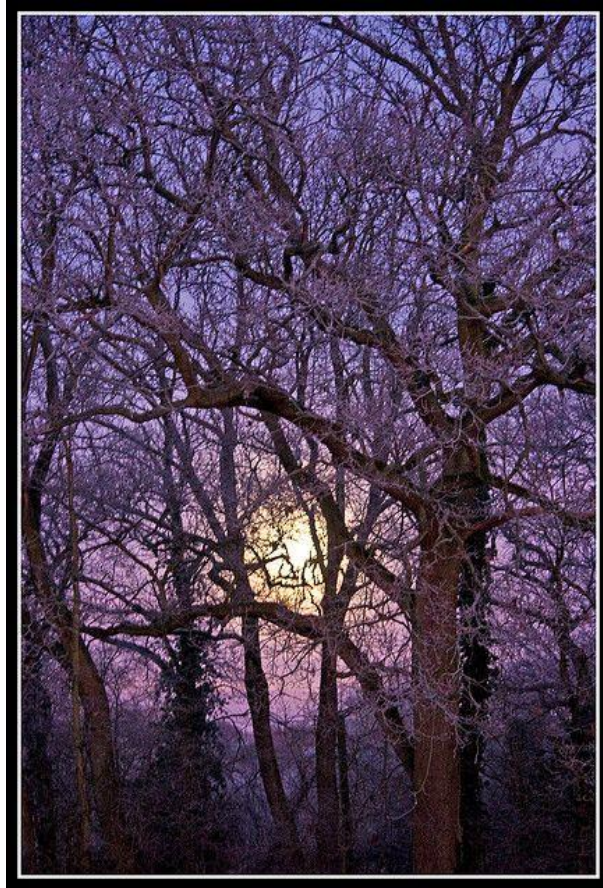


South West Biodynamic Winter Newsletter

Jan 2021



Winter Trees

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!

A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.

By William Carlos Williams

Editorial: I am assuming that if you are reading this newsletter, you are interested in sustainable agriculture and environmental practices. I am going to mention two campaigns which you might like to support.

The Landworkers Alliance is a UK organisation that is a union of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers with a mission to improve the livelihoods of our members and create a better food and land-use system for everyone. Many small Biodynamic and organic farmers and growers are members. They are currently running a campaign of solidarity and support for protesting farmers in India.

The farmers in India are protesting against three new laws affecting the Agriculture sector. The farmers believe that the laws will loosen government regulation and open the industry to market forces and take agriculture in India towards industrialisation. About 50% of families in India are dependant on farming. Our experience of this development model is that smaller farmers are squeezed off the land, intensification of production and use of chemicals and the growth of powerful market actors like supermarkets and large corporations

. For more detailed information see landworkersalliance.co.uk The UK government is implicit in promoting market reforms and providing expertise to the Indian Government to allow private investment and increase corporate control of the agriculture sector in India.

To help you can write to or email your MP to ask them to help Indian farmers in two ways:

- Revise the UK approach to aid to India, including the Conceptual Framework on Agriculture and the UK_India Infrastructure Technical Co-operation Facility which promotes contract farming and finances consultants to 'alleviate bottlenecks to private sector investment in agriculture'.

- Stop exports of pesticides banned in the UK to India and other countries including Paraquat which is responsible for many farmers' deaths in India – a situation so severe that doctors are demanding a ban in its usage. Bees and Pollinators:

Bees There are also many petitions to sign asking the UK Government to reverse its decision to allow a limited use of the previously banned neonicotinoid pesticides on sugar beet crops. To reduce the harm to bees and other pollinators they farmers have to apply further weed killer to stop wildflowers round the edges of the fields where sugar beet grows so as not to attract the pollinators to the fields.

Here are a couple of links to petitions, or you can write to George Eustace the Environment Minister to ask him to reverse the decision.

<https://www.change.org/p/uk-government-stop-the-uk-from-allowing-eu-banned-beekilling-pesticide-to-be-reintroduced>

<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/bee-killing-pesticides-comeback-george>

Diana White.

PS. Accidentally finding myself editor of this newsletter, I would welcome feedback as well as articles or information about your holding/garden connected with Biodynamics. The deadline date for articles, information is 8th April 2021 – dianawhite35@hotmail.com or phone 07747398839.01803 473551

Beetroot and Fennel Risotto

This is the dramatically red and delicious quick supper. Cooks in half an hour.

Serves 6

Ingredients:

8 oz/225g Arborio rice

3 oz/75g butter

3tbsp olive oil

1pt/ 600 ml good hot vegetable stock

1/4pt / 150 ml white wine

4 sticks celery sliced finely

Large onion, diced finely

1 Florence fennel, sliced

8oz/ 225g cooked beetroot

2oz / 50g freshly grated Parmesan

Chopped dill or fennel tops.



Method:

- 1) In a heavy pot, warm the olive oil and 1 oz /25g butter. Saute the onion, celery and fennel until translucent.
- 2) Add rice, some salt and pepper and stir in the wine. Bring to the boil, stirring, then gradually add stock gently stirring with the heat reduced, otherwise burning will occur. When rice and vegetables are tender (20-25 minutes) add the rest of the butter, then stir in the cooked and grated beetroot. Check the seasoning. Add chopped dill and serve topped with grated parmesan.

A salad of orange slices, chicory and watercress is a good accompaniment.

from the Biodynamic Food and Cookbook by Wendy Cook published by Clairview.

Editor's note: Whatever your views are on the current pandemic and how it is being handled, I hope we can all agree that good nutrition is of vital importance to maintain a strong immune system. Wendy's other book – 'Foodwise' Also published by Clairview Books is full of information about the importance of what we eat and how it is cooked.

News From Huxhams Cross Farm.

Autumn started off wet to say the least, with October being one of the wettest on record this year. It dried up a bit in November and December, but in general the season has been damp, which has meant lots of fun in the mud, especially as it is root-picking season! There have been a few glimpses of sun peeking through the clouds though to keep us going...

October saw the a changing of the guard with regards to our apprentices, so we were sad to say good bye to our old batch (although Rachel has stayed with us) but very happy at the same time to welcome our new team - Steph, Mark and Dan. They have been settling in nicely over the last few months, learning the ropes and getting stuck into all the jobs which contribute to the running of the farm.

The yearly root pick has been in full flow again this year, with carrots, parsnips, beetroot and celeriac on rotation on our veg rounds through Autumn. We've also been treating our customers to plenty of healthy greens, with our poly-tunnels full of salad and mustard leaves, and the fields cropping all types of brassicas.

We have prepared and buried three Biodynamic Preparations for Autumn - 500, 503 and 506, so that they can spend the winter underground ready for use in the Spring. Our apprentices were able to take part in this process and get their first taster of the preparations and Biodynamic methods.



Our two beloved resident cows Damson and Daffodil have been receiving some TLC recently. They have completed two moves between our wetland meadow pastures in the last few months to give them fresh grass to graze on and the ground a chance to recover; and they are also being built a brand new cowshed attached to the back of the pack-house, where they will be moved shortly to keep them warm over the winter months. We've been slowly introducing some hay and straw, into their diets in preparation and they seem to be taking to it quite nicely so far in the speed at which they come to fetch it is anything to go by!

Unfortunately the chickens have not been having such a good time of late, with the unexpected Avian flu outbreak making life difficult for us and them! Luckily none of our hens have contracted the disease, but with the nationwide restrictions in place it has been necessary to cover them up for a few weeks. Some nimble planning and quick application

has led to new net cover over the coups, allowing a limited freedom to roam whilst protecting them from contact with the outside world and potential infection.



Our Dartington Mill project has also been making some major steps through the Autumn, with the branding and packaging receiving some final adjustments before “going live”. We are very excited about what this project can achieve, and have been working closely with our other partners in bringing it to life. We hope to have our new website up and running soon so that we can start selling to the local community and beyond - watch this space!

Finally Christmas was a busy time as usual, with the extra markets and pre-Christmas rush to contend with. We were very pleased to attend three markets in the build up - our usual Friday slot at Totnes, as well as the new Farmer’s Market at Dartington Hall, and finally the Totnes Good Food Market on the Sunday. There was a buzz in the air and it was great to get in the Christmas spirit whilst helping to ensure everyone was sufficiently topped up for veg before their Christmas celebrations.

News from Apricot Centre Wellbeing Service.

The Well-being Service at the Huxhams Cross Farm is as busy as ever as we continue to support Looked After Children and their families through our mental health service. We have seen an increasing number of families being referred to us over Covid 19 and are in the swing of providing face to face and online support to them.

The Apricot Centre was awarded funding from The National Lottery Awards for All for our Free - Woodland Wellbeing Project which helps adopted and looked after young people and their families affected by stress, anxiety and mental health issues due to being adopted or looked after, by actively encouraging them to reconnect with nature, find their voice, rediscover the art of play and become a part of a community of like-minded people.

We have also been awarded a grant from Imagine This Partnership for our Free – **Woodland Wellbeing Root to Rise Project** using the Orchards at Lupton House we will use nature connection activities and therapeutic support to help prevent suicide in young people by helping bring people together and build strong relationships and mental wellbeing support through a range of therapeutic and nature based activities.

Finally we have been awarded a grant to run 4 sessions in March to work with young people who are part of the LGBTQI+ community in the Orchards at Lupton House, this series of workshops uses nature based activities and therapeutic support.

Our Farm Club for Home Education Families will hopefully start again in the Spring both for home education families and Dartington Primary School, connecting children with

nature, food and the farm. Children are encouraged to develop a passion for the environment through farm and woodland based activities including how to look after cows and chickens, the wildlife on a farm and about planting and harvesting fruit and vegetables

Training

We are taking booking for our new courses Introduction to Agroforestry, Introduction to Biodynamics and Economics of Permaculture now, for more information visit www.apricotcentre.co.uk/trainingcourses

We are very excited about the new year ahead with lots of new developments and we very much look forward to a time when we can gather again for stirrings and preparations and socials please keep in touch via Facebook, Instagram and our Website www.apricotcentre.co.uk

If you are interested in any of the training courses or the wellbeing activities please contact rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk

Three Kings Stirring

Following the 1945 nuclear bombings, German biodynamic farmer, Hugo Erbe, developed the Three Kings Preparation as offerings to elemental forces to enable plants to root, sprout and blossom

Tobias Goulden organised a stirring on Three Kings Day, 6th January. Unfortunately it had to be cancelled due to the current Lockdown restrictions. However, thanks to the efforts of Selby Thomas, several people did individual stirrings in their own gardens or holdings. If they had expressed a wish to do so, a little package appeared in their doorsteps in the morning of the 6th, with a small pot of potentised gold, frankincense and myrrh and an instruction sheet. People then stirred for an hour in their individual households.

The boundaries of gardens and parks were sprayed in Totnes, Landscope, Buckfastleigh, including the farm at Hapstead and the Christian Community and St Mary's Church in Torquay.

These pockets sprayed will hopefully radiate beyond their boundaries into the world.

The Three Kings stirring ends the 12 days of Christmas. During these days, the earth stands still. After the winter solstice the sunrise still comes later every morning but the sunset in a little later in the afternoon, so in effect the hours of daylight are the same length until the 6th of January. The days start to lengthen at both ends. It is the beginning of the end of winter- The Three Kings Stirring is a wonderful way to celebrate this event as a gift and blessing for the land.



Hapstead Farm C.I.C

I feel very honoured to have been given the opportunity to take on the tenancy at Hapstead Farm. It is 60 acres of mixed biodynamic/organic land. Since last May, together with Jo Clark (On The Hill) and Mike Rees Lee (Head Teacher of The Wildings School), I have set up Hapstead Farm Community Interest Company (C.I.C.). It is Alternative Provision (AP) to provide children/adults, who may experience barriers to learning and mental health issues, with the opportunity to take a major role in the activities associated with running a mixed biodynamic/ organic farm, and associated traditional rural skills. The land based experiential learning, supports the development of personal resilience, independence, teamwork, and citizenship, as well as a deeper connection with and responsibility for nature and the biodiversity of the planet.

So far we have a small herd of North Devon Cattle, a small flock of Shetland Sheep, nine Saddleback Pigs, and two horses. The farm is now in conversion to organic /biodynamic, and should be Demeter certified in three years.

We are now looking to work with people who have expertise in some of the following areas: equine therapy, draft horses, vegetable production, traditional crafts, social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs of children, and accounting. So please contact me if you are interested in getting involved and can offer time to support and shape the development of this initiative. This could be from as little as a few hours a month to a more substantial commitment depending on what you can manage. Please get in touch for an initial chat either by email or on the number below.

An exciting development last half term saw a group of home-schooled children attend the farm every Friday. The day was split into three main parts: doing the daily chores -bedding and feeding of the animals etc.; then working on a group project such as making wooden saw horses; and finally on an individual project such as mallet making. This is set to continue, once the present lockdown restrictions have lifted.

The current challenge is how to meet the financial set up costs of the farm. As well as the gofundme (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/hapstead-farm-experiential>) we are applying to 'Awards for All' and some local charities.

I would just like to add that I wouldn't have got this far without the help and support of many people who have been extremely generous with offering their time/money and helping in numerous other ways. I feel very determined that Hapstead Farm becomes a place not only producing high quality biodynamic food for the local community, and where the animals' welfare and destiny are held in high esteem, but also a place where people can work in an environment that places individual freedom and knowledge at its heart.

Tobias Goulden, January 2021.

Tel: 07593381593

Email:tobiasgoulden@yahoo.co.uk

From Buckyette with high hopes for the future

As spring bulbs brave midwinter and my marigolds forge on courageously (they have been flowering since June!) it seems more crucial than ever to remind oneself never to take anything for granted, especially after the year we have all had in which our 'normal' lives have been shaken up for sure.

Whilst not the easiest of times, I can't help thinking that this 'freeing up of normality' gives us a unique opportunity to appreciate the things that matter to us most and ask ourselves 'where now?' For me this question always finds its way to the land beneath our feet and our innate need for a sense of connection to place. We are expecting a baby in February and so this question seems more poignant than ever.

What kind of a world do we want our daughter/son to grow up in? Where do we want to be? How can we give this child the best start? So I think of my early childhood in which my happiest memories are of living out long glorious summers in our wonderful garden on the south downs of the Isle of Wight. I returned in October for a brief visit and was reminded just how blessed we were to grow up in this sleepy town of Ventnor where the mostly Victorian buildings gently sag and slip their way towards the sea on a bed of clay.

It is a place with a microclimate of its own, where sub-tropical species flourish and nature accommodates human as a guest rather than the other way around. As children we felt safe and free to explore in this place called home, nestled between land and sea. My parents made sure we grew up in beauty, with a strong sense of connection to our environment and that is what we will aim to do for our little one.

All this forces me to ask myself "So what of the children who have had this denied to them?" Those fleeing as refugees, those who live in broken homes, those who have to travel miles each day to collect water (which is often not safe to drink), those who are forced to work as manual labourers to help feed their families, those who with their families are forced off ancestral lands by corrupt logging companies. I could of course go on and it is so easy to feel helpless in the face of the global picture but it does help us to see how incredibly fortunate we are here in the south west of England.

Obviously there are no easy answers to these global questions, indeed the problems can seem insurmountable but I hope that by fostering our own relationship to the land where we live we can in some small way contribute to an emergence of a new Garden of Eden where everyone has a place.

Melissa Milne.



Candlemas

The next marker in the seasons is Candlemas on 2nd February, half way between the Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. It is the point when minerals and trace elements that have been drawn deep into the soil during winter start to rise up in the soil as planting time approaches.

In the Celtic tradition, the 2nd of February is known as Imbolc (translated - “ewe’s milk”, as the time the ewe’s udders would begin to swell.) and is a festival celebrating the Divine feminine potential of the earth quickening through the spring. The Trinity of the Celtic goddess Brigid (Brigid the virgin, Brigid the mother, and Brigid the krone) is honoured at this time, with emphasis on the Mother.

In pre-Christian times it was also known as the ‘Feast of Lights’ as the sun starts to strengthen.

Snowdrops are usually abundant at this time and are suggestive of candles, poking through frosty and snowy ground.

Traditionally the weather on 2nd February is important –

‘If Candlemas Day be clear and bright
Winter will take another flight.
If Candlemas Day be cloud and rain
Winter is gone and will not come again’

Also

‘Candlemas Day stick beans in the clay
Throw candle and candlestick right away’.

‘A farmer should have on Candlemas Day
Half his corn and half his hay’.

During this time when normal life has all but stopped and our own lives are restricted in varying degrees, you may wish to do something to quietly mark this special day. One tradition is to dig a small hole in the garden and place a candle, in it to symbolically help the earth warm up. Some people melt wax and pour it into the hole in the earth with a wick.



Biodynamic Produce for Sale

GREENLIFE SHOP, TOTNES. 01803 866738. Some Demeter products, Biodynamically grown vegetables in season and Seed Cooperative organic open pollinated seeds.

TEIGN GREENS, OXEN PARK FARM, Lower Ashton, EXETER, EX6 7QW – in conversion to BD. Contact Tim Dickens for availability of produce. www.teingngreens.co.uk

VEGETABLES FROM HUXHAMS CROSS FARM: We deliver weekly vegetable bags or boxes. The boxes contain Huxhams Cross Farm own produce as well as several small BD and organic growers who will be providing vegetables at certain times of the year. We can add eggs, fruit and water. You can order online at www.apricotcentre.co.uk.

Enquiries to Bob Mehew: 07507 841 158 or bob.mehew@apricotcentre.co.uk

FRUIT CORDIALS from CHAPEL STORES. We buy in or pick fruit from biodynamic growers wherever possible. We also use some fruit from other sources, all free from pesticides, and some picked from hedgerows away from main roads. Only apple juice and apple concentrate (all organic) are added to the fruit. A small amount of lemon juice is added to the elderberry and sloe juices. The concentration is approximately 7:1 when water is added.

Sloe Elixir and Elderberry Elixir made with honey and herbs £6 a 330ml bottle.

Elderberry: Elderberry is well known for its antiviral properties. It is commonly used in a combination with vitamin C to treat respiratory illnesses like the common cold and flu. It is best used as a prophylactic to help prevent illness, not necessarily to be taken during illness.

Sloe (Blackthorn) : Sloe is the 'king of the fruits'. It is rich in vitamin C, potassium, calcium and magnesium. It can help with digestion and breathing disorders

Rosehips: These are traditionally used for their anti-inflammatory and pain releasing properties but are also thought to be helpful with heart conditions by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure.

PRICES – 2020 All bottles are 500ml unless stated otherwise

Elderberry £5	Blackcurrant £6	Bullace £5	Sloe (330ml) £6
Rosehip £5	Mixed Wild Fruits £6		
Redcurrant and Raspberry £5	Elderberry with Star Anise. 330ml - High concentration £6		
Blackberry £5	Plum £5.		

For further information and orders please contact: Derek Lapworth, 10 Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0AB Tel: 01364 644010. Email: dereklapworth@mailfence.com.

South West Biodynamic Group

The South Devon Biodynamic Group's purpose is to inform those interested in BD methods of gardening and farming of what is happening in the area. As a member you receive

- A quarterly newsletters and seasonal gatherings where we make the biodynamic preparations. These are then made available to members free of charge.
- A library of Biodynamic books kept at The Apricot Centre.

We charge an annual subscription of £15 per person and £20 for a couple. We offer a concession of £10 a year if needed.

Preparations are available from Velwell Orchard. Please contact Jeremy Weiss 07962 432317, velwellorchard@yahoo.co.uk

If you wish to join, please contact Diana White (Treasurer) at dianawhite35@hotmail.com or phone 01803 473551

southwestbiodynamicgroup.org

