

6.9.16

# Learn from the locals

The Alternative Technology Association's Sustainable House Day is this coming Sunday and across the nation, 125 homes will be open to visitors who want to learn more about living lightly on the planet and to be inspired to further their own sustainability journey.

Luckily for locals, one of the homes open is quite close: it is in Glenhope, southeast of Redesdale.

When Clare Claydon and Win Westerhoff moved to their Glenhope house almost 30 years ago, they immediately appreciated one key aspect of its design: the house was built under a pre-existing hayshed roof.

"The huge catchment area means that even when we have just a skiff of rain, the water tanks fill," Win explains.

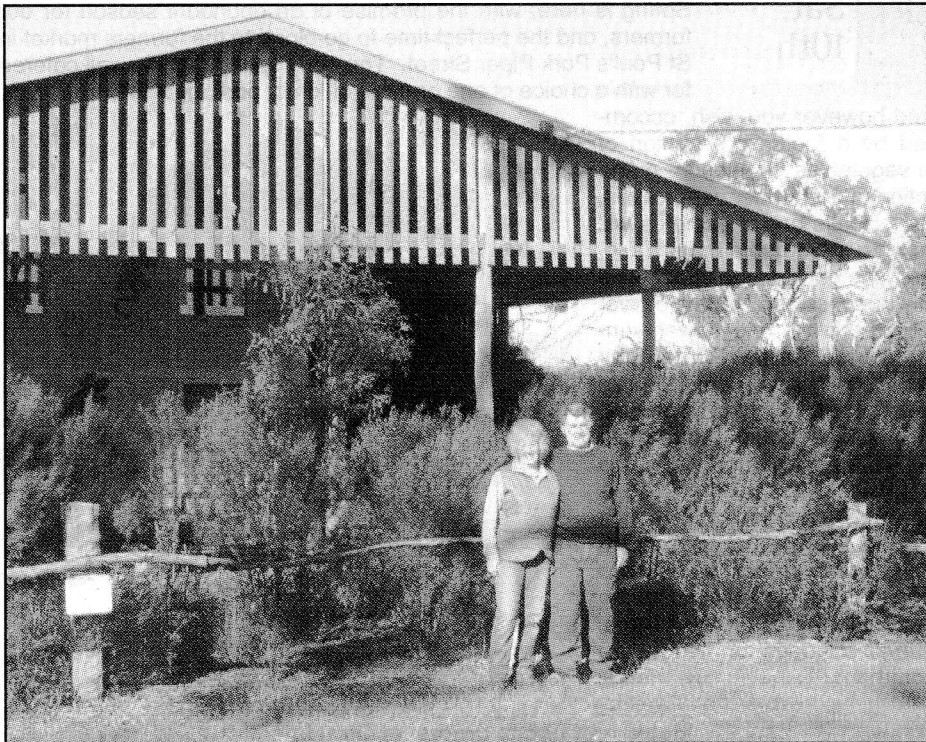
"The large roof means we have lots of undercover storage space and only at the very height of summer do the windows get just a tiny amount of direct sun. And, as we discovered on Black Saturday, the roof seemed to draw the fire up and over - a major contributing factor to our saving the house that day."

Gradually Clare and Win have added other sustainability features to their house: solar panels, solar hot water, a gourmet wood stove that heats the whole house and that they cook on in winter, eco-glazing and efficient electrical appliances.

Clare and Win also thrive on the challenge of growing as much of their own food as possible.

They are self-sufficient in vegetables and fruit and enjoy keeping bees and chooks. To supply the garden and orchard with fertiliser, they regularly make compost and have a worm farm capable of producing up to five tonnes of castings a year.

On Black Saturday, Clare and Win's entire property was burned and they lost nine sheds. After the fire they decided to build one big shed to replace the little ones (easier to defend in the event of another fire) and to build it out of a very local and sustainable material: rammed earth. The bulk of materials - clay and



Clare Claydon and Win Westerhoff in front of their house that will be open to the public on Sustainable House Day. Photo: Emma Jimson

sand - came from the property itself and the enormous amount of energy required to put up rammed earth walls was given by some extraordinarily generous members of Clare's family and of the local community.

"The rammed earth shed has a wonderful feel to it, is very cool in summer and looks as if it grew out of the soil, which, of course, it did - literally," Win says.

On Sustainable House Day, tours of the house, gardens and rammed earth shed will take place every half hour and while people are waiting for the next tour to begin, they are welcome to browse a display of various aspects of sustainable lifestyles including food preservation and non-chemical cleaning agents.

Clare and Win's grandsons, Sam and Thomas Claydon, will be giving pop-up

demonstrations on the use of solar ovens and how to pasteurise fruit juice to preserve it.

Lyn Beinat, CEO of EcoMaster, and an expert on retrofitting energy efficiencies, will be there all day to discuss topics with visitors such as double glazing, insulation and draught-stopping.

Katie and Hugh Finlay of Mt Alexander Fruit Gardens will give talks at 12.15 and 1.15 on growing organic fruit in a home garden. All that for free! There will also be some light refreshments for sale - proceeds to Oxfam's Syrian appeal.

Intending visitors need to register beforehand at [www.sustainablehouseday.com/subscriber-registration](http://www.sustainablehouseday.com/subscriber-registration) and then they will be able to see further details about 'Clearwind', including the address, and information about other sustainable houses open to the public.