

# Quiet times to see more clearly

Two of our members, Pat and Ann Wootton, spend much of their time at their Gladstone home, which overlooks Murray Harbour and the Fox River. They are creating a centre for alternative energy, using windmills for lighting and solar panels for spring and summer hot water; organic growing, all their vegetables and fruit; and quiet days and peaceful meditation for spiritual advancement. Two of the Murray Islands - Thomas and Herring - which lie a mile offshore from their home - play an active part in their enterprising project.

The three windmills give plenty of electric lighting for most requirements, whilst the solar panels give boiling hot water during the warmer months. During winter they have a British 'Raeburn' cook-an-heat wood stove for cooking and hot water. The greenhouse is similarly



heated with a wood stove, backed up by a propane heater to keep the temperature high enough to protect tropical and semi-tropical plants such as pineapple, cotton, coffee, banana, pomegranate, tree tomatoes, guava and a cross-section of citrus. In this climate, this is certainly a challenge which Pat thoroughly enjoys, having served in the tropics in the army, and having written a book on the subject with the title "Having fun with Tropical Plants".

Their land consists of about one hundred acres which was farmed until the beginning of the century by the Sharam family, who moved the farmhouse across the ice to Murray Harbour. Being a mixed farm at that time, the land had been well manured and at no time were chemical fertilizers or pesticides used. Consequently, the land is ideal for organic growing and the Wootton's produce a wide range of vegetables, fruit and free-range eggs.

The method of farming they have adopted is known as 'Permaculture', which, in simple language, implies Forest Farming. This is a process of growing crops and maintaining livestock within the shelter belt of existing trees.

Pat views with particular concern the policy of clearcutting in Canada, which can often lead to excessive moisture, flooded land and erosion of the soil. "Unless we control widespread destruction of woodlands, and for that matter the rain forests, not only will we adversely affect the water table in places and continue to lose coastal land to erosion, but increase the dangers from the thinning of the ozone layer," he says. To improve their forest areas they are interplanting with a cross-section of hardwood trees.

Another aspect of their project, Spiritual advancement, develops by way of what has become known as their "Quiet Saturdays" when people are welcome to join them for a period of complete relaxation, when one can choose to spend the morning in individual solitude by painting a harbour scene, studying the wildlife, reading a book one hasn't had time for or by quietly meditating in a peaceful setting. After this, the group comes together for a bag lunch followed by a discussion or workshop on selected subjects connected with the needs for silence in our lives today.

"We are endeavouring," Pat says, "to present a practical and constructive example of how to survive quite comfortably without causing undue harm to the environment and producing good healthy food without