

South West Biodynamic Group Newsletter Winter 2018

Seasons greeting to you all



'Feeding the sheep' by David Newbatt

Dear Readers,

This year has been a time of change for several of us who have been keep the SWBD chugging along for the past years. Our enthusiasm and commitment to deepening our understanding of Biodynamics has not waned, as will be explained in this Newsletter. For the first time it appears on our website, but not necessarily for ever. Val Collett

NEWS AND NOTES

NOTE FROM DIANA WHITE, our Treasurer: Due to no printed Winter Newsletter and increased subscription in March, we are able to offer small bursaries for people who wish to attend conferences or courses. The only stipulation is that they share knowledge gained with the South West BD Group through the newsletter. Hopefuls can write/email me with their requests: dianawhite35@hotmail.com

FROM THE Anthroposophical Conference at Emerson College in August (2018). Wendy Cook. The keynote speaker was Nicanor Perlas (recipient of the Alternative Livelihood Award). He is a scientist who did the BD course at Emerson in the 1980's. His main topic was a cautionary treatment of the increase in AI (Artificial Intelligence) developing and changing the future of the entire human race at a vast pace. One of the outcomes will be joblessness and as a fitting antidote to this and many social and health issues he cited the importance of Biodynamics. *'Biodynamics creates both community and high quality food. The way forward is dramatically demonstrated by agriculture itself. The 'Medusa-like' touch of death by AI is thwarted in agriculture which will become a strategic area of refuge for real humans, not fake digital humans, including their robotic versions'.* Nicanor Perlas 'Humanity's Last Stand' P.5.

From Val Collett: I've just this book, and regard it as an urgent 'must read', preferably in groups.

'BEYOND CRISIS II' Conference, 17th & 18th November: A successful Conference was held at Dartington Hall on the subject of Social Renewal. We are now planning how to hold another conference next year. For a review and plans for the future, contact Derek Lapworth for a copy of the local Anthroposophical Newsletter (£2) on 01364 644010.

VELWELL ORCHARD, DARTINGTON: No more volunteer days until the Spring.

THREE BIG WEEKEND EVENTS AT HUXHAMS CROSS FARM

HELD IN SEPTEMBER

First, News of the SWBD Group Autumn Gathering, September 16th, from Wendy Cook:

On Sunday 16th September a dozen or more members of the SWBD Group gathered for our Autumn Gathering, for the first time held at Huxhams Cross Farm. It was auspicious in that it fell on the 3rd anniversary of the signing of the contract between Huxhams Cross and the BD Land Trust.

The morning focus was to make the BD Preparations for use by local BD farms and gardens. We were working with the Oak Bark/skull, the Camomile/intestines and the Dandelion/mesentery Preps as well as filling many cow horns with fresh cow manure. It was a very special event, being with a group who were practised in this mysterious alchemy was impressive. Everyone found a task that suited them. The farmland seemed sensitive to the energy that was created.

A really delicious meal came together quite magically, with many dishes using the produce from the farms. Christine Walton brought her autumn wreath to centre the table - making a beautiful contribution to the barn. After working physically people were hungry, so the culinary delights were really appreciated. This was followed by Richard Thornton-Smith's talk. He outlined the circumstance in which the Agricultural Lectures were given and reminded us that Biodynamics is an ever-evolving practice - keeping open-mindedness but sincere and thoughtful practice watching to see how certain things may work in certain situations, but not in others. The 500 Preparation is certainly working at Huxhams Cross and the worm count is going up!

A Biodynamic farm is built on dynamic relationships and also brings together elements that are not usually found together in the same place. The Preparations are particularly effective as catalysts that can trigger processes raising substances into a more potent and permeable condition and in this way differs from purely Organic Agriculture. We hope that more people will be drawn to this practice. (from Wendy Cook, Star & Furrow no. 128)

Then the Apricot Centre at Huxhams Cross Farm had a **MARVELLOUS DAY ON SATURDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER** WHEN WE CELEBRATED OPENING OUR BEAUTIFUL NEW WELLBEING AND TRAINING CENTRE (built by the talented Terra Perma) as well as celebrating becoming Biodynamically certified. The day was filled with laughter, smiles and congratulations as we gathered friends, supporters, customers, shareholders and the local community to celebrate with food and cake made with our produce by the talented Sima at The Kitchen Table, Totnes. Marina, Mark, Bob and Dave led fantastic farm tours where we saw about 60 people enjoy the beauty that is our farm and learn about how we have, in just three years, created a commercial farm producing some of the tastiest, organic and biodynamic vegetable and



fruit as well as developed a wellbeing service focusing on supporting young people with mental health issues in the local community using the farm as a co-therapist in their healing process. 60 people partied into the night with poetry from Matt Harvey and music from Resounding Earth and The Farwells! Thank you to all who came, all who helped and our thanks and blessing to the land that made it possible!

And



News of the AGM held at Huxhams Cross on 29th September, from David Durant & Debbie

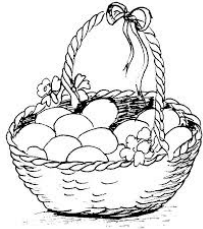
One of the main reasons we moved to Devon was to be able to find ways to be more connected with the food we eat, so when we saw a Facebook post from Huxhams Cross Farm asking for volunteers to come and plant fruit trees as part of their Agroforestry project at Dartington, we jumped at the chance to be more involved. A year and a half on from our first planting, we now feel really connected to the farm and we enjoy delicious biodynamic (Demeter) vegetables from the farm which we buy from the local market weekly.



An opportunity to become more involved in the Biodynamic movement came when we were invited to attend the Biodynamic Land Trust AGM and although we are not fully-fledged members yet, we saw this as an opportunity to learn more about the work that the BLT does and see first-hand their relationship with Huxhams. The AGM was held in the new Training Centre which had recently been completed at Huxhams Cross Farm, and when we say recently, we mean literally hours before the AGM! This purpose built space with an adjoining kitchen and stunning views over the farm proved to be an open, airy and comfortable space to listen to the presentations and take part in discussions over the day.

The AGM itself was well structured and packed with information. We heard detailed presentations and analysis on the previous year's achievements and performance followed by a clear picture of the current challenges facing the Biodynamic Land Trust. There was plenty of time given for members of the audience to ask questions and seek clarification on what was presented and this provided a participatory inclusive atmosphere where everyone was welcomed to contribute. The use of land is one of the most critical factors that will determine how well we can live in the coming years. From what we've seen The Biodynamic Land Trust and the farms which it supports are at the forefront of experiential learning. There is much that has already been learnt and can be shared to encourage others in the farming community to adopt these principles. As committed and engaged members of The Biodynamic Land Trust we can all play our part in spreading the word about the great work that is being done, whether in conversation with friends, via social media, using audio and video to show what you are investing in and through sharing share offers. The world is slowly waking up to new possibilities, as a community we can do so much, so let's get sharing!

PRODUCE FOR SALE, grown on biodynamic principles.



Demeter certified vegetables from Huxhams Cross Farm (trading as the Apricot Centre): You can have fresh local vegetables, eggs, fruit and water delivered to your door. There are several small Biodynamic and Organic growers who will be providing vegetables for this box at certain times of the year as well as **Huxhams Cross Farm** own fruit, vegetables and eggs. **We deliver to your home, and we're at Totnes Market on Fridays.** You can order online at www.apricotcentre.co.uk . Enquiries to Bob Mehew: 07507 841 158 or bob.mehew@apricotcentre.co.uk .

Concentrated Fruit juices from Derek Lapworth, 01364 644 010. These are made with Demeter apple juice and organic apple concentrate; no water or sugar is added. Varieties currently are: Sloe, Rosehip, Blackcurrant, Sour Cherry, Elderberry & Elderflower. All fruit is from biodynamic farms or gardens or hedgerows away from the roadside. Cost: £5 for a 500ml bottle.

Greenlife shop, Totnes, 01803 866 738: Demeter Products, some BD-grown veggies & BD seeds.

Frozen lamb joints, grown biodynamically, are available from the freezer at Derek Lapworth's house, 10 Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh (01364 644010).

WHO'S WHO AND WHAT DO WE DO? (getting fewer)

The Spring and Summer Gatherings (at which the BD Preparations are prepared, shared lunch, talks and discussions happen) have now moved along the A384 to Huxhams Cross Farm and are being prepared by Marina O'Connell and Rachel Phillips (07780 757958) with help from Wendy Cook..

The Biodynamic Preparations are now the responsibility of Frankie van der Stok. They will be prepared at the Spring and Autumn gatherings at Huxhams Cross, but will be stored as before at Velwell Orchard for people to collect by arrangement with Jeremy Weiss (07960 432 317)

Derek Lapworth (01364 644010) has been the formal Group Secretary for many years. He is now looking around for someone to replace him in this central work. See letter .

Ros Bourne/Goodban (01364 643521) will continue to do a lot of typing and putting of notices on our Website and generally be incredibly helpful.

Diana White (01803 473551) is Treasurer of our funds

Wendy Cook (01803 865941) is formal Chairperson and our expert on BD food, nutrition and cooking who also visits some of our members who are working land biodynamically.

News from some of our BD or nearly-BD farms and gardens:

CAROL ASWAY'S LAND AT TIGLEY, 01364 72553: Carol has 3 acres of orchard and woodland on which she has built a large barn. There is also a vegetable patch which produced many squash this year - vegetables given to family and friends. There are now ducks and chicks which bring life to the land. All the Preparations are used. Some volunteers help on the land on Sunday mornings and then they have lunch together - please call Carol if you are interested in joining them. This September Carol and her partner Dominic got married and celebrated with an even in their barn.

SOUTH DEVON STEINER SCHOOL, 2.5 ACRES. MARK VAN VLIET, 07964 265041: Now in his third year at the school, Mark has been able to solidify the crop rotation and to better understand the systems and curriculum development. He remains excited about the work and hopes the children are also excited about their activities. All Classes from 2 - 8 help in the garden. Clare does the crop planning and Tobias Goulden also works with Mark on two days per week. The school continues to have 4 acres, some lambs, a borrowed ram from time to time and some poultry. All the produce during term time is sold to parents and teachers. During the summer a man called David who runs a pop-up restaurant in Totnes comes to collect produce every week.

EASTMOOR ORCHARD, HARBERTON, Noni Mackenzie & Mike Giles 01364 653178/07800 734 270

This year we cut back our growing activities to quite a large extent, covering a large part of our field with successional green manures and temporary mixtures to attract birds and pollinators and restore the land after around 10 years of cultivation. The kale and chard were slow to get going in the cold weather, but came through in the end. Our courgettes did remarkably well despite the lack of rain. Our blackcurrants were hit by run off, with the fruit falling off before it was ripe; we imagine this was due to the lack of moisture. Our raspberries seemed unaffected, but our plums and apples gave us our best harvest yet. We invested in an electric mill, hydrostatic press and pasteuriser, which has given us a better yield of juice. We are unable to sell it to the shops as yet, but can sell privately along with our eggs.

We have a mostly new, young flock of barred rock hens. Only 5 of our existing flock survived our first serious encounter with the local foxes. We have created a more secure enclosure for them and have had no more problems. We hope to add one or two silkie hens, hatched by one of our hens which went broody, once we have discovered the sex of the 4 chicks she has raised.

The fine weather this summer has been a great help to the development of our camping activities. We offered camping in bell tents with mattress and bedding provided and advertised on the Airbnb website, and hosted a good number and variety of campers, who enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of our holding.

HUXHAMS CROSS FARM (now Demeter registered): There has been no rest for the Apricot Centre since our last update to SWBD in September. The farm team have been working incredibly hard with the infrastructure developments on the farm and we have a wonderfully large pond that is currently filling up nicely with all the rain we have been having. That's all around growing the most fabulous veg that we have ever seen our kales and cabbages have been huge!

Our fruit and veg has really been amazing during the Autumn and have really enjoyed the late sunshine we have been receiving, as have the staff who have enjoyed tea breaks on the training centre decking until this last week.

Our wellbeing team are working on lots of new and exciting projects and this month ran a youth brainstorming workshop that was attended by 30 professionals, volunteers and interested individuals who all are working towards helping and supporting the wellbeing of young people in this area. It was so successful that we are planning on running regular sessions.

Our market stall in Totnes is still thriving and has seen the addition of Marina's amazing jams that make wonderful gifts and can be purchased online or at the market! Jam sandwiches have featured a lot at lunch time! The biodynamic fruit really makes the most superb jam!



Finally the Apricot Centre Team have been running a great volunteer day on the first Thursday of the month and it has been very popular, we think it might have something to do with the delicious lunches we provide! Any members who are interested in meeting like minded people and doing some volunteer work on the farm can contact Rachel to find out more.

The Apricot Team wishes you all a wonderful Yule and thanks you for all your support.

With Yule fast approaching we are turning our attention to vegetables again in preparation for feasting! You can have your veg bags for the festive period delivered to your door- they are full of our wonderful vegetables and perfect for celebrating with family. Check out our website for deliveries and orders. We are also thinking about giving the gift of veg if you are interested in purchasing a voucher for your loved ones that can be used towards regular veg delivers or any of our land based courses then visit the website or contact Rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk

FUTURE EVENTS



Any questions to Selby Thomas
on 01803 762260
or Selby at Crookedpath.co.uk

INTRODUCTION TO BIODYNAMIC FARMING & FARMING with MARINA O'CONNELL

Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th March, then Saturday 27th April & Sunday 28th April

£250 for 4 days over two weekends

Lunch: £6.00 inc VAT per person per day. Please email [Rachel](mailto:Rachel@apricotcentre.co.uk) to book lunch.

This course is designed for the gardener, grower or farmer who wants to find out more about the principles and practices of biodynamic systems in a simple and practical way. We shall cover the context of biodynamic systems and the Demeter regulations; how to carry out the practices of biodynamic systems, the use of the preparations and the calendar on both a practical and theoretical way. We shall look in-depth at how Preparations are made by working with local biodynamic practitioners who will give an insight in to the Preparations and their uses. The course will be held on a registered biodynamic farm and will enable you to carry out some basic biodynamic systems on your own land.

For more information or to book contact Rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk

Seeking replacements to keep the SWBD alive and thriving:

Membership Secretary of the SW Biodynamic Group:

from Derek Lapworth

I have been Membership Secretary for about 20 years, and feel that it is time to move on and let a more active person take over.

What is the (unpaid) task?

*To be interested in growing Biodynamically and in enabling others to develop their BD knowledge; *To attend some of the SWBD events (such as the Autumn and Spring Gatherings, Preparation making, talks and workshops planned by our group.
*Encourage any potential members of the group and update our list of (105) members.
*Attend occasional meetings of the SWBD Carrying Group (Chairperson, Treasurer, Newsletter preparer, general and website helper).

Sounds a lot, but for anyone interested in holding together and developing a community of interest in Biodynamic growing, it is a pleasure. I (Derek Lapworth) will assist whenever needed, but am also happy to hand over entirely. Phone me on 01364 644010 if you are interested.

Several people to take the SWBD Newsletter into the future:

from Val Collett

Although I formally stopped producing the quarterly newsletter in the summer, I find myself still doing it half a year later. I absolutely cannot continue, so say a final goodbye to that task but not, ever, to Biodynamics. To continue in some form or another, the newsletter needs the following people to undertake the following tasks (in addition to Hesther Somerville):

*Gathering together contributions from various local sources: could be several people,

*One person to type/layout the various contributions and pictures, to be printed on paper or website. (Late news: Many thanks to Jeremy Weiss for offering to do this)

*Consult with all involved in Newsletter preparation re suitability of content, bearing in mind its purpose is to raise awareness / educate local growers in Biodynamic growing locally.

Anyone interested can phone me, Val Collett, on 01392 811260 or email val@merrymeet.org.uk



