

South West Biodynamic Group Winter Newsletter January 2026



Nature is what we see

Nature is what we see -

The Hill - the Afternoon -

Squirrel - Eclipse - the Bumble bee -

Nay - Nature is Heaven -

Nature is what we hear -

The Bobolink - the Sea -

Thunder - the Cricket -

Nay - Nature is Harmony Nature is what we know -

Yet have no art to say -

So impotent Our Wisdom is

To her Simplicity.

By Emily Dickinson

Diary Dates: The Spring prep making day - **Sunday 29th March 2026.** (Details to follow)

Spring Gathering and EGM Saturday **May 9th 2026** – see inside for details

From the Editor.

Adrian Hanks has come forward to become the SWBD group newsletter editor. This newsletter is a transition one with us working together. We are keeping most of the usual format this edition. In the future Adrian hopes to visit more of the BD holdings that are run by some of our members. We should have news from a larger number of growers and hear more fully what is going on in the South West.

Thank you Adrian!

SWBD Group Constitution

At our Autumn Gathering we had a brief AGM where the accounts were presented. We did not elect any post holders as is usual at AGMs because a few of us who 'hold' the group have been looking at how the Group is constituted.

For several years we have run fairly informally with just enough money coming in to produce the newsletter and make preparations. However we now have the legacy from Helen Dolby that means we have to be more transparent in our decision making.

We are not a charity, but as a Community Group we need to have formal positions to deal with the bank and if we make changes we need to show minutes of the meeting at which the decision was made.

To this end, we are holding an **Extra General Meeting on Saturday 9th May 2026. 10 am to 4pm** Please put this date in your diary.

It will take place at On the Hill, Oxen Park Farm,
Lower Ashton,
Exeter, EX6 7QW (website onthehill.camp)

We will publish more detailed timings of the day in the next newsletter

We will be appointing a Chairperson, formally electing the Secretary and Treasurer, We will formalise the newsletter editor, preparation coordinator and website administrator roles. Our Secretary, Ros Bourne moved to Aberdeen a few years ago, but despite this she is still willing to support us. by sending out the group emails, keeping membership lists up to date and dealing with enquiries from the website. However, she cannot write minutes of meetings – an infrequent task but very necessary. If anyone would like to volunteer for this job, we would be very grateful.

If you would like to volunteer for any of the above roles, or to support those areas of work please get in touch with me, dianawhite35@hotmail.com

I would like to remind members that they can apply for grants for something connected with biodynamics – attending a course or a conference, buying supplies for a BD project. The only thing we ask in return is to share some benefit you received for the grant, whether it is knowledge, progress with a project etc.

The Agriculture Conference 4th to 7th February 2026

The International Biodynamic Conference is being held at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland from 4th to 7th February 2026. This Year it is titled 'You Never Farm Alone. Living Communities for the Future,'

People can register to attend on line. Details can be found at www.agriculture-conference.org. (I did not find the website easy to navigate. To access the live streamed events one has to sign up to Goetheanum TV. Once signed up, you can buy tickets for the events 15 euros for one or 120 euros (approx. £105) for all live streamed events at the conference).

We would like to remind members of the group that we are able to give grants of up to £75 to help people attend. In return we ask that you somehow share with the SWBD group some of what you learn from participating.

To apply you must be a member. Please email dianwhite35@hotmail.com with your request and suggestion of how you would like to share what you learn with the rest of the group (- an article in the newsletter, presentation at a seasonal gathering

About Preparation Making:

At the EGM in May it is hoped that the SWBD group will appoint a new Chair who will, with the steering committee, assign someone to the role of prep coordinator. In the current absence of anyone, I have agreed to coordinate until then.

Please can you let me know if you are interested in being part of a group gathering materials and perhaps doing some study around the various plants / sheaths? You do not need to have experience to join the group. I will then set up an email group, so we can liaise around dates and times.

I will also ask for suitable picking days to be posted on the SWBD website and endeavour to put them there with enough notice.

The Spring prep making day will be Sunday 29th March 2026. (Details of venue to follow)

I look forward to seeing some of you in Feb/ March for Dandelion picking.

Selby McCreery selby@crookedpath.co.uk 0787 499 6367



News from Teign Greens – Oxen Park Farm, Lower Ashton, Exeter, EX6 7QW

If you've been feeling a bit out of touch with Teign Greens, now's a great moment to reconnect. If you want to get a piece of the veggie action, they've got spaces available for 4 week veggie box trials.

Want to beat the January blues? Come and connect with their legendary volunteer crew and get stuck into some kale picking and leek weighing. And for something completely different, they're introducing their first Film Night and Lunch Club over the next quarter. If you live in the area they'd love to welcome you onboard.

You can sign up for their newsletter.

Here is the link www.teingreens.co.uk

An Experience of BD in India by Adrian Hanks

I met Biodynamic teacher and mentor Thangapandian Dhanikodi (Pandian) and Biodynamic farmer, trainer, and project coordinator Anthoniselvi Savarimuthu (Selvie). in September 2023, at the 3 day 'World Conference' at the Goetheanum in Switzerland. I met Pandian again again at the 3rd International Biodynamic Research Conference, at the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester in September 2025 .

My next meeting with Pandian and Selvie was just a few weeks ago in India. My partner Virginia, and I spent a week on an immersive Ayurveda retreat in the foothills of Kerala in southern India before travelling by car to see them in Tamil Nadu – about a three-hour drive.

During our stay we got to visit two biodynamic properties. The first was at the Thalir Biodynamic Farm, in Valaiyapatti, Manapparai, Trichy District, Tamil Nadu. It is owned by K. Pon Alagendra Raja (Raja) and his family and is run in collaboration with the Thalir Kalai Kuzhu ("Thalir Cultural Team"), blending Biodynamic and Organic farming with Tamil folk arts to inspire ecological awareness and social unity.



Our timing was incredible. The community had planned a training and introduction day for current and prospective biodynamic students with several guest presenters attending. In true Indian hospitality, Virginia and I were welcomed with a ceremony, seated among the presenters and I was given the opportunity to speak and give some demonstrations and practical advice on biodynamic methods, including the building of a BD compost heap. At the end of the training day Virginia and I got to hand out the Certificates to graduating students and we received lovely plaques that we now have on our shelf at home.

The main crop on the farm is 'rice'. It was great to see how the rice is grown. There were also a few vegetables being grown and there was quite a menagerie of animals with cows, goats, chickens, and dogs roaming about.

One of the projects they have is a community café in the nearby town. They supply much of the produce and the café has become a place where people can be introduced to, and eat, biodynamic food.

The bigger vision is to train hundreds of local youths in biodynamic farming and help them to set up their own biodynamic farms with hands on, educational, and financial support.

The second property that we got to visit was Selvie's. She has a small biodynamic plot on a large community called 'Sevapuri'. It has a 'Gandian' outlook and philosophy. The community was established in 1968 by a Belgium woman called Mother Lea Provo. Like the Thalir Biodynamic Farm, in Valaiyapatti, Selvie's main crop was also rice. She shared with us that there had been an eight-year drought where it was difficult to grow rice, but now the rains have come the rice can be grown more abundantly. She shared that for several generations her family had been growing rice in the area.

Selvie had two magnificent cows on the property that were used for ploughing. With her farm worker, I tried to pull the plough through the soil, to much laughter from the people watching on! The soil was quite incredible, it was rich with worms and had a lovely smooth colloidal feel to it!

On both the farms we visited Cow Pat Pit (CPP) was made on site and used frequently to help improve soil conditions. Some BD 500 is also made on the two farms. BD 501 and the Compost Preps are all made and purchased from someone who makes them in Tamil Nadu up in the cooler foothills. I advised that Raja and Selvie try to make, grow, and/or use homegrown remedies wherever possible. I look forward to seeing this being implemented. In India, the cost of the preps, as well as the BD association membership and certification can often be a challenge or barrier for small scale farmers.

We spent time looking around Sevapur. In its day it was quite magnificent. With a thriving community, lots of workers and volunteers, it was an easier task than it is today. The whole property needs some financial and labour input, and much repair work needs to be done to get it back up to its former glory. However, it is still a magnificent place. On the community there is a small bakery and a fully functioning boarding school for girls with about 30 students attending.



Pandian also drove us out to see another project he is involved with – a municipal recycle centre, managed by women. On site they make compost, which they use and sell. It was wonderful to see about eight women clearing through the recycled materials, sorting, and removing anything non-compostable, and doing it all in good high spirits.

Pandian shared that it is a not-for-profit organisation and pays the women a fair wage for their work. This and other small initiatives in the area are common. We also visited a small school with about a dozen children who get looked after by two carers/teachers because the mothers of the children are struggling in some way socially and/or financially.

All in all, it was a great experience and I look forward to returning to Tamil Nadu and revisiting the farms in early 2027 and spending some time advising/teaching/working there to support them with their visions ...If anyone would like to help support any of these initiatives, please get in touch with me (Adrian), and we can have a conversation.



As I write this, Pandian and Selvie are in the UK having attended the Oxford Real Farming Conference. They will then go to Belgium for a while visiting BD farms and a Steiner School, before going to the Goetheanum for the 'Biodynamic Youth Conference' where Selvie will give her presentation. Visit <https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/sv/biodynamic-youth-conference-2026>

To get an idea of the growth of biodynamic farming in India, I would suggest watching 'One Man, One Cow, One Planet' a film about New Zealand biodynamic pioneer, Peter Proctor. Here is a link:

<https://krishnatube.com/video/859/one-man-one-cow-one-planet-save-the-world-with-peter-proctor/>

Adrian Hanks



Our Autumn Gathering

On Sunday 19th October, The South West Biodynamic Group held the annual Autumn Gathering at Whites Farm in Lower Dean. After a brief AGM, we worked with some of the Preparations.

We dug up the horns that we buried in the Spring and extracted the 500 preparation then stored it with what remains from a previous season. We prepared some

Yarrow / Stags Bladders for the 502. We then refilled some horns with cow manure for the 500, and then buried them.

We also had a good discussion on 'How to determine the quality of the Preparations'. I think this is a very important question and something that can be further discussed and worked with. The

quality of 'living' things can be determined in many ways, including the 'Etheric' and even 'Astral' qualities.

And after a very hearty, healthy shared lunch we had the pleasure of listening, and engaging in a talk on 'The Biology of Soil' by Lorraine Campbell who shared images of different soil and microbe activity through her microscope. Her talk included the symbiotic relationship between plants and their microbial partners, understanding the roles of the four main groups; Fungi, Bacteria, Protozoa and Nematodes.

Unfortunately, the weather was not so kind to us and we decided not to do any stirring and spraying of preparation 500.



A recipe from Wendy Cook's 'The Biodynamic Food and Cookbook (Published by Clairview)

Dahl – simple and warming winter dish

Serves six people

The Ingredients:

8 ounces / 225 g of red lentils
cleaned and soaked for one hour

1 1/2 pints / 800 mls of water

Half a teaspoon of salt,
one bay leaf,

3 teaspoons of turmeric powder,
two large onions

3 ounces / 75 g of melted butter

The Method

1. Cook lentils slowly with water and salt, bayleaf and one teaspoon of the turmeric for half an hour

2. Slice the onion into rings and fry in the butter until brown and crispy. Sprinkle with 2 teaspoons of turmeric and serve on top of the dish of Dahl

Wendy adds – 'In my opinion, dahl should provide an ocean of calm amidst the fiery curry components, but of course you can make it spicier if you wish.'



BIODYNAMIC PRODUCE FOR SALE

BIODYNAMIC BEEF from our freezer from our biodynamic South Devon Cattle, 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.com

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 – Contact for availability of produce. www.teigngreens.co.uk email teigngreens@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 meat. You can order online at www.apricotcentre.co.uk

BD FRUIT JUICE CORDIALS for SALE - All with organic apple juice

Contact Derek Lapworth on 07747 120 669

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 newsletter
- Seasonal gatherings where we make the biodynamic preparations. These are then made available to members free of charge.

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

Biodynamic Gardening Courses in Devon



A series of 7 one-day-workshops exploring the essentials of biodynamic gardening From February to July 2026

If you are looking for a truly regenerative and holistic approach to growing, these Step-By-Step workshops are highly informative, practical and enjoyable. Each participant is empowered to put into practice what they have learned. Course leader Franky van der Stok, has 50 years experience in biodynamic farming.

Course dates: Feb 14th *Compost and Soil*. Mar 14th *Planning our Garden*.
Apr 11th *The Biodynamic Preparations*. May 9th *The Plant between the Sun and Earth*.
June 13th *Tending the Garden*. June 20th *Ian Bailey: The Planetary influences in
Biodynamic Agriculture*. Jul 11th *The Garden as an Organism*.

**Courses are at Whites Farm Education Trust, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0LS
Saturdays: 9:45-3:00 and includes organic lunch £210.00 (for 7 Saturdays)**

For booking, please email:
Alasdair: info@whitesfarm-edtrust.com
<https://www.whitesfarm-edtrust.com>

