

South Devon Biodynamic Group Newsletter

Autumn 2021



APPLE PICKING – an extract

BY ROBERT FROST

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through
a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking
trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well

Upon my way to sleep before it fell

And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.

SOUTHWEST BIODYNAMIC GROUP NEWS.

We held our AGM on 25th July at the Apricot Centre. It was great to meet other members in person again. The main subject of discussion was how we make the preparations. Since the pandemic and lockdowns, we have not had our seasonal gatherings where we would often make the preparations. This kept the membership supplied. However, since we now have a farm in the area which has now expanded to 100 acres that need spraying and a large amount of compost we were running short of some preparations.

A condition of membership of the group is that you receive preparations as part of your subscription. As Huxhams Cross Farm is the largest BD holding in the area they use the most preparations. The outcome of the meeting was a survey of members' use of preparations (thank you to those who responded) and further email discussions and suggestions. It has been decided that Marina will make the preparations during her normal working times at Huxhams Cross Farm.. She will publicise when she will be doing it and hopefully some members can come and help.

This does not, of course, stop others making preparations if they want to. If you feel the urge and want some help, please let either myself or Ros Bourne know so that we can circulate information about the event..

The preparations will be stored at Whites Farm, Lower Dean, Buckfastleigh.. The contact person will be Mark Gordine, the new gardener there. We will circulate the contact details soon.

If any one wishes to be part of the SWBD group 'core' group which meets occasionally to plan gatherings and where best we can put our support, again please contact either myself or Ros.

Education and training seems to be the theme of the contributions to the newsletter we have had this month.

As well as the exciting news of the Regenerative School of Land Based Systems at Huxhams Cross Farm and the setting up of the Goethean Science Project at White Farm we have had the offer from Daniel and Mary Sutherland to use their land at Craxon Combe as a training resource. .

Daniel. knows about Dutch *biodynamic theory and practice*, having studied environmental science, ecology and economics. He retired from local government, land-use planning and *voluntary landscape projects for Devon Schools*, etc. He and his wife Mary moved to Craxon Combe in Diptford in 1968. As well as rebuilding the old farmhouse they have revitalised the land using Daniel's knowledge of scientific concepts in energy flow for soil, water and wildlife conservation to suit that particular spot. If anyone would like to visit or discuss the idea further please contact Daniel on 01548 821379 or djjsutherland@craxon.plus.com

Diana White – dianawhite35@hotmail.com or 07747 398 839

Ros Bourne – bournegoodban@gmail.com

South Devon Land Trust.

Some of you may have lived long enough in this area to remember the setting up of The South Devon Land Trust in 1995. It was primarily formed to purchase one piece of land to support one particular grower, who rented it back from the Trust with the proviso that the land, had to be managed using Biodynamic methods.

Due to changing circumstances the Trustees agreed to sell the land to its current tenant. That piece of land will still be used biodynamically. The Trustees have decided to use the money to offer small loans and grants to Biodynamic projects. They welcome applications which could be to help someone starting out to purchase tools and equipment or attend a training course.

If you think that this might be helpful to you, please email Derek Lapworth at dereklapworth@gmail.com for an application form.

NEWS FROM HUXHAMS CROSS FARM.

The abundance of late summer is upon us and at the farm we are wallowing in a glut of produce. Over the last few weeks our market stall has been packed to bursting with a variety of fresh biodynamic vegetables. It has been a difficult year for some aspects of growing, particularly the soft fruit. However, nature is a master of balance and where some have been struggling others have been thriving- our flowers are running rampant and wild! It has been such a good year for them; we have started collecting statice, ageratum, cornflower, flax, verbenas bonariensis, meadowsweet and straw flowers for drying. In a few weeks we will also harvest the nigella, poppy and sedum seed heads.



In other flour news, the YQ population wheat has been harvested and is ready for cleaning and our Devon Landrace is lined up to be milled soon. Both these grains grew in Broadlears agroforestry field in Dartington this year and provide freshly milled local flour for bread making and all-purpose use. The buckwheat grown on the farm will also soon be ready for the harvest. We are hoping its quality will be good enough to produce a local buckwheat flour.

We are currently in the full thicket of our onion harvest. 21,000 onions are ready to be pulled from the soil and dried for our winter stores. The first of the squash were harvested this week- little round orange sunspots that are perfect for stuffing. The rest of our beautifully ripening squashes will be harvested at the end of September and stored as additions to the winter veg bags. This year we are growing Butternut, Crown Prince, Celebration, Amoro and Sweet Dumpling cultivars.



We've been biodynamically busy over the last few months spreading horn manure on Broadleaves, making and burying nettle preps and collecting yarrow, chamomile and valerian to dry ready for the preparations. We are also on the hunt for more skulls! Joe from On The Hill kindly donated us a sheep's skull and we are hoping to acquire a deer skull from them soon. If anyone has any leads on a cow skull it would be much appreciated (note: There are laws on cow skull usage related to animal age and TB/BSE).



Regenerative School of Land Based Systems

The Apricot Centre carried out a feasibility study between January - April 2021 to assess the potential for a Regenerative Land School that was funded by DEF. The results showed that in order to increase the amount of regenerative farming in Devon and support the aim of 30% of land being for Nature by 2030 a comprehensive training in Regenerative Land Based Systems levels 3 and 4 certified by Ofqual was needed.

Why is this school needed?

More Skilled practitioners in the regenerative land/food systems are needed to support a transition into regenerative models of food production and land use at all scales in Devon. This is needed to offset biodiversity loss, and reduce net carbon emissions to zero in the next 10-20 years. It will also support farms, food producers and land based businesses to adapt to climate change whilst still producing the good quality produce for which Devon is renowned. Regenerative agriculture systems frequently shorten the route of produce to market, and this improves economic viability. It creates a circular food/ produce economy.

The Regenerative School of Land based Systems offers a unique learning experience, drawing on the huge level of expertise and practice in the region, whilst combining placement training with establish farms such as Shillingfords Organics, The Apricot Centre, Baddaford Farm (Guy Watson), Higher Hacknell, Challocombe as well as new and up and coming farms.

The Aim of the school is to :-

- Train and support existing farmers, growers and land based businesses to convert to regenerative land systems,
- Grow the next generation of Regenerative farmers growers and, land based business owners

and , foresters

-Develop a distributed collaborative learning network bringing together organisations with similar aims and pushing a central agenda, landowners,farms and leading practitioners in regenerative agriculture, forestry, land based business, rewilding and conservation.

Through the school we aim to help conserve and restore Devon's diverse natural habitats and sequester carbon – via initiatives such as regenerative agriculture, agroforestry, rewilding, tree planting, holistic grazing, reducing food waste and water management, as well as its aiming to support projects that share learnings and best practice to replicate their successes and scale their positive impact to other areas, to maximise the benefits to nature.

The Traineeship includes : -

Running January 2022- January 2023 we are offering 20 placements for 19+ (No upper age limit)

- Free Level 3 training in Regenerative Land Based Systems including Permaculture (Permaculture Association Certificate), Biodynamics, Agroforestry, Water Management 1 day a week at the Apricot Centre and 4 days per week placement.
- £100 training allowance per week
- 1 food bag/box
- Some placements have accommodation

If you are interested in hosting a placement and you are in the Devon area or you are interested in being a trainee please contact Rachel Phillips rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk

Adult Education Training

We are taking booking for our new courses Introduction to Agroforestry, Introduction to Biodynamics and Economics of Permaculture, for more information visit

www.apricotcentre.co.uk/trainingcourses

Wellbeing Service

The Apricot Centre Wellbeing Service has been busy this summer with our Creative Roots and Root and Rise projects for young people who are adopted or look after being fully booked for all sessions. Young people have enjoyed whittling, crafting, growing, cooking and eating activities on the farm.

We have also taken part in the local council Holiday Activities Fund Scheme, helping to feed young people during the school holiday with produce from the farm and Food in the Community. We worked alongside LifeWorks for their holiday activities. Children learnt how to cook veggie curries and risottos as well as kebabs and stir fries. We even managed to entice the young people who absolutely DO NOT LIKE VEGETABLES to have a bowl...or two!

The Wellbeing Therapeutic Service has gone through the OFSTED registration process and have been successful in obtaining out OFSTED status this year which we are incredibly proud of and thank all those who have worked incredibly hard at developing the service to be of the high standard it is today. We are working with 80 + young people and their families offering a range of therapeutic support from assessments, psychotherapy, family therapy and creative therapies to name a few.

We have also welcomed a new Service Lead Caron Parke who we know will continue to develop the service with Mark. If you would like to discuss any wellbeing activities please contact us on wellbeing@apricotcentre.co.uk

Please keep in touch via Facebook, Instagram and our website - www.apricotcentre.co.uk

Goethean Science Project at Whites Farm

The summer brought a stream of interested visitors and volunteers. The clearing of the land has continued and one of the large polytunnels has been transformed (the roof is re-covered and the walls are being washed clean of the grime and algae). The repair of the Field Kitchen has begun in earnest with the roof secured, a soakaway dug for the waste water and plans for the bread oven are now in action (thanks to a generous donation for this purpose).

Both the Field Kitchen and the large polytunnel are now workable venues for events and groups. We have welcomed an established home-education study group (The Circle) which is based on the site from September. We have had our first talk (Tobias Kay presented his perceptions on working with the Etheric realm) and there was a presentation on September 24th by a visiting guest speaker, Peter Taylor. Peter is a scientist and environmentalist with a rich and fascinating biography. He is an experienced researcher into the spiritual realms as well the physical world. He presents a deeper more comprehensive picture to understanding the climate than that presented by mainstream thinking.

Funding has been offered for a part-time Biodynamic gardener and we anticipate that this position will begin in October. We are looking forward to celebrating Michaelmas on Wednesday 29th September, and a community Apple Day in October (date to be determined by the apple harvest). Please contact alasdair@ignitingflames.com or ring 07826854826 if you are interested in being involved.



Dates for your Diary

Two linked workshops at Cholwell Farm Lower Velwell Dartington, TQ9 6AD

Saturday 16th October 2021: Seasonal Wreath making workshop with Christine Walton at Cholwell Farm, 2-4 pm. Come and make a seasonal wreath. Materials will be provided. Wreaths are to be used as decoration for the shared lunch at the preparation workshop on 17th October (see below).

You will be able to take your wreath home on Sunday. The base of the wreath can be used again with different foliage etc for Christmas.

Sunday 17th October 2021 at Cholwell Farm, (see above) a **Compost preparation workshop** 10am -4 pm. Bring some food to share for lunch. You can drop in and out during the day. There is shelter if wet.

Parking at Cholwell - there is reasonable space to park at Cholwell Farm. Please do not park on the road.



Pumpkin, Chestnut and Porcini Croustade (Oat and Cheese Herb Topping)

From The Biodynamic Food and Cookbook by Wendy Cook. Published by Clairview

Ingredients: Serves 6

Topping:

4 oz /100g oat flakes

3 oz /75g fresh breadcrumbs

1 tbsp finelychopped herbs (sage, rosemary, thyme or provencal dried herb mix)

3 oz /75g grated emmental cheese (optional)

Salt and pepper

1 tsp paprika

3 oz /75g melted butter

Filling

1 ½ lb /500g of peeled sliced pumpkin (choose a variety with sweet dense flesh such as 'Hubbard' or 'Crown Prince')

2 large onions sliced finely

6 cloves of roasted garlic (it's good to roast several heads of garlic with oil, salt and rosemary when you have the oven on and then to hand)

Cerariac –small cubes (or 2 celery sticks)

2 oz/ 50g dried porcini (wild mushrooms washed carefully and soaked in boiling water for ½ hour

½ tsp cinnamon

½ teaspoon grated nutmeg

4 oz /100g dried chestnuts (soak in boiling water for 1 hour or so and cook separated with a little salt for ½ hour

Olive oil and butter for sautéing

Method:

To make the topping – Mix all the dry ingredients, melt the butter and pour over dry ingredients.

Work it through with fingertips/

To make the Filling –

1. Using a large heavy bottomed pot, sauté the onions in a mixture of olive oil and butter with a pinch of salt. Add garlic and sliced pumpkin, chestnuts, soaked porcini and celariac.
2. Add 1pt/20fl oz of stock and the strained porcini water, being careful not to include the grit! may need a little more stock later on. Bring to the boil.
3. Turn down the heat to minimum and allow to simmer for ¾ hour or until vegetables are tender. The stock should be absorbed and the vegetables dense. Adjust seasoning. It should have a hint of spice.
4. Fill an oven proof dish with the pumpkin mixture, top with a coating of the topping, dot with butter. Bake in the oven at 180°C/gas mark 4 until golden – about ½ hour.



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.teigngreens.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, flour 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

Hapstead Farm Meat:

All produce from animals that are managed according to high welfare, organic, biodynamic regenerative farming principles. Contact Tobias Goulden about what is available. - Email: tobiasgoulden@yahoo.co.uk.

FRUIT JUICE CORDIALS for SALE

Rosehip, blackcurrant, elderberry, mixed fruit, bullace and sour cherry.

All in 555ml bottles, concentrated 7-1 and made with apple juice and concentrated apple juice. Prices £5 and £6.

Elderberry Elixir and Sloe Elixir, with apple; honey, star anise, ginger, cinnamon and cloves. Both at £5 for a 330ml bottle.

Contact Derek Lapworth on 01364 64401

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. Sort Code 20-60-88 Acc. No. 13509680

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 or 07747 398 839

southwestbiodynamicgroup.org