 1.

All proceeds to Moonby House and Quirindi Nursing Homes.

ALEX CHAD Secretary, Liverpool Plains Lodge

Phone Spring Ridge (067) 97



The details of day to day life, such as cooking, gardening and workdays are organised at fortnightly farm meetings.

The midday meal is shared with two people preparing the food, in the community kitchen, for everyone.

The community has a vegetarian diet, with rice and other grains as a staple, garden and other pesticide-free vegetables, dried beans, lentils, soybean products (such as tofu, a cheese made from soy milk), fruit and occasional dairy products.

With a limited amount of agricultural land the farm produces only a portion of it's food needs.

The need to make optimum use of resources means here a human intensive rather than capital intensive agriculture.

Seaweed is gathered on beach visits and the large quantities of vegetable scraps from the kitchen are deposited in composting bins to be transformed into rich soil. Composting toilets are under construction to enable eventual recycling of wastes.

Cardboard cartons are used for orchard mulch, soil is enriched with animal manure, compost and seaweed sprays, nitrogen fixing cover crops, dolomite, and rock phosphate.

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tail tree falling across the roof, damage was slight due to the weight-bearing capacity of the supporting poles.

Buildings on the community were used as a test case by the Planning and Environment Commission in the recommendations to State Government of policies for rural hamlet development, which have since been approved.

The Commission has now published a booklet on alternative methods of building construction and use of materials for the benefit of local government officers and homebuilders.

Sharing life with such an extended family has its conflicts and specific meetings are often called to air difficulties and explore their resolution.

With nine children under five, they are often the focus of discussion on ways to respond to their current necds, both individually and collectively and possible structures for the education.

Two years ago, with considerable initiative from people within this community, a pre-school was established in the local village hall, for the benefit of children in the area.

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Grantite, Bing its Advoczte, Coonsbarabran Times, Goondrwind: Argus, Gunnedah Independent, "Supweitbrook Punter Valley News, Parrabri Course, Quinndi Advocate and Warialda Standard. WEEK COMMENCING FEBRUARY 2, 1981 3

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Its establishment filled a vacuum. The availability of child care and pre-school facilities in the area has increased, contact, and communication between children and parents in sometimes isolated situations.

Several people from the farm are employed in the pre-school.

An annexe to the pre-school has been planned for the farm, as an ongoing educational facility for people in the immediate area, giving greater accessability and reducing the need for transport for young children.

Two older children in the community travel to a school co-operative run by parents in Lismore, requiring a high commitment from parents involved. This has been beneficial for these children, highlighting the needs of different age groups and the unfortunately narrow age range among children on the farm.

Such a community obviously requires time and a great deal of energy to become established.

As the community becomes more consolidated greater focus is directed to livelihood and involvement in the community at large.

People support themselves in a variety of ways.

A pottery and kiln has been built and pro vides income for a family with three children and partially supports a single mother of two.

Five people from the farm were initially part of a larger group involved in the establishment of a health and bulk food store in Lismore. This now provides a livelihood for ten people, three of whom live in the community

Several people are supported by importing cloth and selling clothes at local markets as well as producing massage oils and skin creams for a wide distribution.

Building and carpentry skills offer an irregular livelihood for others.

Work can be found locally and also further afield, for example six people from the community constructed a mud brick home near Manilla.

Several women receive supporting mother's benefits and a family is supported by unem-

Drawing closer to

day of re-appraisal

ployment benefits while attempting to establish a livelihood with art work.

The farm is supported by weekly contributions of \$22 per person which covers general farm expenditure and maintenance and basic food costs, with households buying additional personal requirements.

People from other communities in the area are active in the fields of nursing, education, psychiatry and public service, still deeply connected with the mainstream society.

Birth and Beyond, a group in nearby Nimbin, has been growing for some years. It was initiated by a trained mid-wife, who together with several assistants, attends home births in the district.

The group, meeting weekly, has become a valuable support system during and after pregnancy with a trained nursing sister also in attendnace.

There has been growing concern among parents and friend of the continued use of toxic chemicals in spraying of weed infestations, often adjacent to water supply systems and the possible connection with birth defects in the area. Meditation provides the spiritual focus of the

community.

The nearby Forest Meditation Centre, built together with people from the surrounding community, offers anyone interested the peace of the forest.

Here group retreats are conducted in silence several times a year, providing a time for reflection and contemplation.

The farm's involvement with social action and the desire for the establishment of more far sighted policies such as a same re-afforestation programme were born out of the conflict over the proposed logging of the nearby Terania Creek rainforest.

The dispute produced a deep schism in the community, particularly with many long time residents, dairy farmers in more abundant times, who are now bitter at the influx of young strangers and their families into their countryside.

While communication with some of the more established residents of the area remains rare, the tensions crystallised by the focus on Terania Creek created further discussion.

A re-afforestation seminar brought together logging interets, conservationists, forestry department and government personnel and served to bring attention to the urgent need for a vast tree planting programme.

Discussion included the need for restoring marginal, weed infested land, still frequently sprayed with the toxic chemicals, 24D and 2245T, by planting trees to prevent further erosion and policies to encourage land holders to reafforest unproductive lands.

The local tensions, breeding long after the bulldozer, police and conservationists had left Terania Creek, underscored an unpleasant sense of living as an ethnic minority, disapproved of and disparagingly dismissed as 'hippies' because of a concern at the treatment of our Earth.

It is easy for us all to view with suspicion that which is unfamiliar, yet it seems we are swiftly approaching "the latter times", when man is destroying his environment so irrevocably that as human beings of conscience we must demand a reappraisal.

*Richard St. Barbe Barker — My Life, My Trees, Findhorn Publications.

*E.F. Schumacher — Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered. Abacus.



Sir - In a recent issue of the Namoi Valley Independent, Gunnedah, I noticed a picture of the sadlydepleted water level at Keepit Dam.

What really caught my eye was the fact that the receding waterline has laid bare - perhaps for the first time in more than a decade - probably hundreds of dead trees, both standing and fallen.

Wouldn't this present the Water Resources Commission with a golden opportunity to get rid of all that unwanted timber?

They should have got rid of it in the first place, as was done in the case of the Hume reservoir, near Aibury, and a number of other storages.

The dead treas must surely be a hazard to navigation as the water level falls.

Removal would at least be a move for safety.

D.G. Austin, Anne Street, MOREE.