

# Introduction to Permaculture Workshop



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## SUMMARY



## Brief Introduction to design and how it came to be.

2014 was the first year of the Nonstuff festival organised by James Chapman, permaculture designer, musician and teacher. There had been a shout out for people willing to lead an introduction to Permaculture and I decided I would give it a go. I had

been signed up to my diploma for over a year at that point and it would be a way to expand my edges as I had never led a workshop in Permaculture before.

It seemed like a good idea to do it with someone else, for moral support and having someone to collaborate with would shine light on areas I may not know much about. I asked around and Jennifer Aird who had done a PDC some years ago and whom I knew quite well was up for facilitating with me.

### Ethics:

**People care:** *Be mindful of people coming in and be aware of what we are giving. The whole point in running the workshop is for people care as it was adding something people want - i.e. permaculture knowledge to a fun and creative, permaculture themed, festival. It was also caring for ourselves as we were furthering our own experience and also attending the festival for free.*

**Earth care:** *The whole thing is about earth care and awareness and for us it was also about being mindful of the place we were running it so trying to find permaculture principles at Wiston Lodge to mention and highlight throughout the workshop.*

**Fair share:** *It was free and open to anyone already at the festival, the whole festival had a sliding scale fee structure and was free for anyone offering a workshop*

Brief: Teach a couple of introductory workshops at the Non-Stuff Festival outlining permaculture for beginners.

Design Process:

SADIMET

# SADIMET

## SIMPLE DESIGN STRUCTURE

### 1 SURVEY

GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT  
DESIGN

### 2 ANALYSE

HOW DOES THAT INFORMATION  
FIT INTO THE DESIGN BRIEF OR  
ORIGINAL QUESTION. ARE THE  
SPECIFICS

### 3 DESIGN

START TO PIECE IT TOGETHER  
AND MAKE IT INTO A COHERENT  
WHOLE

### 4 IMPLEMENT

HOW WILL IT ACTUALLY BE  
DONE? MAKE PRACTICAL STEPS.

### 5 EVALUATE

HOW WELL DOES THE DESIGN  
MEET THE ORIGINAL GOAL?.

### 6 TWEAK

IS THERE ROOM FOR MANOUVRE  
? IS THAT NEEDED?

## SURVEY:

<b>Description:</b>	Deliver two 1.5 hour sessions at the Non Stuff Festival
<b>Location:</b>	Non-Stuff Festival, Wiston Lodge, South Lanarkshire
<b>Duration:</b>	2 x 1.5 hour sessions
<b>Resources:</b>	Resources on Permaculture Association Website. Physical materials needed would be a flipchart and laminated sheets as well as principle cards and some book samples, some magazines and leaflets from permaculture association, left over from previous workshop.
<b>Time to prepare</b>	Three Weeks all up
<b>Who:</b>	Jennifer Aird, Priya Logan
<b>Prior Preparation:</b>	Jennifer and I committed to meeting twice for around 2 hours each before the workshop, we would use our time alone to do any additional research.
<b>Research and Learning:</b>	We needed to make sure we had read up on different definitions of permaculture and carefully studied the particular workshops and possible questions before the event.
<b>Think about what we need in terms of the intangible.</b>	Space, prior knowledge, practice, group culture etc.

## ANALYSE:

### 1. Space: How to arrange the room.

The workshop is a drop-in so we don't know how many people will end up coming along.

We don't have a definite size of room beforehand either. So need to estimate numbers of attendance.

We can set a limit of people to attend ( as a rough outline we can estimate the size of a ideal group )

### ***2. People : think about the venue and audience:***

It's a festival so people have come to enjoy it and relax as well as learn something.

As it is a permaculture themed festival it could be assumed that people are acquainted with some of the themes but that cannot be taken for granted.

Need to make it fun and accessible, facilitated rather than taught.

### 3. Prior Knowledge, Research:

Find a variety of different definitions and descriptions of permaculture as unsure of peoples previous knowledge.

Decide on and fully explore about 2-4 workshop ideas depending on whether we run

Find a way to find out how much people know about permaculture at the beginning of the workshop.

### 4. Managing variables:

We could have a backup plan with another lesson in-case we speed through things and only have one or two participants.

Will the workshop get too busy or too quiet? How do we prepare for these type of variables?

Running one workshop a day should we repeat and get to know one lesson extra well or will we perhaps get repeating attendees?

We should plan for two workshops with different lessons in case people come to two.

5. Define the learning outcomes:

What do we want people to walk away with ?

What is realistic for an hour and a half ?

6. Creating group culture:

In line with permaculture style learning, the group culture could be created together at the beginning of the workshop.

We need to get to know a little about everyone who comes in and make them welcome.

Establish an atmosphere of co-creation.

Make sure everyone speaks and introduces themselves.

Have some fun, play some games, don't be too serious.

DESIGN

## 1. Space: How to arrange the room.

Requested a room that can easily fit 8-10 people at least. Have requested plenty of chairs too.

Have large pieces of information that will be able to be seen by a large amount of people. Make sure our materials are clear.

Make sure we have signs that direct people to the room - will this be done already? The organisers will make the directions clear.

Sitting everyone in a circle is standard permaculture practice and means everyone is seen and feels as included as the next person.

## ***2. People, think about the audience:***

Get everyone speaking - putting everyone's voice into the room is powerful and inclusive.

Ask everyone what they know about permaculture already. Then go through a few example quotes of what permaculture is and introduce the history of it.

Have an icebreaker game. There is a perfect example of one in the permaculture workshop resources on the permaculture association website that covers many bases apart from point three.

**20 minutes go round:** starting with the person to your left, ask them to say:

1. their name,
2. what kind of weather sums up how they feel today, and
3. 2 things they remember most from yesterday.

If anyone says “thunderstorm”, “blizzard” etc. ask them if there's anything anyone can do to help and offer to speak confidentially later if necessary.

List or map the things people remember from the day before.

### 3. Prior Knowledge, Research:

We spent some time finding quotes and we found a short descriptive piece on Wikipedia so we could talk about Permaculture is and how it came to be.

From Wikipedia:

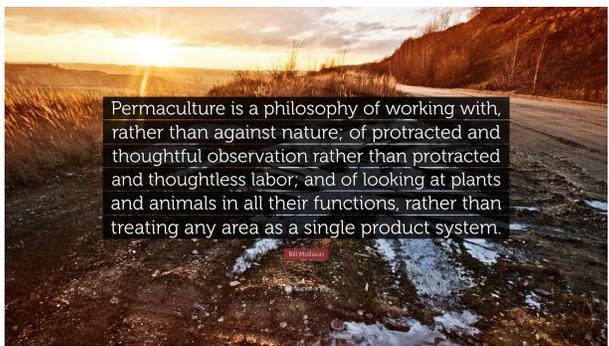
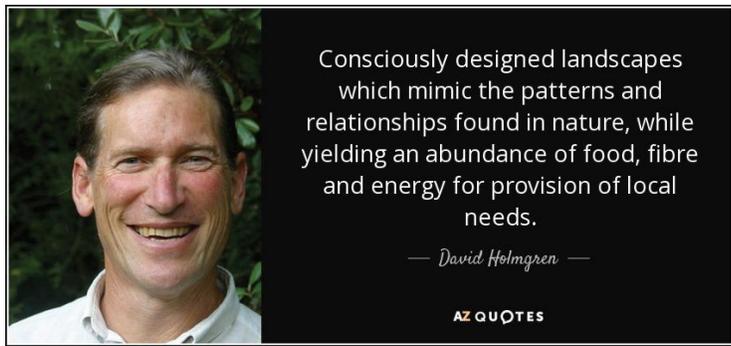
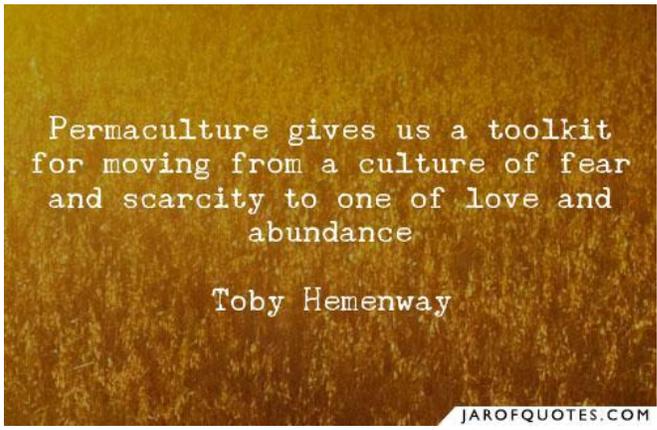
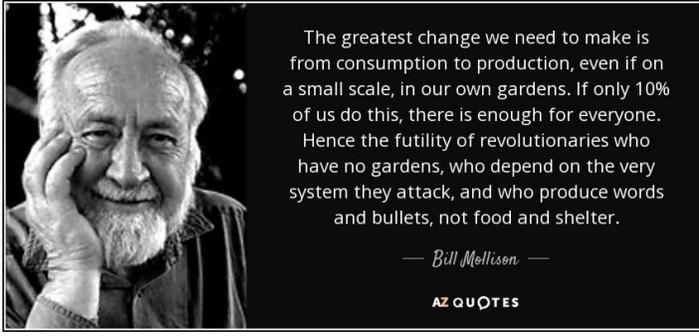
We basically had this and chatted through the definition from what is outlined here.

“ The term permaculture was developed and coined by [David Holmgren](#), then a graduate student at the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education's Department of Environmental Design, and [Bill Mollison](#), senior lecturer in Environmental Psychology at University of Tasmania, in 1978. <sup>[1]</sup> The word *permaculture* originally referred to "permanent agriculture", <sup>[2][3]</sup> but was expanded to stand also for "permanent culture", as it was understood that social aspects were integral to a truly sustainable system as inspired by [Masanobu Fukuoka's natural farming](#) philosophy.

It has many branches that include, but are not limited to, [ecological design](#), [ecological engineering](#), [regenerative design](#), [environmental design](#), and [construction](#). Permaculture also includes [integrated water resources management](#) that develops [sustainable architecture](#), and regenerative and self-maintained [habitat](#) and agricultural systems modelled from natural ecosystems. <sup>[4][5]</sup>

Mollison has said: "Permaculture is a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless labor; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area as a [single product system](#)." <sup>[6]</sup>

Here are a few quotes we agreed upon:

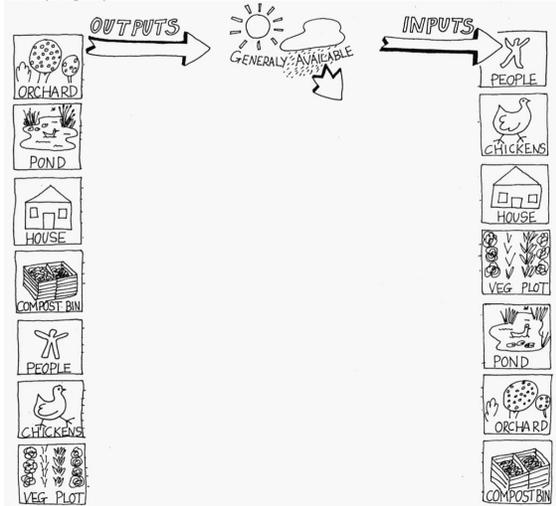


What workshops we chose to work through.

We spoke about what we enjoyed as participants when we learned permaculture and went through the various workshop details that were available on the website. Here are some of the documents we pulled out.

**25 minutes: small group exercise:**

Split the students into small groups and produce one pre-drawn grid on a flip chart sheet per group:



Ask each group to spend 5 minutes filling in the outputs for each element, as for the human. Next ask them to spend 5 minutes filling in the inputs. Finally ask them to match the outputs to the inputs.

When they've finished, ask them for their observations and what they've learned and map them on the whiteboard. This session should help to point out concepts such as pollution, extra work, multiple functions for each element, importance of relationships, relative location, cycling, automatic systems.

**Resources:** White board, markers, pre-drawn grid on flip chart paper.

**Observation Exercise: Listening to the Landscape**

In this session we are not asking "what can I do with this land?", but "what is this land telling me?"

Move around the site on your own, in silence, and spend 10 minutes on each part, below:

**Part 1 - Intuitive:** What are your first impressions of the site?

1. How would you describe the overall site?
2. Close your eyes: what can you hear, smell, feel?
3. What are the relationships with the neighbouring land?

**Part 2 - Objective:** Observe the site rationally and systematically. You may want to list the following (if you don't know the name of something, describe it):

1. Soil type:
2. Climate and micro-climate:
3. Water courses and features:
4. Plants:

5. Animals:

**Part 3 - Imaginative:** try to visualise this place in other times/states

1. How would this place have looked before humans influenced it?
2. How might it change 3 months from now?
3. How might it change 6 months from now?
4. How might it change if humans stopped influencing it?

**Part 4 - Subjective:** how does the *genius loci* of this place make you feel?

1. Go wherever you want, and do whatever you feel like...

Adapted from Patrick Whitefield's session 'listening to the landscape' from the Permaculture Teachers' Guide

**Session 3: Permaculture ethics**

**Context:** Introduction to Permaculture Design course

**Duration:** 45 minutes

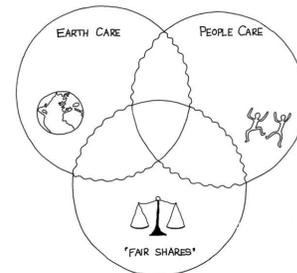
**Aims:** To introduce the Permaculture ethics and give students an opportunity to apply them to real life choices.

**Learning outcomes:** By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- State each ethic and give simple examples
- Apply the ethics to food buying choices
- Relate the ethics to design

**Method & timings:**

**15 minutes whole group exercise:** draw 3 intersecting circles on the whiteboard or flip chart:



Then ask students to shout out examples of each and fill them in. You might want to start them off with some examples, such as 'organic food', 'sustainable transport' etc. Some examples may relate to multiple ethics. For example, Fair trade could relate to fair shares and people care.

When you've finished, produce a card with a picture of a honey pot on it (See handouts); ask students where they buy their honey from, and how their decision

**Session 2: Input Output Analysis**

**Context:** Introduction to Permaculture Design course, early on.

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Aims:** To explain the 'Analysis of Elements' design method, and, using a simple group exercise, develop this into an opportunity for students to uncover some permaculture principles.

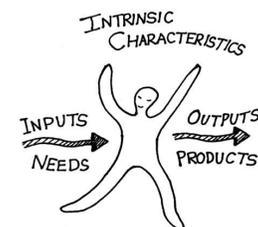
**Learning outcomes:** By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Use the Analysis of Elements method
- Explain why observation is crucial to the design process
- Explain what concepts such as pollution, extra work and relative location mean in a Permaculture context
- Explain why creating beneficial relationships is crucial to permaculture design.

**Method & timings:**

**2 minutes: introduction.**

Introduce the session by drawing a large person on the whiteboard or flip chart with accompanying text:



**10 minutes: whole group exercise:**

Ask the students to shout out suggestions for inputs/needs, outputs/products and finish with intrinsic characteristics, and add these to the drawing.

**Question:** Ask students how this method of analysis could be useful in design and map all suggestions without comment.

### Session 6: Observation Exercise

**Context:** Introduction to Permaculture Design course

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Aims:** To enhance students' observation skills and provide time for quiet appreciation of the landscape.

**Learning outcomes:** by the end of the session, students will:

- understand the importance of observation
- have had an experience of quiet observation & reflection
- have gained insights into our relationship with our environment

**Method & timings:**

**10 minutes introduction & brainstorm:** Why is observation important in design? Write this up on a mind map.

**40 minutes individual exercise.** Now explain to the students that the next 40 minutes will be spent as an individual exercise with 4 distinct phases and give them instructions on what to do. This is also all explained in the handout that you give them now.

**20 minutes group discussion:** Describe experience: reconvene the group and ask them what their impressions of the exercise was. Some students can find this quite a profound experience, especially those that rarely spend time outdoors, so it's good for them to have some time to reflect on and process what's just happened.

**20 minutes brainstorm:** Any new insights into how observation might inform design work? Add these new insights to the previous mind-map, using a different coloured marker.

**Resources:** Whiteboard/flipchart, enough handouts for everyone to have one, bell, horn or whistle to provide an audio signal to reconvene.

**NOTES:**

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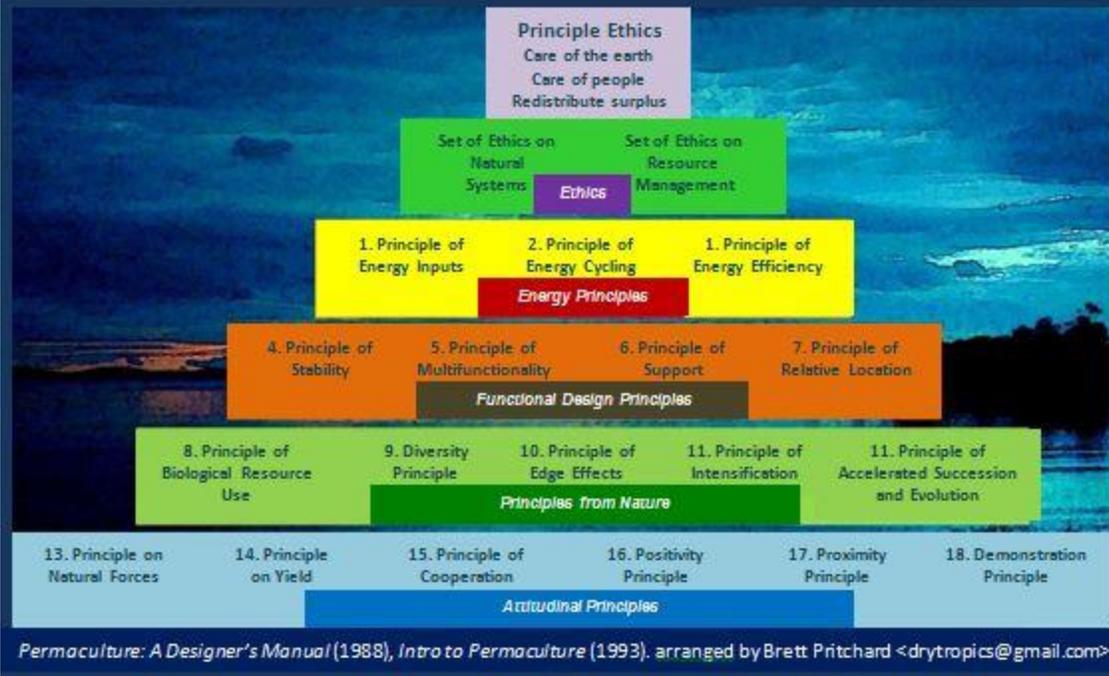
Time for some decisions:

On the first day, we decided we would work through the following lesson plans:

After introductions and housekeeping we would get an idea of what people already know about permaculture then talk through the basics - the permaculture ethics, using the lesson plan designed for that - Session 3 Permaculture Ethics as it is pretty foundational to what permaculture is, we wanted to use this as a discussion point rather than a full lesson so that we can go through another lesson plan: Session 2 Input and Output Analysis. This was going to form the full body of the session.

We talked through the principles too and the fact that there are different principles as this is also pretty foundational to what permaculture is:

## Mollison's Permaculture Ethics and Design Principles



1. Observe & interact



2. Catch & store energy



3. Obtain a yield



4. Apply self-regulation & accept feedback



5. Use & value renewable resources & services



6. Produce no waste



7. Design from patterns to details



8. Integrate rather than segregate



9. Use small & slow solutions



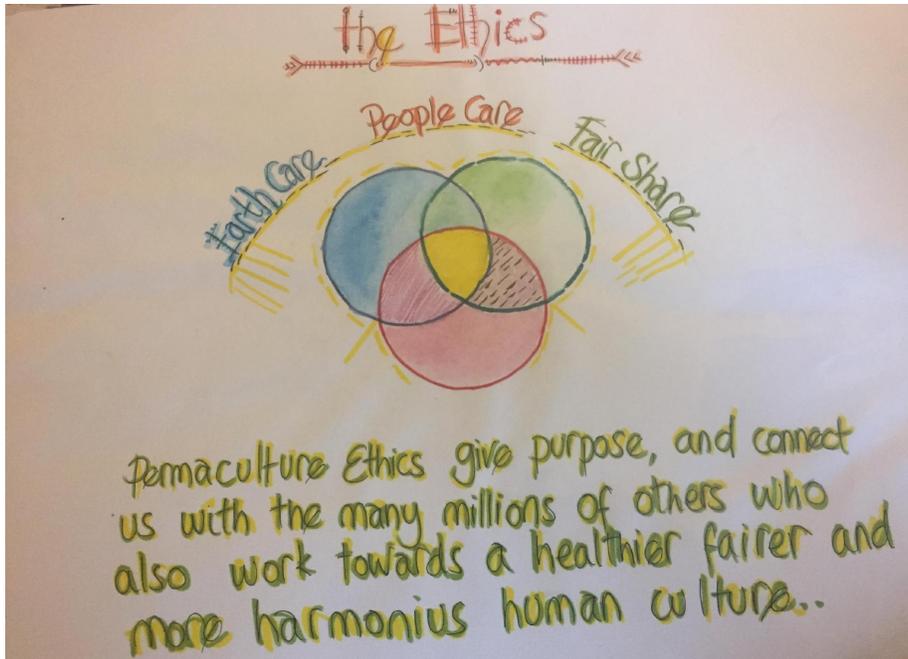
10. Use & value diversity



11. Use edges & value the marginal



12. Creatively use & respond to change



This was an a3 page I made up about the Ethics.

On the second day we wanted to do something that incorporated the grounds of Wiston Lodge and really focused on observation and also a bit of nature connection, so we decided we explore the grounds and also do a bit of a visioning exercise.

For this we used Session 6 in the resources Observation Exercise.

This gave us plenty to work through in one and a half hours especially when we need to cover the basics again for anyone who wasn't at day one (assuming we have any of the same people in both workshops. We did a little bit of research and figured out that there were extensive grounds and lots of established trees etc at Wiston Lodge. We planned to bring some ID books so that on the first day we could acquaint ourselves with the stand out trees and plants and we would also ask questions of the people at the festival who may know a bit more about the land.

# Grounds

One of Wiston Lodge's major attractions is our outdoor space. Our 53-acre estate consists of a wide variety of woodlands, with various walks and features to explore.



The scale of our estate allows us to offer a wide range of environments. Some of these are described below:

- Policy woodlands. These woodlands, surrounding the main house, consist of interesting and exotic trees and plantings. This creates a beautiful area in the immediate surroundings of the main house.
- Regenerating woodland. This area is undergoing natural regeneration, with pioneer species and some native broadleaf planting.
- Plantation woodland. We have three plantations: an area of Sitka Spruce which provides firewood and building material, a larch plantation approaching maturity, and a mixed plantation of young

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## From the website

### 4. Managing variables:

Time Variables: This is related to number of participants as if we only have one or two people the workshops will likely take a lot less time. In this case we are just going to keep with the amount of materials already prepared but work through things slightly more or less in depth depending on the amount of time needed for introductions etc.

Variables in attendees - numbers of people who turn up. We will have a lot of chairs and a medium sized room based on an ideal number of participants of between 5 and 10

Workshops for different days - Both days will contain information on:

The Ethics

The Principles

Definitions of Permaculture

Background of Permaculture

Covering all that with time given to Introductions and Housekeeping will take an estimated time of 20-40 minutes.

This time could very easily be expanded too by introducing a discussion on any of the principles or ethics and seeing if people can relate it to their own lives or any projects they are doing etc. On the other hand it could be cut down and people could be signposted to where they could find out more about the specifics.

## 5. Define The Learning Outcomes

We want people to walk away:

- With a good grasp of the history and background of permaculture
- With a confidence in the ability of permaculture to add value to their own lives and nurture the relationship between an individual and the larger environment.
- With some information as to where and how to take the next steps if they want to learn more about permaculture
- Having enjoyed the experience

## 6. Creating group culture:

### *How to do this. Steps.*

- Get everyone to introduce themselves and talk about the weather they feel like, this ensures that everyone has a chance to speak.
- Ask people what they know already and what they want to know.
- Ask everyone for culture “rules” and write them down.
- Make sure everyone listens when others are speaking.
- Encourage small group work
- Go around in a circle which and ensure that it feels like we are all collaborating and learning together rather than being divided into leading and following.

## IMPLEMENT

- Make up several copies of the workshop session plans.
- Make large a3 laminated pieces for the input and output workshop
- Write out plan of action for who introduces each part
- We would have our lessons printed and with us :) nothing like physical help.

- Borrow large flipchart and make sure we were suss out space as early on as possible. When we arrive at Wiston Lodge.

I am due to arrive night before: Jennifer will be arriving same day, probably an hour beforehand so I will take responsibility for room set up.

### When we get there

- Orientate, find out where we are doing the workshops
- Set up room find space and put materials in.
- Write up any info we need to put on flipchart
- Arrange chairs or cushions in circle format. Set up room in general.
- Find out time running
- Make sure that everything is clearly signposted

### Session Plan:

#### Day One

- Wait 10 minutes and close door 10 minutes after start time ( 10 minutes )
- Introductions: what weather does everyone feel like and where have you travelled from? ( 5 minutes) Jennifer prompt this on first day and Priya on second.
- Give a brief history of Permaculture. Priya
- Brainstorm definitions of permaculture ( 10 minutes) Jennifer to prompt
- Hand out a few definitions of permaculture and ask people to read out. ( 10 minutes) Both of us
- Do the inputs and outputs of a human as group ( 10 mins) Priya

- Bring out laminate input output analysis and ask people do work in two/three groups. **Both of us**
- Let people work on this for some time (20 minutes)
- Get people to share all important feedback and talk about one thing they have learned ( 20 minutes )
- Give handouts, allow people to look at materials and wave everyone off ( 5 minutes)

## Day Two

- Wait 10 minutes and close door 10 minutes after start time ( 10 minutes )
- Introductions: what weather does everyone feel like and where have you travelled from? ( 5 minutes) **Jennifer prompt this on first day and Priya on second.**
- Give a brief history of Permaculture. **Priya**
- Brainstorm definitions of permaculture ( 10 minutes) **Jennifer to prompt**
- Hand out a few definitions of permaculture and ask people to read out. ( 10 minutes) **Both of us**
- Go for a walk around grounds and set scene for looking at the landscape through deep time, talk about why observation is important( 10 mins) **Priya**
- Observation exercise, working in small groups if necessary. ( 20 minutes)
- Discussion about the things we can observe in the environment and how we could vision how the land wants to go.
- Get people to share all important feedback and what they will take away with them ( 20 minutes )
- Give handouts, allow people to look at materials and wave everyone off ( 5 minutes)

## MAINTAIN

The maintenance of the event is sustained and upheld by our implementation plan as well as keeping the lines of communication open with the organisers of the event when we get there and prior to being there to make sure we have everything we need and that all information is clearly communicated to the participants.

Sparkling and maintaining interest in permaculture, and in us as facilitators while the workshop is running, is the main aim.

By running this workshop we hope to introduce permaculture as an approachable useable, practical tool to help people think about their own lives and projects. To this end it is a good idea to give people information about further reading, courses, websites and publications.

Highlight to participants that the whole festival was a permaculture design so that the knowledge they gain in the workshop is maintained throughout the festival.

Maintain the interest level in the room at the time by keeping things interactive and accessible.

Make sure people get handouts and information about the permaculture association and details of upcoming PDC courses.

## EVALUATE

I feel pretty confident that there is plenty of information to work with and enough elasticity to adapt the information to smaller or larger numbers of participants.

I think having a basic introduction of the history, a few descriptions of permaculture, introduction to the ethics, examples of the principles, as well as a discussion about how to use them is foundational to getting what permaculture is. So I don't feel we can go wrong with that and there are so many places to go with those topics, the only challenge will be keeping some brevity.

The body of the workshops are full of potential depth and exploration too and I feel that having one workshop based inside and one outside gives us a good balance and if the weather was an issue we could also swap the sessions over.

## TWEAK

Make sure we have extra material in case only one person shows up and powers through lesson.

Make sure we have capacity for extra people if they show up

What if people have a good knowledge of permaculture we can adapt to that and open up

Also have an outdoor friendly and indoor friendly workshop planned ( can swap days if needed )

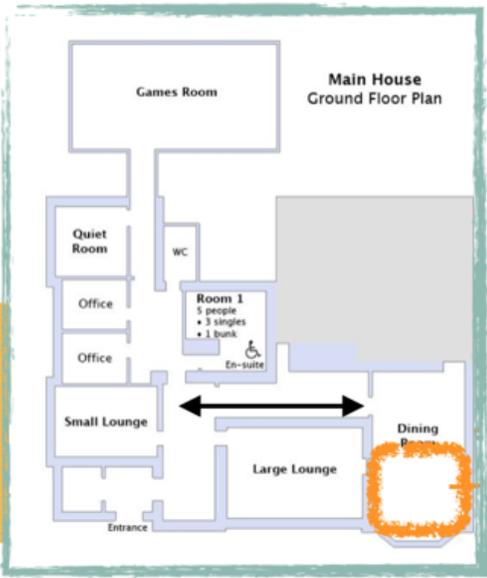
How it worked. How we arranged the room on the day:

**HOW WE USED THE SPACE ON THE DAY.**

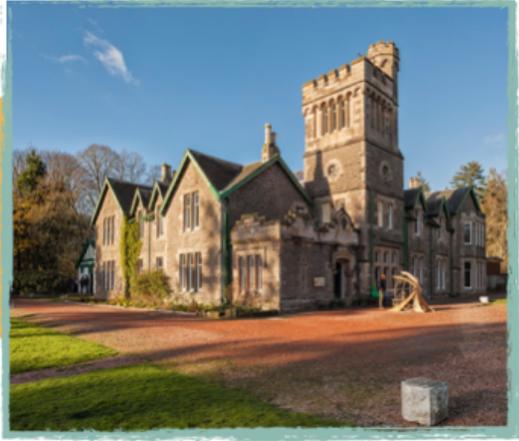


*Basic Floor Layout, The actual dimension of the room was quite different. See floor plan below*

*Floor plan with the area we used in orange*



*Wiston Lodge the door is the main entrance, there were workshops in all the rooms at the time.*



## Principles used :

### **Design from Pattern to Details:**

the pattern for the workshops were all there and as Jennifer and I have both attended PDC's and recognised all the materials from when we were participants so it was easy to use the materials and feel that if we forgot bits we had a good overview.

We also adapted some things i.e. making the laminated sheets.

Both days followed the same basic pattern

### **Apply self regulation and accept feedback:**

We had feedback written into our session and we had also been quite self regulating in terms of learning as much as possible before turning up.

**Integrate rather than segregate:** I valued having someone to work with who came from a different PDC background than me. It was great to have different energies working on the project and to help with morale boosting and planning.

**Catch and store energy:** doing a lot of preparation and using the resources on the Permaculture Association Website - all energy that we could use. Also taking notes from our meets beforehand and the energy encapsulated by our prior permaculture knowledge.

## Session 2: Input Output Analysis

**Context:** Introduction to Permaculture Design course, early on. Duration: 45 minutes

**Aims:** To explain the 'Analysis of Elements' design method, and, using a simple group exercise, develop this into an opportunity for students to uncover some permaculture principles.

**Learning outcomes:** By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- | Use the Analysis of Elements method
- | Explain why observation is crucial to the design process
- | Explain what concepts such as pollution, extra work and relative location mean in a Permaculture context
- | Explain why creating beneficial relationships is crucial to permaculture design.

**Method & timings:**

2 minutes: introduction.

Introduce the session by drawing a large person on the whiteboard or flip chart with accompanying text:

10 minutes: whole group exercise:

**Ask the students to shout out suggestions for inputs/needs, outputs/products and finish with intrinsic characteristics, and add these to the drawing.**

**Question: Ask students how this method of analysis could be useful in design and map all suggestions without comment.**

**25 minutes: small group exercise:**

**Split the students into small groups and produce one pre-drawn grid on a flip chart sheet per group:**

**Ask each group to spend 5 minutes filling in the outputs for each element, as for the human. Next ask them to spend 5 minutes filling in the inputs. Finally ask them to match the outputs to the inputs.**

**When they've finished, ask them for their observations and what they've learned and map them on the whiteboard. This session should help to point out concepts such as pollution, extra work, multiple functions for each element, importance of relationships, relative location, cycling, automatic systems.**

**Resources: White board, markers, pre-drawn grid on flip chart paper.**

**REFLECTION**

As far as the brief went this was a simple and straightforward design. It was also time bound and had a clear start and finish, it has been fantastic to find out just how many resources there are already on the Permaculture Association Website .

The knowledge of permaculture of the participants was at a beginner level so they got a lot out of it and the feedback was positive and encouraging. The workshops we chose to do were interactive and fun so there was plenty of absorption in the task ahead plus people did learn new things and had their interest piqued. It has been really interesting to scratch the surface of facilitating and discover how much I have learned since starting my own journey with permaculture.

We gained confidence as teachers/facilitators and plan to do it again. Was a boost to realise how much I knew and had learned about Permaculture.

*I had a great time teaching this workshop. It has given me the confidence to know that I could teach in the future - something I had not thought in great depth about before but something I am gaining interest in.*

*The fact that there are so many ready made resources on the website and also teachers guides mean that I can try this quite easily in the future.*