

Permaculture Introductory Weekend Course 2007 - Introduction.



As part of my journey in Permaculture i have been working towards running courses to pass on this amazing stuff to other people, both to spread sustainable living and to bring me an income. I think that encouraging and enabling people to live more in touch with the earth, more responsively and responsibly is one of the most important things i can do in my life, so teaching permaculture is ideal for me.

I have done some apprentice/shadow teaching on a few courses at Steward Wood with Devin Ashwood and also at Monkton Wyld with [Designed Visions](#) (a group of permaculture teachers teaching in the South West). Last summer i went on a ToT (Training of Trainers) course with Designed Visions, which gave me lots of teaching tools and the confidence to run some courses myself.

I am co-teaching a full design course this August with Aranya at Steward Wood, and i also decided to go for running an introductory course this spring as well. I was particularly inspired by the [Transition Town](#) phenomenon around Devon - I thought this would interest lots of people in Permaculture, and i thought an introductory course may also generate people coming on the Summer design course. I planned to lead a course jointly with Aranya in Moretonhampstead in March, but things did not go to plan...



Permaculture Introductory Weekend Course Design – Transition Town Moretonhampstead phase.

I had sat in at an introductory weekend that Aranya taught in Bournemouth in the summer of 2006, and decided it would be fairly easy and gentle to get him to come and co-teach a weekend with me, copying his design of one day inside doing theory, and one day outside seeing permaculture in practice. He could support me as I found my feet, and I would get valuable convening, teaching and session planning experience. I decided early on that I could also get another yield from this by doing the course design as one of my 10 designs for my portfolio, showing how permaculture can be applied to non-physical systems too.

Survey

I ran through a list of my resources – Proper Job resource centre, friends' houses and Steward Wood (venues for the permaculture in practice sessions), Aranya, the Permaculture teacher's guide, my past session plans, Transition Town people, Aranya's 2006 introductory course timetable, my ToT apprentice contacts and the course convenor's guide.

I also made a list of my wild ideas – find out what people want to learn about, plan the course using Tuckman's Forming–Storming–Norming–Performing process, derive principles from a woodland walk, do a peak oil and climate change blurb, where now session at the end (an open session, I prep ideas and resources), Harper's scale of personal lifestyle intervention efficiency, physical activity during Saturday sessions, this course as PC example, tour buildings in particular ('half of permaculture in temperate zones is about shelter'), practicals – warm spaces, ethics sessions.

And I looked at Aranya's learning objectives and half copied, half changed his list to –

Students understand what Permaculture is.

Students are inspired to learn more about PC, are aware of their options for doing this, and start to use PC in their lives.

Students see the effects of their choices in the global web of trade.

Students take away 3 simple things they can do in their own lives.

Students can connect into local initiatives.

Students understand the value of applying PC principles and ethics to daily choices.

Students start to see ways to alter their houses and gardens to be more sustainable.

I also wanted to create a good learning environment for the participants. My learnings from ToT told me that for this it was important to balance –

Visual–Audio–Kinaesthetic learning activities.

Information sessions and time to process the information.

Session styles (voice, film, discussion, tours, music, games etc).

My personal objectives with the course were -

To build a local network of permaculturists

To earn money

To promote non-land-based permaculture

To learn about teaching and convening

To get more people for the Summer design course at Steward Wood.

I also spent some time thinking about the tours on the Sunday. The objectives for these tours were -

People see Permaculture in action.

Ideas start to flow about ways they can design their own lives.

There are spin off benefits for Proper Job and Steward Community Woodland - money, custom, beneficial connections made.

The principles and design ideas get reinforced.

I made a mind map of various issues to do with the tours as well.

Analysis

I then moved onto a bit of Analysis, pondering what principles to teach, as this seemed to be a core part of the course, and there seemed to me to be lots of different systems of principles. I was most familiar with [David Holmgren's](#) latest batch, but Aranya had taught a different set on his introductory weekend. And an article I read by Roy Harper brought in more yet... I would need to make my own shortlist from the many principles on offer, as trying to get too many across would lead to overload and probably a shallow understanding. I came back to this issue a few months later on...

Publicity seemed the most pressing issue, to get people interested and booked up for the course as soon as possible. As my target group was people from peak oil/climate change networks, I needed a title that would appeal to those people, who may never have heard of Permaculture. I worked through a few ideas, and tried them out on people who were involved in the local theatre group with me, and eventually settled on the humorous 'How to make a cup of tea after Peak Oil' heading. It was inspired by Aranya's vegan reworking



of the tale of two chickens, wherein Aranya compares an industrial, global, fossil fuelled cup of black tea with a local herb tea cooked on a woodstove. I thought I could sprinkle the course with lots of different ways of making tea too, (storm kettle, wood fired rayburn, electric kettle, open fire...) and then compare them to



gently get people thinking about the sources of their everyday items, and the environmental impacts of that. And it meant I could have lots of nice teacup logos on the posters too.

With my strapline worked out I made a poster/flyer and a blurb to go in the local News in Moreton magazine, and the Transition Town Moreton newsletter. I also added the advert into one of our SCW emailouts, and put the flyer up on the SCW and Transition town websites. I booked the Community Club Hall in Moretonhampstead, and waited for the bookings to come in...

Permaculture Introductory weekend Course design – Ashburton Futures phase



After all the preparation and marketing, only one person came forward to book onto the course, and she got in touch just after i had decided to cancel! However she was very keen, and thought she knew lots of other people who would be interested in coming on the course too. She was involved in a peak oil/climate change group called Ashburton Futures, which had about 50 members. I went to meet her, and we decided to run a course in the middle of May – she would advertise it in Ashburton, and get an Ashburton hall for the Saturday, and i would organise everything else. The Ashburton phase had begun. This time i use OBREDIM as my Design Macro.

Observations:

I ran through my personal wants again –

I want to get experience teaching.

i want to get some income.

I want to share Permaculture.

I want to help people network their peak oil/climate change groups.

I want to help energise and empower local people to change their lives and surroundings for the better.

I want to create a network of people to spread sustainable living in South Devon.

I want Lionel (who was interested in Moreton course but unable to make the date) to learn about Pc.

I also debriefed the Moreton phase using the Plus Minus Interesting tool:

Plus	Minus	Interesting	Done differently's
Got three names of people who'd like to do the course.	Didn't run, so no cash for me or Aranya.		More marketing.
Made links with Ashburton Futures.	May lose deposit and come out £14 and lots of hours down.		Not call it local
Got the idea and definition of Pc out into Moretonhampstead.	'Local' word put off people not from Moreton?		Say where we are going on site visits.
Got idea of level of interest in Moretonhampstead	Lionel wasn't sure if it would be relevant to him wanting to improve his house.		Do a taster not full weekend?
Got myself and SCW known as an educational facility.			
People will assume it actually happened!			

Boundaries

No Aranya for co-teaching in May - My Diploma write up needs lots of my time in May - I need enough time to advertise it before it happens.

Resources/Synergies

Other Pc teachers i know, local peak oil groups, my diploma accreditation event, ToT handouts, Tuckman group flow process, my contact in Ashburton - her keenness and local knowledge and contacts. I also have plants, planters, calendars and cds for sale, and all the stuff i had before for the first weekend:

Aranya, Proper Job and Steward Wood as venues/tour examples, Moreton Community Club as a venue, Transition Town Moreton, friends with houses in Moreton, past teaching sessions, SCW dwellers, ToT apprentices, convenors guide, PAB Teacher's guide, timetable from Aranya's weekend course, ToT learnings, diploma (write up the course as a non land based design).

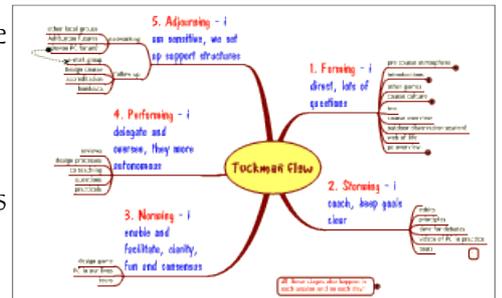
Training Needs Assessment

As people book places on the course, i ask them what experience they have in permaculture and what they hope to get out of the course. Most of the people equate Permaculture with sustainable and clever gardening, and say they want to learn about that, most people have heard of Permaculture but do not know much about it and want to learn more.

Evaluation:

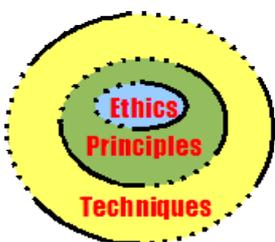
Course content

Master patterns - using the principle of designing from patterns to details, i looked at the Tuckman group dynamics flow, and analysed the structure of Aranya's timetable. I condensed Aranya's structure to: Welcomes-what/why is PC-ethics- principles-design tools-PC in practice-PC in our lives-design course-site tour-practical-close. I then put Tuckman onto a mind map and fitted in my wild ideas and Aranyas course onto the flow skeleton. There were good parallels between Aranya's structure and Tuckman, and it also occurs to me that the SADI macro is also similar to Tuckman (Survey-Forming, Assess-Storming, Design-Norming, Implement-Performing)...



This process has given me a warning to leave time for discussions/arguments at the storming phase (ethics, principles, tours, videos) on both Saturday and Sunday, and to prepare my information for those sessions more thoroughly. (To get a more readable mindmap, click on the image). It has also given me more focus on the performing and adjourning elements, creating space for people to contribute, create and work out their support systems/next steps. It has given me an idea of the overall timetable, which will be similar to Aranya's, but with additions on the Sunday (local networking sessions and 2 site tours), and slightly different focuses thanks to the TNA i carried out.

Principles



One of the areas i will diverge from Aranya's timetable is in the area of Permaculture principles. This part of the course seems to me quite fundamental - it is the ethics and principles that set the context for what permaculture is - without them the techniques are actions which may or may not be appropriate. I see the ethics as the core of Permaculture, then the principles are next, followed by the techniques. Design flows from the ethics, through the principles and into the techniques, in another parallel to SADIM (Survey-Ethics, Assess-Principles, Design-Techniques).

As mentioned earlier I have personally been a bit confused about which principles come from where, and what they all are. I am most familiar with [David Holmgren's](#) recent, quite heady and academic set, but I am also aware of many other principles that float around, some derived from ecosystems, some attitudinal, some crystallized common sense. Aranya's principles section had seemed a bit theoretical and abstract, and the principles need to be ones I am comfortable with, that are easy to get across to people, and are immediately useful to the participants. They also need to be a limited number, to avoid overwhelming people.

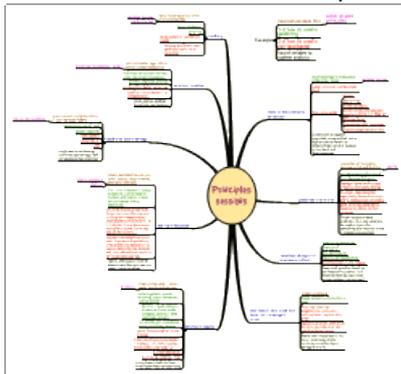
From a bit of research on the Internet it seemed that the originators of Permaculture were similarly vague about the principles, and different versions seem to appear each time a new book is written. Oh well, diversity is one of the principles... I divided the wealth of principles into 2 categories - principles derived from ecosystems and attitudinal principles. I pulled out a shortlist of ones that met my criteria:

Attitudinal principles: Designs are information /imagination intensive, not labour intensive - The problem is the solution - Make the least change for greatest effect - Yield is theoretically unlimited - Start small and work out from well-managed areas.

Ecological principles: Relative location - Multiple function from each element - Multiple supply for important functions -Use biological/renewable resources and services - Maximise edge - Maximise diversity - Accelerate succession - Stacking - Harvest only sunshine - Catch and store energy



How many to use? Aranya teaches 11, other teachers 5 and 18. I feel Aranya's were a few too many, 5 feels too limiting, so somewhere between 5 and 10... I have 14 in my list. I'd like a mix of attitude and natural ones, with an emphasis on ones that will be useful for gardeners.



Attitudinal choices: Yield unlimited - Problem is solution - Least change for greatest effect - Start small.

Ecosystem choices: Multiple function - Multiple supply - Catch and store energy - Relative location - Stacking.

This gives me 9 principles to present on the Saturday, over maybe 2 sessions, and then I reinforce during the rest of the course. I can also get participants to present and describe some that they know, if time is available for that. I will present each principle with examples from land based and non-land based systems, and invite people to suggest their own examples, to help them teach

the session and help them understand and own the principles, getting across the idea that there is no one set of definitive principles. I can do a handout of all the principles I have come across if they like. I will refer back to these principles all through the course once they have been introduced.

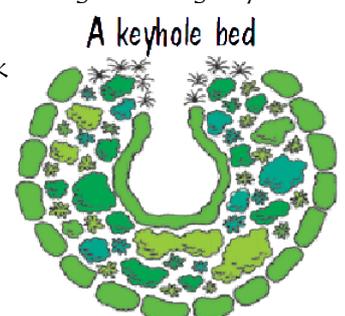
I made a mind map of all my chosen principles, linking each one to examples from the natural world, gardening, non-land based designs and system analysis. This mind map is a useful tool for the session itself, and for future teaching sessions, and I may print it and stick it up in the compost loo, in a state of multiple functioning. I will use it as my session plan for the principles session, with the addition of some timings.

Gardening - After the TNA survey, I felt a bit insecure about my knowledge of gardening and what I can pass on, and I thought it clashed a bit with my objective of broadening PC into non-land based areas. So I looked at what I actually do know about PC gardening, and how I can bring this into the course more.

There are lots of opportunities to talk about gardening at SCW and the house, and maybe in a street or garden at Ashburton on the Saturday.. I ran through a list of ways I use Permaculture in gardening myself:

Guilds, mulching, keyhole beds, no compacting, forest gardening, perennials, zoning, choosing what you grow carefully (something you will want to eat or look at, choose the easiest to grow, be kind to yourself if starting for first time), start small and well managed, mulch longer term beds, choose space and time heavy/labour light plants for those zones, low maintenance vegetables, long storing vegetables, continual harvest and high maintenance plants close to kitchen/eating areas.

After this list I felt relieved and able to pass on some useful gardening tips to the



course participants. And even if they knew all the techniques already, i can remind them of the underlying principles and share my experiences with the various techniques. A fair amount of time on the tours should be devoted to the PC intricacies of the SCW growing area.

Sunday Scheduling

I used a form of the McHarg exclusion technique to work out the schedule of sessions on the Sunday. I made a list of all the sessions i wanted to run, and the time available, and looked at when i couldn't run each session, or set of sessions:

I have 6 hours to use.

Definite sessions - SCW tour (2 hours long), lunch (1 hour long), where now session (30mins), tea break (30 mins) = 4 hours

Possible sessions (2 hours left) - practical (1 hour), Proper Job tour (1 hour), house tour (30 mins), travel to house - 20mins), travel to Proper Job (40mins).

In terms of exclusion, lunch has to be sometime between 12 and 2 pm, the travel has to come before the travelled to sessions. The where now session is best at the end. Lunch shouldn't be followed by too sedentary a session, nor one that is too strenuous. I have a strong intuition to do the tour of Steward Wood first thing. I only have enough time to do either the house visit or the Proper Job tour in the afternoon. The lunch and tea break and 'where now' session all need a warm sheltered space in case of rain, or alternate plans in case it is cold and raining. The house will not offer these things if there is a group of more than 5 of us. To keep the house a possibility, i need to have 2 alternate plans - for good and bad weather. The practical may also become impractical if its tipping it down... The practical cannot happen after leaving SCW for tours, so it must happen directly after lunch. The red words are the plans created through the exclusion technique.

timings	must happen here	cannot happen here	can happen here
11-1	SCW tour	lunch	proper job travel and tour, house travel and tour
12-1	SCW tour		proper job travel and tour , house travel and tour, lunch
1-2	LUNCH		proper job travel and tour , house travel and tour, lunch

2-3	PRACTICAL or PROPER JOB TRAVEL AND TOUR	lunch practical if its raining	proper job travel and tour , house travel and tour
3-4	PROPER JOB TRAVEL AND TOUR or HOUSE TRAVEL AND TOUR	lunch, practical house travel and tour if its raining	proper job travel and tour, house travel and tour
4-5	where now and closing	lunch	proper job travel and tour, house travel and tour

So this created my timetable for sunday. I decided to let the weather and the participants decide whether they want to do either Proper Job or the practical and the house visit. This means i have to prep both sessions, but they should be relatively straight forward, and good to add to my toolkit of session preps for future courses anyway.

Saturday Scheduling

I quickly reread all the advice i had on teaching and session planning from the ToT course, the Permaculture Teachers Guide and then combined the sessions i wanted to do (from my wild ideas), with Aranya's time allocations for sessions and drew out the sessions pattern from the Tuckman flow. Amazingly, when i had all the sessions i wanted laid out in order, with approximate timings, i was only half an hour over time! So i shaved a little off some of the more generous allocations, and came in perfectly ending at 5pm. The final timetable and mind map session guides can all be seen on the next page.

Permaculture Introductory Course – Final Design



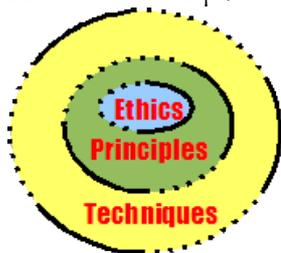
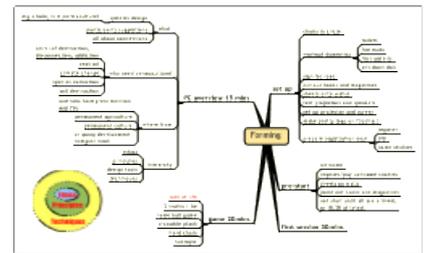
The overall structure of the course was to be one day of inside learning at Ashburton, followed by a day of outside learning at Steward Wood and Proper Job. This provides a diversity of learning experiences, and reinforces the practical nature of permaculture, whilst exploring its theoretical underpinnings. It also stacks in some benefits for Steward Wood and Proper Job (personal connections and sales). I find doing tours and discussions much easier than inside sessions too, and they require less preparation. I arranged a course assistant to help me with both the day's teaching – to register people and collect their money while i set up, to help with set up and pack down, to support me emotionally, to help with materials prepping and do any odd jobs that came up while i was busy.

The Timetable for Saturday

I reused the mind maps that i had used to plan the sessions with as the session guides for me to consult when teaching (multiple function). I advertised the start as 10am, but planned to start at 10.20 in case of latecomers, feeling it was important not to start until everyone was there. The Saturday was laid out following the Tuckman flow:

Forming

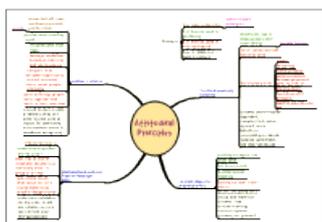
In the forming stage of [Tuckman's group process flow](#), participants look to the facilitator for guidance and information; the facilitator directs. Forming includes room setup, people arriving early and milling around, a personal introductions game, domestic and safety announcements, a brief timetable overview, a section on the course culture and me reading out the course learning objectives. I made a [separate mindmap](#) for the detailed information session of this part.



Then i scheduled the web of life game, which reminds people how interconnected everything really is, and what happens if we damage parts of the web... Its also an active process, involving standing up, talking to other participants and being creative in coming up with connections. I then run through definitions of permaculture and its history, and introduced the design hierarchy circular logo, which reminds us that Pemaaculture has ethics at its core, and that the principles inform all the techniques and designs. I used this little graphic quite a few times, on the handout, on my computer and on this write up page too, getting a good return for this multi-functioning piece of digital craftwork. It did take a surprisingly long amount of time to create it though, as is often the case with computers...

Storming

In the storming phase participants may vie for group position and discussions/arguments are to be expected; the facilitator coaches. In this stage i introduce the ethics and principles, interspersed with lunch, a video about permaculture in practice and an exercise examining systems by looking at a mainstream cup of tea's inputs and outputs, and a permaculture cup of tea's inputs and outputs – with thanks to [Graham Burnett](#) and Aranya for their inspiration. I have taught the ethics session several times before, so i adapted an old session plan for that one.



For the principles i planned 2 sessions – one on the [principles derived from natural systems](#), and one on the [principles of attitude](#). I prepared a lot of examples for these sessions, so that i could demonstrate how the principles can apply to all sorts of

Permaculture Introductory weekend Course design - Implementation



Preparing

One limiting factor i had not taken enough account of was the lack of electricity at Steward Wood, and having prepared all my mind map session guides and handouts, i found i had to cycle a long way in the rain to a friend's house to get them printed. I also couldn't test the projector until an hour before the



course, as that was too heavy to take on my bicycle. But i finally got all the sheets printed on the Friday evening, after a fair amount of stress and what felt like wasted time. The bike ride was a good way to get some exercise and fresh air however - things i had been increasingly foregoing while getting the course prepared and working on my diploma accreditation.

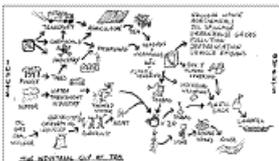
Saturday

The course assistant and i arrived at the venue in good time, and set up the room. People started arriving early on, and the assistant welcomed them, took their money and pointed them at the kettle or the table covered in Permaculture magazines and books. As people came mostly from Ashburton, a lot of them knew each other, so they were quickly bonded and chatting, while i continued to struggle with getting the projector to work... It did eventually work, although the room was bright and had no curtains so the picture was quite faint. I was amused when the last participant turned up at the predicted 10.20, and pleased that my timetable had allowed for this eventuality. The other people were talking to each other and leafing through books, so i called them over. We then sat in a circle and began the course.

The first session felt great, i had decided to tell people that it was my first course, and this vulnerability and realness seemed to bring rich rewards. We all introduced each other, and it turned out half the group had grown up in Surrey - 5 out of the 10 people, including me... There was laughter and a feeling of safety created very early on. I ran through the domestics and course overview, and then we launched into the web of life game. This went very well, except the signs we hung around our necks (indicating that we were a stream, a fox, fungi, a tree etc) were a bit awkward because the string wasn't long enough and the signs were too big, but the web of string connecting us all looked beautiful as it spanned out and around the circle, and then it was very striking and sad as it dropped away when we polluted or wiped out various parts of the web.

The Permaculture overview session passed okay, and then we moved into the ethics session, which also went fairly smoothly. I realised that for all my talk of wanting it to be participatory and valuing their contributions, i hadn't timetabled them in! and we started to go over time as they discussed the ecological positives and negatives of computers...

A Tale of Two Teacups:



After this we analysed the two different systems of tea making - industrial and permacultural. I had planned to use the projector to shine up Graham Burnett's drawings of these systems, but it was too bright and too much effort in the end, so i fell back on drawing it onto the flip chart myself and using my print out of his diagrams (i had prepared for a projectorless course too... multiple supply). This went okay as well, and people then started saying that they were actually very ready for a cup of tea themselves.



We then had the tea break. Which i spent busily prepping something to do with the next sessions rather than having a break myself.

After the break it was the first of the principles sessions – principles derived from nature. The session was good, although they rarely guessed the principles from the rather abstruse icons, apart from David Holmgren's sunshine in a bottle icon. I stressed the systems analysis implications of each principle, and how they could be used for any system, not just gardening. Then we crowded around the projector screen to watch a washed out 80's video of permaculture as applied to gardening, which i was able to stop at the point i wanted, and ensure that lunch happened on time! I hadn't seen the video myself before, as i hadn't had access to the hard drive it was on until the night before the course, so i was taking a bit of a gamble, but it went okay, and it also introduced zoning and various applications of the principles for people.

We all ate lunch outside in a zen-type peace garden, as it was warmer outside than inside (i had been warned about this and had told people to bring an extra layer). I suggested doing the next few sessions outside too, which people agreed to. The handchain game was over quickly, perhaps too quickly to fully energise people who did look a bit sleepy in the next sessions.



So I tied down the flip chart stand, taped the paper onto the stand (it was windy), dragged people away from watching baby spiders in a bush, and introduced them to 5 of the attitudinal principles of permaculture. I had planned to do 4, but there was extra time, so i threw in 'Permaculture is information and design intensive not labour intensive' for free, and we had fun collectively making up an icon on the spot for this principle (a big head with hovering energy efficient light bulb next to a small shovel).

After this we were theoretically into the norming stage, with its fun free-running, brick-in-your-toilet-cistern music video. But it felt too nice outside, and the projector quality would have been even worse since it was now sunny and bright, so i cut that from the program, suggested they move around the garden a little as an energising break (some of them had been lying disturbingly still on the grass during the second principles session, with their heads facing down...) and then ran through the design tools session. This was well received, although it felt a little unprepared on my side.

Next came the design for real floor exercise, but i had not yet made all the icons for this – having planned to do it during the lunch break I then actually needed a break and also had to go off and buy some food. The course assistant had prepared some during the hand chain game, but there were still a lot to do. I suggested that the participants make the remaining cards up themselves while i laid out the string zone markers and placed the immovable sectors icons (prevailing wind, south, road, ugly view etc). They seemed to enjoy this a lot, having a creative break from the learning i suppose. Then we all played around working out possible placements and designs among the zones on the floor.

The rest of the sessions went well, the permaculture in our lives provoked a lot of discussion again, and fortunately i had overestimated how long it would take to plan the arrangements for Sunday, so we got back on time after that. There was a big groan when i mentioned feedback in the last session, and then they all said very nice things about me and the course so far. One person then suggested a closing event too, so we all held hands and stood in silence for a few minutes, before ending a few minutes early!

I then put on some Ennio Morricone spaghetti western music and slowly packed away, feeling epic and very happy with how it had gone.

Sunday

I awoke several times to the sound of rain on Sunday morning. Heavy rain such as had been notably absent all through April. The paths were awash and i hoped people had taken heed of my suggestion that they bring stout shoes or wellies. One person called to say she wasn't coming as she wasn't good in the rain. I revised a few things on the timetable to deal with this rain, and thanked John and Daz for building a new shelter in the growing area a few days before (to collect water originally, but quickly developing many other functions like keeping cardboard, straw, tools and now course participants relatively dry and sheltered). I would do a lot of talking under the shelter, a quick tour of the growing beds, then we'd have a tea break in the warm kitchen.

Another person phoned up who hadn't been there on the Saturday, and i realised i hadn't organised her a place in the transport planning session, so i apologised and gave her some phone numbers to ring. I lit the kitchen rayburn and tidied up a little, put kettles on and headed down to start the day. In an amusing contrast to saturday's large collection of beautiful printed mind map session preps, today i had some writing on the back of an envelope for the whole day - a list of the principles to remind me of what to remind people, timings and locations for the tours, and materials needed. It worked fine, and fitted easily in my pocket, which kept it out of the rain.

Everyone arrived on time, and we walked up to the growing area, got under the shelter and went through some of the techniques at work, including the new water collection roof, which had collected 400 litres in 4 days! An excellent example of stacking, catching and storing energy, multiple supply, multiple function, design not labour intensive and yield is unlimited, which made my job of pointing out principles in practice very simple, and quite dry. We wandered out in the rain to explore the comfrey patch where we recycle humanure, and the perennial vegetable beds, and the squash bed where i am combining squash growing with bramble clearance this year.



Then we damply repaired to the kitchen, for tea and the story of how we got the Steward Community Woodland project together. It stopped raining as we stepped inside... It was a long tea break, and some people ate their lunch. We then looked at the compost loo, a few dwellings and the communal spaces, before stopping again for lunch. I worried that i was the only one eating at this point, as most people had eaten during the earlier break, but lively discussions raged around the firepit anyway. I had decided earlier to cut the practical, so we then headed off to Proper Job for the afternoon. I realised in the car i was actually really tired, and hadn't done any learning reviewing yet - which i know is an important tool in learning new information - to be reminded of it a day later, then a week, then a month, then a year, means that the neural pathways stay clear and accessible for you, and it is easy to remember the information.

We arrived at Proper Job, and i ran through a brief review of saturday's sessions, recalling each session in turn and asking people to call out the principles, ethics, design tools etc to jog their memories. People remembered the principles by the pictures i drew first, and then the principles themselves, which i found very interesting. I then gave them a history of Proper Job, and explained all the different areas in which we recycled and resold things (community composting, second hand clothes/ furniture/building materials/tools/books and films, green shop etc). I then let them wander around and look at things by themselves, and bring any purchases they wanted to me for pricing up and selling.

After this informal (and for Proper Job, lucrative) half hour, we reconvened outside in the sunshine for the closing session. I was feeling very tired by this point, and i didn't facilitate very well here. We discussed whether and how people would like to stay connected after the course, and exchanged phone numbers, and a few projects were flagged up. I then initiated a closing round of sharing a moment you found inspiring from the course, and an offer and a request that may be useful to other members of the group. I figured this was a good way of reminding people of parts of the course again, as well as letting me know what went well on the course. People were a bit unspecific, but i got lots of nurturing and lovely feedback about how much they had appreciated the course, and a few offers and requests were voiced. A buzzard soared overhead at one point, in an effortless and striking spiritual omen of something or other. We then stood in a circle and held hands. I thanked them, and the course ended with a group of tired inspired people standing together in the sunshine, honouring each other and our shared time together.

Packing down and reviewing

As they were leaving i managed to get a few bits of constructive feedback out of them, then i locked up, danced around the yard in joy for a bit, and headed off to a reservoir with my lovely course assistant for

more dancing around, swimming, beer drinking and unwinding. I wrote down review thoughts as they came to me that night, and did a proactive session the following morning. As i have been writing this page i have also been using it as a way of reviewing as well, noting down my personal feedback and done differentlies as i go along.

Costings

I kept a record of the hours i spent working on this course: I spent 41 hours in total preparing, convening and designing the course. The course itself was 15 hours work, and i have spent 4 hours reviewing it. That's 60 hours in total.

The course was priced at £25-£40 (self assessed sliding scale), and it brought in £265. The Saturday venue cost £45, and the materials and travel about £10, so i earned £210. £20 of this i will donate to Ashburton Futures to support them and reward them for their help in advertising and convening the course. The rest i will keep as wages for myself - £190. That's £3.16 an hour for me alongside: the teaching and convening experience; a design i can use in my portfolio and a two day introductory course design (timetable, session guides, debrief and course materials) that i can use to help me prepare the next one.



Onto the debrief...

Permaculture Introductory weekend Course design – Review and Done Differently

Teaching methods: People seemed to appreciate the mix of session styles and techniques. I missed out on some possibilities on the Sunday because i was so tired. The effectiveness of the visual icons was very apparent in the review session we did on Sunday – people remembered the icons and then worked out the principles from them. The planning for real exercise was particularly popular. Maybe there was too much information on the saturday – people were a bit glassy eyed by the end of the day. The projector wasn't great because of the light levels, but i was able to end the film when i wanted and thus ensure that lunch happened on time no matter when the video started. I need to learn some more facilitation skills, and put in more time for discussions next time.

Preparation: Next time i would ensure i definitely had the facilities to print pages out before i relied on that for my session guides. Or i would try to print them earlier on rather than leave it to the last minute. The digital mind maps are however versatile, pretty, easily altered and easily readable, so i will use this technique again next time if i can assure printing facilities. Likewise the handout should have been ready earlier on, to ease last minute printing stress. Getting more sleep in the run up to the course is something i would plan to get more of next time as well. Having the projector sorted out before hand would also have reduced my stress levels. The last few sessions on Saturday were less well prepared – i had no visual layout ideas for the flip chart, so the teaching seemed less coherent to me and maybe to the participants too. It would be good to have actually seen the video in full before i showed it as well... More preparation, and less leaving it to the last minute.

People care: I forgot to add Louise into the transport pool, and didn't tell Lionel to come past the locked gates at Proper Job, so he missed that afternoon. More thought next time for the people who are not there for parts of the course, so they can join back in – physically and mentally. Also, some more comfortable and sheltered urinals at Steward Wood would be useful.

Timing: Overall it was good, but because i was so tired i didn't prepare or facilitate the last session as well as i'd have liked, and we ended 20mins late having agreed only a 5 minute overrun.

Feedback: I organised some on the day, but more will be built in next time, and a session between me and the teaching team afterwards (asap afterwards) would be good – it didn't happen this time. Printed feedback forms would help people share constructive feedback more easily next time.

Photos: It would be nice to have pictures of the course, not least to put on this website – next time i will take a camera and record the course that way too.

Offers and requests: This idea came in too late, when everyone was tired. I could have brought it in earlier on the saturday, and used it as an example of designing by input/output joining up (needs-inputs, offers-outputs).

Energy levels; I was very tired on the second day, increasingly so as the day wore on. Getting more sleep in the run up to the course would be a good tweak, or failing that, putting some strong chocolate onto the course materials list! The participants were also very tired by Sunday afternoon – partly due to the weather, but maybe also due to the amount of learning they had done. Make a shorter syllabus next time?

Venues: I was slightly scared 3 days before the course when i realised i hadn't heard for definite which venue we had in Ashburton, so keeping closer contact with the venue coordinator, or doing it myself, would make things less worrying for me. I also forgot to formally ask Proper Job if i could do a tour there – in all my busy-ness i assumed somewhere below my conscious thought level that my informal agreement to do a tour there in March meant i could do one in May and not have to ask anyone. Next time i will be more respectful and clear in my relationship with Proper Job.

Non-land based Permaculture focus: I think that i got the message across loud and clear that the principles and design tools can be applied to all systems, not just gardening, but it would be nice to have the planning for real game not based on a broadscale farm, but on a kitchen layout, or an invisible social structure of some kind instead.

Overall: The course was an incredible experience for me, reassuring me about my teaching skills, encouraging me to make it a larger part of my focus in life. All the lessons i have learnt will be useful next time, and it seems that the participants also had a great time, and i hope to reconnect with them somewhere down the line - indeed some of them are coming to my Accreditation event.