

SOUTH WEST BIODYNAMIC GROUP

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2024



Fall, Leaves, Fall

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

Emily Brontë

Date for Diary:

Three Kings Stirring on the Sunday 5th Jan 2025. This is when we stir gold frankincense and myrrh and spray in round the boundaries of the land. More details on times etc to follow.



Autumn Gathering 2024

On Sunday 22 September, the equinox, members of the group gathered at Whites Farm in Dean Prior to progress the making of the compost preparations.

It was a wet and stormy day, so any forays into the orchard to bury or dig up some more cow horn stuffed with manure from Tobias Goulden's cows.

Mesentery was sewn into a bag and stuffed with dandelion heads, dried and stored by a few of the group over the summer.

The stag's bladder full of yarrow hung in a tree in the Spring was taken down and buried in the orchard to be dug up next Spring.



Chamomile was put into intestines and buried, wrapped in chicken wire to keep animals out

Selby shared a summary of a talk given by Manfred Klett on The Biodynamic Preparations as Sense Organs which is printed later in to newsletters.

After a delicious and varied shared lunch we held an AGM

Southwest Biodynamic Group AGM – Diana White

We opened with the Social Ethic by Rudolf Steiner "The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the community, the virtue of each one is living."

I took notes during the meeting, and will give a summary here. Full minutes will be published in the next newsletter but there are some things that would be good to share and invite feedback.

We started with a tribute and a minutes silence to remember **Marina O'Connell**

It was with great sadness we heard of the death of Marina O'Connell, the farmer at Huxhams Cross Farm on September 9th.

When land on the Dartington Estate came up for sale a group of people from the local Biodynamic Group put out feelers to the Biodynamic Land Trust Ltd to purchase it and to find a biodynamically trained farmer. Marina had worked in this area in the past and Wendy Cook had kept in touch with her. She had settled in Essex with husband Mark, a therapist and started the Apricot Centre there which was a smaller version of the model they brought to the land at Huxhams Cross in 2015 – combining therapy aided by nature, the healing process of working on the land with regenerative farming.

For a full account of her life and work, look at the Apricot Centre website and the BDUK website. Suffice for us to say that she will be greatly missed.

Accounts: On 28th Feb 2024 we had £1,348.42 in the bank. This looks very healthy, but it was because our account was used for the Are Thorensen Conference in March 2024 and £1,080 was fees for this. The expenditure had not yet taken place!

We did however get to keep a share of the small profit that the conference generated. This will show up in next year's accounts.

Also in this financial year The South Devon Land Trust has been wound up and the remaining £900 in its account has been entrusted to our group. To keep this separate I have opened a savings account. Then we had a huge surprise – a bequest from Helen Dolby, a member of the group that died earlier this year. She left us £10,000. This has gone straight into the savings account.

Previously the accounts were very simple – subscriptions in, cost of newsletter and ingredients for preparations out. Sometimes small surpluses were given to people to enable them to attend conferences or workshops, Now it is very different. There were ideas expressed at the AGM of what to do with the money.

These were: Host an Ian Bailey, the astronomer, lecture and workshop.

Workshop with Susan Raven on Nature Spirits and Elemental Beings
Polytunnel cover for Whites Farm

Consider what areas Helen would like us to use it for – she was very interested in the Hiram Trust which promotes rural skills and these are very closely linked to Biodynamics.

We don't need to be in a hurry to spend it!

Any other ideas most welcome!

I asked for volunteers to form a group as I didn't want to have to make decisions on grant making alone. Ros Maynard, Kit Buckley and Selby came forward.

If you would like to request a grant for a biodynamic project, towards training, anything connected with biodynamics that would be considered 'seed money', please get in touch with me, Diana White dianawhite35@hotmail.com or 07747 398839 and I will take it to the group.

Appreciation was expressed for the continuing work of Ros Bourne, who despite moving to Aberdeen, still keeps our mailing lists up to date and send out group messages.

We finished with the verse - by Rudolf Steiner

The stars spake once to Man,
It is world destiny
That They are silent now.
To be aware of the silence
Can become pain for earthly Man.

But in the deepening silence
There grows and ripens
What Man speaks to the stars
To be aware of the speaking
Can become strength for Spirit Man

Below is a very personal response to our meeting:

An imagination

I see within the living vital force of my heart, an imagination. Which a community of hearts has the potential to unfold.

This arose from years of struggle with my own demons, in how to bear these without giving up, and yet continue to participate within our local biodynamic community. ... And through the "when two or more are gathered" experience of a recent conversation, my own destiny task, I am most grateful to say, was clarified.

Advocacy

Thereby, initiating at the south west biodynamic group's autumn gathering, advocacy for a potential willingness that all gathered could be offered the space to hear and be heard. To participate.

In Freedom

The suggestion to use a "talking stick" was immediately and warmly asked from my hand! And in this way, the smooth round pebble was passed, when needed, from hand to hand.

I offer in this, to pass, in spirit and materially, if you wish to take this beingness into your own groups, gatherings and communities, a development task. In this way, perhaps our voices may become living prayers. Through our purposefulness. A purposefulness enabling the fullest participation of all. For all. To choose, only in freedom, to make decisions. To form, co-creatively, agreements. So that the gifts of wisdom, our otherwise perhaps excluded elders can offer us, can be received as seeds we can each grow into living realities. So the gifts from the spiritual world, of the vital presence of children, can unfold in our midst. Perhaps through challenging us in such a way! So that mothers, perhaps, if we choose this, will be welcomed. I say this, because my response in a recent gathering, to a question about whether children could be embraced in our next gathering, was to say yes. I give my apology for this now. For attempting to make a decision, so unconsciously, on behalf of the group! Without seeking other's agreement. Inviting conversation. Learning to grow. I offer this, with the necessary trust that is needed for the unknown to unfurl, so that other marginalised, often excluded or self-excluding persons can be welcomed into and with the future of our communities. And yes, of course, in some communities, this happens already. Blessed be! With my humble thanks for being accepted by those around me, so warmly. For the acceptance and development of this development task.

Would others like to occasionally gather, in supporting another development task, for how together we might prepare for festival gatherings and prep making, stirrings? Supporting our love for soul and soil. And how we live this into communities and futures.

I welcome you! And feedback!

With love, Sarah

01364 631102 walkingtotherivertoswim@protonmail.com

Sustainable Food Accessibility (Using Buckfastleigh as an example.)

– Solving the Hungry Gap Problem

In Buckfastleigh we are very fortunate to have a very popular and busy wholefood shop 'The Seed' which also sells organic fruit and vegetables. We also have the Doe and the Moor Imagination Collective centre which have opened mainly organic cafés.

Organic vegetable growers abound in the area and one could list ten growers within a five mile radius. Many use biodynamic methods but do not have the official Demeter symbol. Apricot Farm is the only one in the district who are certified.

However, there is still the problem with the hungry gap approximately between March and mid-May. Riverford Farm fills the gap for many sales outlets with imported fruit and vegetables. This is neither ideal nor reliable into the future. There could be other solutions.

- 1) Produce more of the crops possible to fill the hungry gap. This would mean that people may have to give up year round tomatoes, peppers and salad products, certain fruits and be prepared to eat lambs lettuce, kale, bamboo shoots, asparagus. Solomon seal, purple sprouting broccoli and of course root vegetables. There may be certain items for foraging.
- 2) Improved storage for fruit and vegetables. a) A traditional and now lesser used methods of storing root vegetables in boxes with sand and ash.
b) Keeping these root of crops as well as leeks in the ground and covering with straw can extend their life for many weeks. Use of biodynamic methods has considerable benefits by strengthening the life forces of the plants they keep longer, especially if picked on the appropriate days.
- 3) Preservation methods: There are many ways to preserve fruits and vegetables, such as bottling, pickling, drying, use of salt and freezing.

How to Further Develop these Ideas:

All the ideas suggested can of course be put into practice by growers in their crop management and by households with storage and preserving.

It would be useful to stimulate the practice of these methods by holding some workshops on different aspects. There are various venues for such workshops.

Please let me know if you are interested in running a workshop and I would help to organise.

If a suitable building could be found for rent then storage and preservation could be done on a larger scale for the benefit of local shops and cafes as well as households. Possibilities for financing such an initiative already exist so I am hopeful a place will become available. Such a building might also provide storage facilities for wholefoods in bulk quantities which would help lower prices for small businesses.

Please let me know if you have any thoughts of these ideas.

Derek Lapworth, dereklapworth@gmail.com or 07747 120 669

The Biodynamic Preparations as Sense Organs

A report of a talk by Manfred Klett At Emerson College, Sussex. 4 – 7 th January 1994 edited by Selby

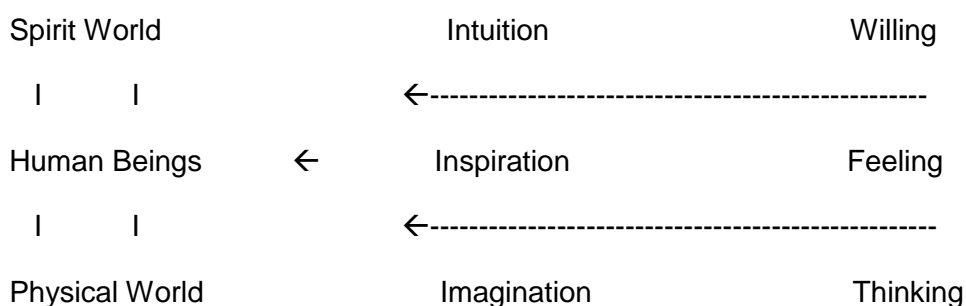
What are the realities of the preparations ?

We only know ourselves as reality and should therefore take ourselves as the starting point.

We, as human beings, live between or in two worlds, i.e. the physical and the spiritual world. We live as feeling beings through inspiration. In the physical world we are touching on reality through our thinking – through imagination. In the spiritual world through willingness – through intuition.

In our day and age we are experiencing that we are less and less in touch with our thinking , feeling and willing - that our thinking and feeling and willing our breaking apart more and more.

The interaction between spiritual and physical world can bring healing about



When we work with the preparations we school our thinking, feeling and willing. We combine intuition with the most practical.

The preparations cannot be found in Nature; they are not part of the wisdom of Nature. They belong in the spirit world.

1. *Studying the preparations*

Before we make the preparations we first have to study what Rudolf Steiner said about them. We have to study the *Agriculture* course word for word and think how the sentences were put together; "Dandelion is a messenger of Heaven": it is a phenomenon of the spirit world. One has to think beyond this world and build up an inner picture.

2. *Collecting the flowers*

When we go out to collect the flowers we have to feel the mood of the pasture and think about the plant throughout the year and study the plant – the roots, how the leaves are shaped etc.

3. *Preparing the preparations*

We do this out of Freedom. It is a free deed. We also take the plant beyond its natural destiny. It is not going to bear fruit or produce seed any more.

The sheaths we use i.e. the skull, stags bladder, intestines etc are the sense organs which transmit the cosmic and spiritual forces to the substance within.

4. *Burying the preparations*

When we bury the preparations at the Michaelmas celebration we combine animal, plant, and mineral and we have to dwell upon this fact. Nowhere else does this happen in nature by itself. When we come back to this spot later we have to build up the image again and through thinking, enlighten our will.

5. Digging up the preparations

When we dig up the preparations at Easter we must think again. We must look at the earthly structure: the substance, colour and smell. It is now earthly matter, permeated by spirit.

If we compare this new substance to the seed of a plant we see that the seed is almost nothing. It contains the cosmic force of the plant. The plant is the outer image of cosmic reality. The preparation is different. It contains cosmic reality as substance! The substance contains the germ for overcoming the physical. It is resurrection substance, evolutionary substance.

6. Putting the preparations in the compost heap

The compost heap is a heap of decomposing substance, a heap of destruction. The preparations build a new organism out of this destruction.

7. Spreading this compost

When we now spread this compost we have to build up an image again: how from above and below the cosmos is working. This is how we feed nature with the preparations – not only with the substance but also with how we work with it.

New elemental beings in the service of Christ can in this way come about. The preparations bring in a new quality into the wisdom of nature – the quality of love which is: enlightened will. The earth longs for it and cannot create it itself. It can only be created through the free deed of man.



Image given by Willie Swindell

A sculpture found by her friend, Suzanne,
in the chapel at the castle, St Michael's Mount,

News from Teign Greens - Teign Greens is a not-for-profit community food growing enterprise in the Teign Valley in Devon. Partnering with Oxen Park Farm in Lower Ashton, our abundant market garden and orchard is spread over about four acres of ecological fruit and veg growing and all our produce is grown in harmony with nature, with no chemicals or other nasties. Oxen Park Farm is certified Organic and Biodynamic.

We've been busy over the summer, sowing and planting out tens of thousands of seedlings which will become our crops for winter. And wedding them... occasionally watering them (luckily this is the first year since starting that we haven't been battling with drought!). And of course, harvesting! With the help of lots of little hands we brought in our potato crop, and with a team of volunteers from Tim's new team at the Soil Association who held their team away day at the farm, we harvested all our squash yesterday!

It's been an interesting season, our squash are looking lovely, but the yield is less than half what we'd expected- something that many other grower friends are complaining of this season. The wet Summer made it harder for pollinators like bees to get out and pollinate the squash flowers apparently. And it's been a short season for sun loving crops like tomatoes and aubergines- unlike 2022, we won't be having tomatoes through until December this year! But thank goodness for diversity, because some plants have loved the cooler wetter weather, like our summer carrots which were the best we've ever grown! And our winter brassicas which you can see in the pic below are looking absolutely stonking! And, we've been pretty surprised, but we've grown a superb crop of sweet, juicy cantaloupe melons- YUM!

And as well as all the veg growing, we've also been busy trying to grow our membership. We've been doing talks for U3A and WI groups, hosting stands at festivals - Bovey Food Festival was a particular highlight! And signing up new members across our now SEVEN collection points, including Newton Abbot and Heavitree! We're so keen to make this year a little more sustainable financially and energy wise at Teign Greens, so meeting our target of 100 members by the end of the year is really key. We're at 90 so please tell all your friends! And **if you've been thinking of signing up... now's the time!** Autumn veg is by far my favourite, and we've been thinking of lots of ways to make our veg more accessible... see below.

Making our Veg More Accessible

We're passionate about making our delicious organic veg accessible to as many of our local community as possible, but we know that our CSA, signing up for the year model doesn't work for everyone. However on this small scale, our enterprise only works with a degree of commitment to give us the financial security to invest in all the upfront costs of growing (seeds, compost, growers!).

So we've been having a think and have come up with a few ways to help make our veg a little more flexible:

- **Struggle to get through veg every week?** Try a **Fortnightly Share**. As a fortnightly member you'll get a veg bag every other week and pay half of the monthly or annual price. It works for us as two fortnightly share members on alternate weeks makes up a member! As most of our veg is picked on the day, you should find that much of your veg lasts really well for two weeks. This also works well for members who like to support us and another local veg growing enterprise, for instance Shillingford. On the other hand you might not have as much variety, as for instance when planning the veg bags each week, I follow rules like making sure that people get potatoes every other week.
- **Grow loads of your own veg?** Try a **Gardener's Share**. If you find that your allotment is churning out loads of your own veg in the summer months, you could sign up for nine months of the year from around October to June. You'd just pay for 3/4 of the year or just for the relevant months. This works for us for a *limited* number of members, as if we know in advance we can find others to replace you when it's time for you to duck out.
- **Planning a big trip?** Just let us know in advance with at least two months notice, and like above, we can find someone to replace you when it's time for you to go.
- **Can't afford our veg?** Try our **Solidarity scheme**. Sadly, due to many unfair factors in our broken food system, we know that properly grown veg like ours is pricey and not accessible to all. But if you'd love for your household to be eating Teign Greens but can't afford it, get in touch to talk to us about our bursary scheme. Some members kindly donate a bit more to discount those who can't afford our prices, and thanks to a generous donation one of our members, we currently have a place available for a discounted membership!
- And remember we're a friendly bunch, always happy to try to help, whether that's by changing bag size, your collection point, holding you're veg past the Thursday 8am cut off if you're running late... Just let us know.

Of course, we do still need a core of members signed up for the year to make the model work. But hopefully a few small tweaks might help get our veg on more of your plates. Have you got any other ideas for how we could make our veg more accessible? Please let us know if so! We're always up for thinking creatively about how we get more people on board with our local veg revolution!



Autumn Volunteering on the farm

With the days getting shorter, Autumn's a lovely time to get outside before we hunker down for the winter, and there's loads to do on the farm. We'll be frantically sowing the last seeds in the prop tunnel, pulling out tomatoes and cucumber plants from the polytunnel and preparing beds and filling them with our winter salad seedlings. It's harvest time so we'll be carrying a lot of onions and squash inside for storing! Oh and did we mention we're hoping to build a polytunnel this autumn, which will need a lot of extra hands!

Here's when you can come and join us:

- **Every Tuesday 9am-4pm** Our weekly volunteer day where we pick and pack the veg bags is a great time to drop by. Don't feel like you need to stay for the whole day, every little helps and even popping in for an hour would be much appreciated! We serve up a hearty veggie lunch for all volunteers at 1pm, and there's usually plenty of homemade cakes at our morning tea/coffee break. Please drop us a line if you fancy joining.
- **Saturday Morning 9:30-1pm**, Come and join us for our Drop In volunteer day, usually on the 2nd Saturday of the month. All welcome, especially little gardeners. We always plan lots of different activities, so there really is something for everyone, whether you want a compost barrow-ing work out, or a civilised chat in the prop tunnel sowing seeds. And we always have a few kid friendly jobs up our sleeve for them to have a go at (before hitting the rope swing!). Our next dates are:
 - **19th October 9:30-1pm**
 - **9th November 9:30-1pm**

With all our volunteering events, it's helpful if you give us a heads up if you can make it, but if you're feeling spontaneous, feel free to drop in too. **See you there!**

Corporate Volunteering & Away Days: We often have space for corporate or charity volunteers to help on the farm for half or full days getting stuck into jobs on the farm. See above a group of ten from the environmental consultancy WSP who spent the day with us planting, weeding and harvesting onions. It's always rewarding, great for team building and sure to foster some brilliant chats. We can provide a yummy lunch of farm produce and if you want to combine it with some strategic thinking, our landlord Oxen Park Farm also hires their beautiful cobb barn for meetings/events. Please get in touch at teigngreens@gmail.com to find out more.

Parsnip Celery and Apple Soup (slightly curried) serves 6 Seasonal

Recipe from The Biodynamic Cookbook, by Wendy Cook.

Ingredients:

1 lb/450g parsnips, peeled and chopped	: ½ tsp ground cumin
8oz/225g white onion, sliced	2 bay leaves
6 oz/ 175g grated eating apple	1tsp chopped rosemary
8oz/225g potatoes, peeled and diced	¼ pint/150ml single cream
3 sticks celery, chopped	2 pts/1.2 l good stock
4 cloves of garlic chopped	1 oz/25g butter for sautéing
2 tsp medium hot curry powder	2 tbs olive oil for sautéing
Some finely chopped parsley for garnish.	

Method

- 1) In a heavy pan heat the oil and butter. Add onions and garlic and sauté till translucent
- 2) Add celery, parsnips, potato. Sauté for a further 5 minutes
- 3) Add hot stock, bay leaves and rosemary and cook for 30-40 minutes, or until all the vegetables are tender. Grate the apple in and then add cream, Remove bay leaves and blend until smooth. Adjust seasoning. If too thick, add a little milk, Garnish with parsley.



On September 15th the Preps Group met to prepare oak bark for stuffing in a Sheep's skull to be buried for the winter. This is a beautiful picture of the sun on the oak bark after it had been 'shaved'.

BIODYNAMIC PRODUCE FOR SALE

BIODYNAMIC BEEF from our freezer from our biodynamic South Devons, various cuts and joints but all the sirloin, rump and fillet steaks have been sold.

Please contact Tristan Bertie 07836 591 847

Lordswood Churchstow Kingsbridge

Or e-mail me at lordswood.biodynamics@btinternet.co

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.teingreens.co.uk email teingreens@gmail.com

VEGETABLES FROM APRICOT CENTRE/ 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

BD FRUIT JUICE CORDIALS for SALE - All with organic apple juice
Contact Derek Lapworth on 01364 644010

Hemp and other Tinctures (all homemade)

The CBD tincture is made by Nick Read from hemp grown at Dartington and is the only UK organically grown CBD.

Please see website for costs and purchasing information. <http://www.englishhemp.co.uk>

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 South West Biodynamic Group

Preparations are available from Whites Farm, Lower Dean, Buckfastleigh. TQ11 OLS. .Contact Denise deniselaurenj@icloud.com

If you wish to join, please contact Diana White (Treasurer) at dianawhite35@hotmail.com or write to 12 Apple Wharf, The Plains, Totnes, TQ9 5QL 07747398839