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Patron:

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WOLLANGARRA

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Spring Newsletter 2023

I sit in the office below a picture of Ian driving around a heap of young folk in Claude, beaming with smiles on their faces, no doubt arms aching from helping carve out an outdoor ed centre from logs. Just outside the office door are pictures of the Woll staff teams, almost 35 years of baking, making, carving tracks, banging nails and planting seedlings. I can hear some vollies in the kitchen making lunch after a morning of hard yakka. The new directors are on their way, my short time at the desk is nearly done. Just one more stage 2/3 program next week and what a privilege to finish with that. We'll have young people along that only just did stage 1, as well as long time returners. The river is just now receding and losing its chocolate brown colour after over 170mls of rain last week, keenly watched everyday by sweaty volunteers ("I reckon its swim-able today guys!" they say). The silky oaks are in bloom and those darn bower birds are hell bent on trying every plum before us (back in a sec after I throw another shoe). We had a red bellied black snake right outside the inner verandah door yesterday, a reminder the grass cutting we're all doing today is essential.



I give this snapshot of a moment as it reminds me that the 'ordinary day' at Woll is consistently special. It's not just the valley itself, the magic light that shines on the hills, the sights, smells, sounds that are constantly evolving, nor the purposeful work that feeds the mind and body, or the comraderie from being with groups out on the tracks.. it's everything. That unique mix that Woll can provide in a beautiful, messy, tear-your-hair-out-somedays way. How does it all work? It works because people put in. They slog. Sometimes behind the scenes - for years! Now we've heard people say things like "You guys saved Woll, jumping in etc etc". What rubbish and don't be tempted to say it if you see me! We've been here a very short time and would like to acknowledge those who have been keeping the raft afloat for years. People like Jodie Steel, Helen Collins, the Brady Bunch, the MacCraes, the Woll council, ex directors, ex staff, alpine walkers, stage 3s, ex and current. You've stepped up

and boosted the place you clearly love, when it needed it. Juliette and I have really valued being able to call this homestead a true home for us and our little boy, who took his first steps in the grass

out front. We'll never forget the help given and all the young people, vollies and alumni with whom we've shared good times. We'll also never forget floods, fires and snakes, but hey, that's the bush.

Woll's future is really looking up with Smitho and Katie at the helm but don't forget - the place thrives on many hands, so get up here if you can.

Rock and Woll, Dan, December 23

Juliette's message

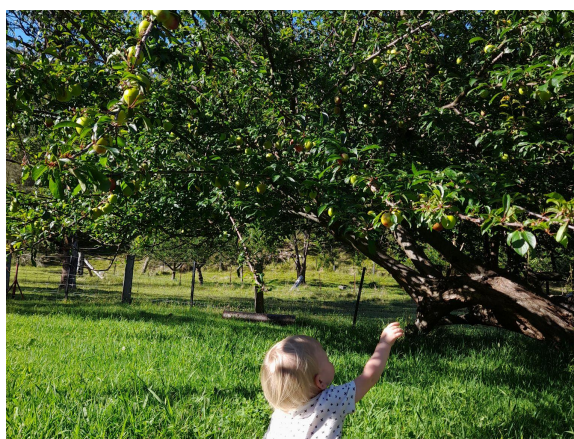
I arrived at Wollangarra not knowing what to expect, as I had not yet been part of the community. It was a steep learning curve and I encountered many challenges. No doubt this is part of many people's journey up here. Nothing beats the absolute quiet of the nights, the obvious health of Nature all around us, the joy of lighting a fire – or several! - every day. Many people including myself get inspired by this place, asking how we can live in a place a bit like this – with open showers, fruit trees everywhere, swims in the river. The gift of Wollangarra is to get us thinking, how could I include what I love about the place in my life and how could I improve on the design?



For me, the toilets would have to be closer to our main living space! Also, as much as I love the Fox, the experience of 2 floods have made it a necessity to have an alternative way out, that I could potentially use on my own, especially with a baby. There were a lot of times when there was precious few of us on the flat and all hands were required for other jobs. However, the people who were there are all absolute legends and lifesavers. I hope they know who they are and how much of a difference they made during challenging times. We could not have done it without every person who came up to give a hand in these 4 months.

Thank you, everyone, who made it possible for Dan, Rowan and I to have this experience. I do hope we will be back for working bees and open days, that Rowan will stay familiar with the place and its people, feeling at home and surrounded by a rich and active community.

All the best,
Juliette, Dec 23



Program Reports

6th –8th Sept Kardinia International College, 26 young people, 2 teachers

Volunteers: Sophie Brunton, Jess Magner, Madi Steet, Micheal ‘Six’ Caffrey

Our first course and due to maintenance issues, no flying fox! But from the start those young folks and vollies threw themselves in – literally! Forging the river I don’t know how many times in the course of the week, and I can tell you it was still quite bracingly cold in early Sept. We had a heap of work around the flat and 2 nights camp out. This week featured no less than 2 thunderstorms, 1 windstorm, rain showers and a heck of a lot of fun! Will go down in Woll history as ‘most river fordings in one program’ I think. Special thanks to Sludge pit Soph and Oscar Knights for course prep before this course.



Stage 1 September Holiday program, 15 young people

Volunteers: Tess MacCrae, Josie and Thommo McLachlan, Andy Hooke, Paul and Hazel Nichol, Casper Reed

Guest star Vollie – Micheal Donovan, Mittagundi Director

What a course! When you have a dream team, dreams come true. Sheep were wrestled and tagged. Tractors were resurrected. Epic hikes to far flung spots like Deer and Banana flat were reached, as well as McMillans peak. Heaappps of flat work was smashed out. Ex directors pulled up sleeves and cleaned reaaally messy offices. Ex staff cooked a roast that made thanks for waiting reaaallly hard (still dreaming about that cheesy cauli, oof!) Stage 1s became new fam and Hazel (7) was pretty much on staff by the end of the course. Seriously this one made us feel truly like Woll staff and not just imposters. The bar was set high and we’ve been proud to uphold it!

Sept Stage 2 and 3, 15 stage 2s

Volunteers: Hamish MacCrae, Paul Nichol, Mali Booth (Stage 3 Guest Facilitator)

Stage 3s: Rosie Maslin, Jack Brown, Raph Tibbits, Alkira Aares, Ursula Stephens, Casper Reed, Thommo McLachlan



Once again superstar ex staff were on board and with such good guidance, we had a ripper week. Stage 3s were given 2 wheelbarrows of gear, a canoe, food and told “get to Tussocky flat and setup a base!” They rose to the challenge and then put in a huge week of effort doing fire clearing at Tussocky and serious amounts of track work up the Contour track. Stage 2s had heaps of flat time and a day hike out to Burgoyne’s Hut and back, doing a fair bit of maintenance and track marking as they went. We have

certainly needed it on future courses, so this work was vital. A sensational stew guided as always by Juliette and silly dress up games rounded off one of my favorite weeks so far.

Sept Stage 2 and 3 Photos



NOTE – Most October courses cancelled due to major flood (see flood report!)

Program Reports cont'd

Oct 30th – Nov 3rd, Templestowe College, 16 Young people, 2 teachers, 1 school vullie

Volunteers: William Auld, Catherine, Tully, Matthew and Jack from Mittagundi

Well to say this was a special course is an understatement. Firstly, our spirits had been quite down, losing 2 courses due to flooding and one had been cancelled even before the flood. I took a call from the Mittagundi director saying, hey, we've got a school that last minute can't come to Mittagundi BUT they can come to you at Woll! Sure enough they did and Mittagundi sent 3 staff to help us run it. I'm not sure if that's happened in Woll's history but I can tell you the magic moments were bountiful. The weather was perfect for swims and the picnic lunches on the contour track were highlights. As you'd expect with Mittagundi staff, there were singalongs, jokes, riddles, games and hard yakka aplenty. Even with a young person needing to go to Traralgon late at night to get a nasty cut looked at, you couldn't keep the smiles off our faces during this course. Our long time vullie Will was getting a name for amazing baking skills and has set the bar higher since! Special thanks to Tracey, Callum and Eloise for jumping in to their first ever Woll camp with sleeves rolled up.



Nov 13th –17th , Collingwood College, 14 Young people, Teacher: Sarah Powers

Volunteers: Hamish MacCrae, Ciara Gardiner, Olivia Flower, Will Auld, Rosie Maslin, Alkira Aares

Collingwood College must be doing something right because they were a really mature, grounded, fun and talented group of young people. Hamish and Sarah led a really big hike along the contour track, camping one night at Deer flat and one night at Burgoyne's Hut. This is not an easy hike, and they were justifiably proud to achieve it and come the 'high road' over the top back to Woll. Group 2 aka the Kangaroos decided to opt for a shorter but no less beautiful hike to Box flat and enjoyed great camp and exploration times under the guidance of superstars vullies Ciara and Olivia. We rounded the week off with time in the garden, around the flat and a memorable lamb stew eaten with everything from whisks, spatulas and even an eggbeater!! I'll never forget the harmonies of this group singing around the campfire and dinner table.



Nov 20th –24th , Camberwell High School, 26 Young people, 2x teachers

Leaders: Rachel Aistrope, Ciara Gardiner, **Volunteers:** Jarrah Sofarnos, Kiralee Gardiner, Will Auld, Ant Mair (Director 98-00)

One of our biggest courses for a while and we were caught out right at the start as the group pretty much walked right up to the fox before we realised! But this tells you a lot about CHS – huge enthusiasm and go-get-em energy. We were lucky to have such great volunteers including ex director Ant Mair to keep up with this group, we needed it! Ciara and Rachel did a fantastic job leading their groups on different routes and staying safe through quite a decent thunderstorm on the

Program reports cont'd

first day. They crisscrossed paths and visited Hickey's creek and Burgoyne's Hut on different nights. Back to Woll Thursday for de-issue, showers and stew night and wow – we had finally done something like a 'normal' Woll course. This really showed us just how much effort a staff team at Woll puts in, week in, week out. We take our hat off to 34 years of resilient teams!

Nov 27th –Dec 1st , Camberwell Grammar, 16 Young people, 2x teachers

Volunteers: Olivia Flower, Maya Carlyon, Will Auld

From the outset this was a course with a difference – for the first time in a while, yours truly was going hiking! I also made the call that, due to really significant rain forecast from Tues night, we would actually start hiking ASAP on the Monday. To these boys credit (all boys school) they rolled with it! Will and Olivia did a fantastic job getting them out and set up at Hickeys creek for the first night whilst Juliette and Maya had a hectic run to the doctor to care for our bubba Rowan who had a burn on his foot. Once bubs was back with the all clear, I headed out with the group next day. We decided to summit McMillans lookout, which was stunning if a bit eerie given there was not a single breath of wind. The clouds were ominous on the horizon. We descended, packs on again and missioned to Burgoyne's hut including a decent steep ascent up to Burgoyne's Gap. The Hut was a very good choice as the rain did indeed come in that night. In fact, from Tuesday night, it rained almost continuously for the rest of the week! I think I tipped out 175mls in the end. The group was cosy at the homestead by that stage and honestly I think apart from cooking we did a lot of gear sorting out and little jobs while just staying dry! When the group finally headed out on Friday the river was a big brown monster, in minor flood. Hats off to their bus driver for navigating Heyfield-Licola Rd with trees and landslides aplenty!

The Dec Stage 1 was cancelled as all road access to the area was closed (flooding)

December Stage 2 and 3, 16 Stage 2s, 8 Stage 3s

Special guest volunteers - Incoming directors Smitho, Katie and their kids Floyd, Frankie and Pearl

Volunteers - Maya Carylton, Jess (wwoofer)

Well we made it, our last course for the year. What better way to finish than a handover to the new directors and their beautiful fam. It was perfect course to welcome them, with returning young people to show them around. The weather was kind to us (for once!) and our first day out was a joint Stage 2 and 3 walk to Burgoyne's Hut, clearing the fairly overgrown scrub off the track as we went. The swim when we all got back was all the sweeter for washing off the track dust and cooling sore limbs. Wed we got into a



mini Garden party - Juliette and Katie overseeing the double digging and clearing of 4 new beds. It was really muggy and humid, again afternoon swims featuring highly and just in time too - a real banger of a storm swung in. It was awesome to see Woll fitting Smitho and family like a glove and Floyd had caught a bass already! The week rounded up with the usual dress up shenanigans, games and another legendary stew. Perfect weather greeted us for the walk out Friday and I could see already that Woll will be in good hands.

Oct 3rd-6th Major Flood Report

When I looked at the forecast around the 1st and 2nd of October, one thing was on my mind. It wasn't flood. There were fires burning out of control near Briagolong and another under watch at Rawson. In terms of fires, that's not far. However, a certain Ralph Barraclough, a longtime supporter of Woll and local legend advised me to watch the rain coming, instead. Well, he wasn't wrong. It started Tuesday arvo and there was about 48 hours of continuous, often heavy rain. I think it was around 160mls in the end, but it came down fast and by Wed the Macca was 3.5m and rising. I was on my own at Woll and following the flood checklists. Taking off return ropes, moving pumps, caring for the sheep. I realised too late there were pumps over at Tussocky already well under water. I also knew there was 1 troopy still at the landing area. I could see it from the Woll side and the water looked a bit close for comfort. Called Wayne Macallum in Glenmaggie, hiked out the telephone track and he basically rescued me by driving through a swollen Cheyne's creek (3-foot water, usually dry) We drove back to Woll, going through an overflowing Hickeys creek to get to the troopy and move it. To top it all off the MacCallum's took me in for 3 days while flood waters receded. I'll never forget the hospitality from Wayne, Bev and Kirsty. The final level was 4m, which in Woll terms reaches just into the Flat pump shed.



Ian rang in "I heard you had a bit of water!" and it was great to chat and hear stories of past floods too. Since the flood the magic Ralph Barraclough has managed to resurrect not just 1 but 2 of the damaged pumps – what a legend.

Working bees

Ever since I started, I was keenly aware it would be quite a challenge to maintain a property like Woll, without a staff team. There are a lot of eccentricities to this self-made, secondhand and mostly solid 34-year-old place. Just look at the plumbing map if you don't believe me! Actually, it makes more sense than Mittagundis but shhh, I'll get in trouble here. Now, I also know, things falling over is half the purpose – we roll up our sleeves with the young people and learn great skills. However, sometimes, you just need a few experienced hands to stop you pulling your hair out. I'd like to thank the following people who came up and what they did. I apologize if I have forgotten anyone!

- **Sophie Brunton and Oscar Knights** – Cleaning drains, grease traps, rotaloos and many other jobs that benefit programs to this day – legends.
- **Josh Tucker and Louise King** – Heaps of Woll help, pruning trees, cleaning stoves and more

- **Andy Hooke** – A seriously good job sorting Wolls workshop! Pulled a lamb too!
- **Tess MacCrae** – Garden TLC and plantings, heaps of general Woll care
- **Josie Mac** – A hero's effort in the Woll office, invaluable advice
- **Sally and Phoenix** – Heaps of work at Woll flat and Tussocky
- **Anna, Bill, Guy and Michelle** – A big weekend fixing many things from flyscreens at Homestead (still loving that!) to pretty essential plumbing repairs.
- **Micheal Donovan** – Big list of fixes but especially getting the red tractor going, checking our fire and program preparedness and getting sheep flock sorted
- **Conrad McKee** – Huge help on pest and environmental control, sheep management, vehicle and trailer advice, general maintenance and care of Woll wisdom
- **Lawrence, Casper, Sally and Emma** - Creating a new railing for Fox entry
- **Ralph Barraclough** – Salvaged and repaired 3 x pumps, lots of donations and invaluable advice
- **Hamish Macrae, Sarah Powers, Rosie and Alkira** – Heaps of general work around the flat, care of everything from garden, gear store and homestead
- **Dan Abikhair** – Huge help on all things Woll systems from micro to macro, big effort post flood recovery including resetting flying foxes, great chats as always
- **John Brady** – Fixing a number of gates, mowing, installing a new sheep trough with Fergus, ODK verandah posts
- **Fergus O'Donohue and Jasper** – Big group gear sort out, Tussocky flat work, heaps of jobs around flat
- **Harm, Lisa and Nathan** – Citrus pruning and making seriously good lemon cordial! Caring for Woll on babysitting weekend.
- Last but not least - **Dave Cadogan**, who has put in a power of work, donated equipment and expertise time and again - Legend, ty Dave.

Interim Staff

I've created this section to acknowledge a few folks that really made it possible to run courses with a shadow number of a 'normal' Woll team. Sophie, Madi, Will and Maya gave us 3 – 8 weeks of their time and we are so grateful. It goes without saying the quality of programs was greatly enhanced by having them around to ground young people and new volunteers in a new and sometimes overwhelming experience.

I've asked a few questions of them each to hear of their Woll experience in their own words.

What made you give your time to Woll?

Sophie Brunton: I ended up volunteering at Wollangarra in September through being a young person being heavily involved in Wollangarra and stage 3 for many years. I hadn't been back for a year or so, and had lost a lot of contact through Covid, but went to the Garden Party '22 and was reminded of how absolutely in love I am with the place, people, community, spirit and mountains. Midway through this year I volunteered at the Stage 3 induction, and it was at that point I decided that I would love the opportunity to spend a month helping out up there.

Madi Steet I think I have a somewhat interesting journey with Wollangarra, I'd even go as far as calling it a mutualistic relationship, both Wollangarra and myself benefited in ways. I, like many of others, first came to Wollangarra through a Stage 1 program, whether it be a school or holiday program. I even came back for a Stage 2, but for almost 8 years hadn't returned. This is when I found myself in my most spontaneous, might-as-well-give-it-a-go year to date and sitting in a dingy Vietnamese hostel room replying to a Facebook post looking for volunteers. I had some time in between intrepid adventures and there honestly couldn't have been a better way to reintegrate myself with the Woll community, and spend a couple months!

Will Auld: I'd like to say I came up to volunteer at Wollangarra through the pureness of my heart, that I chose to offer weeks of my time for nothing more than the betterment of this community. In reality I decided to stay up here for a purely self-benefiting and goal oriented reason: life in the modern world stresses me out. There were many other smaller reasons behind my decision as well, I wanted more experience before I joined the 2024 Mittagundi staff team, I get to spend my time hiking in the Australian bush, etc. However, at the bones of my decision, I was looking for a place to escape from society until Mittagundi. But what I found through my self oriented decision making was a truly amazing and caring community. The amount of support I have seen given to this place is inspiring. Support ranging from Dan and Juliette offering not only months of their life but months of their child's to Woll, support from volunteers taking time out of their hectic lives and spending a weekend chopping wood and mowing grass, support from young people, especially stage threes, using their years of knowledge to guide outdoor educators in the subtleties of Wollangarra.

What were your magic moments this time?

Sophie B - There were many highlights and challenges in that month, it was wild ride! Ultimately one of the best things I've ever done though! It was incredible to spend that month off grid, amongst the mountains that I love so much. There were so many highlights but to name a few: hiking McMillans, hanging out/getting to meet and reconnect with other volunteers, endless swims in the Mac River, meeting and living with Dan, Juliette and beautiful little Rowan, making the Megaloaf, the adventures and laughter that ensued when Oscar Nitz came up, eating the best food, getting on the 'Crete with Casper, learning about/adventures of the Woll plumbing system, so much laughter and LAMBS!

Madi Wollangarra has this magic, it's a space that can bring unlikely people together and creates a unique family full of compassion. I found that my fondest times while volunteering involved the others around me, supporting each other and laughing, while crack into farm jobs during Flat Week and working alongside the Young People.

Although Woll has its challenges too. It can be hard being out of touch with friends and family with the lack of internet and reception, and the weather isn't always kind and cooperative when you want it to be... but that's kind of the fun of it as well. Moments of reconnecting with loved ones is more exciting, and a hot drink is more delicious after hours of outside labour in sodden rain jackets

Will: The first moment that comes to mind was on my very first program at Woll. It was the third day of program and we had just got back from hike. We went for a longed for swim but the peaceful day on the water quickly devolved into animalistic mayhem when one lad scooped up a handful of mud and slapped it onto his mate's back. At the climax of the event we had almost every boy in the group splashing around in the river with huge ridiculous grins on their faces hucking mud

at each other. To my amazement one of the teachers even joined in the tomfoolery pelting his enthusiastic students with unrelenting handfuls of dirt and sand. After the better part of an hour we were inclusively covered in filth but equally covered in laughter and high spirits. Wollangarra has this amazing ability to draw out the strongest, most primal feelings from someone, whether that be the playfulness and happiness of rolling around on the beach slapping handfuls of mud on someone, the adrenaline and danger you experience dashing down a gully to escape a thunderstorm, or the warm satisfied feeling you get sprawled on a couch next to a fire with a tummy full of lamb stew and ears full of music and good conversation. When you strip away the complexities of the modern world, when you leave behind distractions and stressors, you experience life more. You laugh harder, eat better, work longer and sleep deeper. At the end of the day life is just a collection of memories and emotions and at Wollangarra I have only had good ones.

What would you say to a young person considering a Stage1?

Madi - Just give it a go! You might love it or you might not, you could laugh or you could cry, but consider this: an old friend once said to me, "it might be the best experience you've ever had, or the worst... but either way, it will probably be something you'll tell stories about for a long time." Just get out and create some stories, make some friends and have a laugh, (or a cry).

Sophie - I would say to a person considering Stage 1, take a chance, come up for a program because you never know where that one program will lead you! Whether that's just a chance to see the beautiful mountains, make new friends, or having a unique story to come back to school with after the holidays, it could also be the start of something ongoing that leads you to the best places in life!

Stage III News

The Stage III crew has been thriving lately with many plans being made and fresh faces joining in the fun. In Sept some stage threes headed up to clear up some bush around Tussocky, do a heap of trackwork on the Contour and odd jobs around the flat. I heard it was a lovely and productive week up there! Eight radical stage threes came up for a program in Dec and what a lovely time that was as well. Helping out with the stage twos and doing some much needed gardening and track work kept us busy in-between the many river swims. A night was spent at Tussocky flat in which pasta was our dinner and brekkie, due to the huge pot we were sent via flying fox. We began clearing out the stage three building in preparation for Smitho, Katie and co to move in, however lucky for us they changed their mind! Nevertheless some serious sorting and cleaning was needed anyway so glad we got a start on that.

Many discussions are happening about future hike plans and activities in various meetings with the next plan being hiking into Mittafest. (We are in need of an awesome volunteer with wilderness first aid for that hike if anyone is willing let us know) Exciting times are ahead for us stage threes and I'm sure more updates will follow. Feel free to check out the stage three instagram page for some sick flicks @wollangarastagethree!

- Ivy



Stage III Photos



Brad Pryce Award

The Brad Pryce award acknowledges a young person who, amongst their peers of Stage IIIs, who already give alot, has shined. They are sponsored by Woll to complete a Wilderness First Aid course with the Woll and Mitta staff the following year.

There are many ways someone might stand out, but for Rosie Maslin, I would say the qualities were attention, patience and alot of hard work. When I learned of this award and was asked to nominate someone, Rosie had just done a Sept Stage III and then stayed to help out on a weekend working bee. Her work ethic, attention to what's going on and needed at a given moment and general passion for Woll was really apparent. We really wish Rosie the best and no doubt she will put those Wilderness first aid skills to good use, if Wolls lucky, with a staff position in the future!!



Thank you to...

Ross Richards for Hop MC and bushdance calling
Everyone on the Hop band
Sophie Brunton for alot of hard work in Sept and Woll systems help
Mittagundi directors for HUGE support, not limited to lining up a program and providing staff!
The Mccallums, Wayne, Bev and Kirsty for awesome hospitality and great chats, always
Mali Booth for Stage 3 facilitation and general awesomeness
All the working bees vollies - we gave a whole article for you!
Ralph Baraclough for invaluable donation of time, materials and expertise
Paul Nichol for multiple program leading
Hamish Macrae for multiple program leading and alot of help around the flat on weekends
Katie Green and Smitho for taking on admin role long before they landed at Woll
Helen Collins for many, many years of dedicated service
Jodie Steel for doing an AMAZING job behind the scenes with bookings, finances, admin, the Hop, volunteers, calendar, community and more!
Terry Higgins for help with pest control
Conrad McKee for championing the Brad Pryce award
Flying Foxers aka those champions who donate monthly to Woll
The Woll council for above and beyond support for Woll in the last 6 months

DATES	EVENT	FURTHER DETAILS
Jan 15th -19th	Holiday Stage I	Postponed from Dec due to flooding (again!!)
Jan 23rd -26th	Stage III Hike to Mittafest	The Stage III's are resuscitating an awesome tradition - looking for a WFA qualled vollie
Jan - Feb	Staff training	The wonderful wollies will learn with great skillful skill, all they need to run programs!
TO BE CONFIRMED	Fruit bottling	Clashed with Mittafest, to be moved to an Autumn weekend
	<i>Check the website for early 2024 Courses!</i>	

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