

SW Biodynamic Group Newsletter Summer 2018

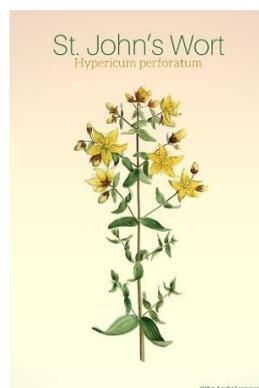


*Then doth the joyful feast of St. John the Baptist take his turne,
When bonfiers great with loftie flame, in every towne doe burne;
(from C16th poem by Thomas Kirchmeyer)*

The Festival of Mid-Summer and the Feast of St. John:

The tradition of jumping the embers of the mid-summer bonfire can be seen as symbolic of a transformative threshold that marks an intention to overcome that which curtails, engaging the will to overcome challenges ahead, before reaping and harvesting latent gifts in store.

As ye sow, so shall ye reap.



*The plant-seeds are quickened in the night of the Earth,
The green herbs are sprouting through the might of the Air,
And all fruits are ripened by the power of the Sun.
(Rudolf Steiner)*

SWBD GROUP AGM – Held at Velwell Orchard Sunday 8th April 2018

1.Future of the Newsletter – Val has produced the newsletter for ten years and cannot continue. We discussed how to go forward given that no one has come forward to take Val's place. Jeremy proposed having a website with blogs used for updating and possibly one newsletter a year. There are problems of people who do not have internet access but these are relatively few, and it was felt that this was outweighed by the advantages of having a website. This would cost £36 a year and would be run by Jeremy assisted by Ros. Ros Maynard wanted it minuted that some people really appreciate a paper copy. The Committee will meet to take this further.

2.Accounts – Diana brought the account summary for March 2017-Feb 2018. Income from subscriptions and sale of pots was £936. Expenditure on the newsletter, preparations and support for conferences was £938.32.

3.BD Library – Ros brought this to the attention of new people and had brought a selection of books to the meeting.

4.Buckfast Millenium Fair – This will be held on Saturday June 2nd from 9.30-5.00pm and will be a major event with 150 stallholders. We have been offered a stall at a reduced rate and Derek is looking for people to set up on the Friday evening and man the stall throughout Saturday. Tom volunteered to help set up and Hesther, Karina, Mel and Ros Maynard will man the stall for part of the day. Huxhams Cross is sharing the stall so Derek will contact Marina. Tom will 'phone Jessica to see if the BD Association wants to be involved.

5.Forthcoming Whitsun Gathering – Derek talked about the forthcoming event on Saturday 26th May which is an all-day event at the Greenwood Hall developing the theme of The Threefold Social Order from last year's Dartington conference.

6.Officers – were re-elected unopposed.

This will be the last event held at Velwell – the Autumn one will be at Huxhams Cross. Tom stressed that we really must get behind Huxhams Cross as it is a wonderful opportunity to make biodynamic food available in the area.

NEW WEBSITE AND THE GDPR

As you are no doubt aware, new laws are coming into force governing the way groups such as ours are able to store data and distribute information. Therefore, if you wish to continue to receive news from us via email you **MUST** do one of two things: The best thing to do is to go to our new website and sign up to our blog. You will then be sent an email every time we update the news page. It's very quick and easy to do. Just go the website at southwestbiodynamicgroup.org and scroll down to the bottom of the home page and put your email in the box.

If you don't feel confident doing this at the moment, please reply to this email stating that you wish to continue to receive emails from us. However, at some point in the future we intend that all communication will be via the blog on the website.

IF YOU DO NOT DO THIS YOU WILL NO LONGER RECEIVE NEWS FROM US VIA EMAIL!

Jeremy has put together the very simple website and welcomes any comments, feedback or suggestions. You can contact him at: jeremydweiss@yahoo.co.uk

LIFE AND THE ROLE OF THE HORN PREPARATIONS – *Richard Thornton Smith*

The biodynamic movement has been preoccupied throughout its existence with understanding the 'Preparations' which Rudolf Steiner spoke about in his Agriculture Course. In this regard there are a few often-repeated names which emerge as leading lights to awaken our insight into their significance. In parallel with this, there have been those equally preoccupied with the techniques associated with biodynamic practice such as preparation-making and of course, stirring.

But how much independent thought has there been among the 'rank and file'? And is it the case that we have 'not been able to see the wood for the trees'? It seems to me that, following the example of the Agriculture Course, we are engaged with lesson twenty before having launched ourselves into lesson one, lesson one being that in biodynamics we are dealing with the realm of life. For this reason, if we don't have a clear picture of what life is, and how it manifests, we have no real foundation – and little motivation for pursuing biodynamics!

We need firstly to understand that the whole earth is a living being – people in the past had a sense of this, and they also saw the earth as inextricably linked to the cosmos. As modern science has developed, its techniques have been unable to comprehend other than the material world, so great vistas of understanding have been closed off for people in our time. When we think of life, we think of a cycle of growth, development and decay as mirrored in plant and animal life. We think of movement, not just in the physical systems of the planet but the movements of animals and birds.

There are also those internal streaming movements within the bodies of plants and animals. We should also consider that, as matter is held together by the elemental world, movement is also a fundamental characteristic of atoms and molecules. Breathing is also a characteristic of all living organisms. Steiner spoke about the earth's breathing process (used in the making of preparations) while aspects of this are embedded in mythology with Demeter's daughter Persephone drawn down into the underworld of Hades.

So, when we engage with the biodynamic preparations we engage with the actual energies which animate life. Indian culture calls this 'prana' while we may, if we wish, call it 'life force'. Steiner bequeathed us the preparations because he could see the weakening of the earth's capacity to support life in the future – a situation which we can only imagine has become worse in the course of time with deforestation and electronic interference!

The preparations act as intermediaries between the life we nurture in our agriculture, and cosmic forces which are the ultimate source of life. These life forces are the gifts of higher spiritual beings within the galaxy, whose essence is drawn into our solar system through the portals of the zodiac constellations. Our sun's light contains the greater part of these energies, those which can be regarded as the builders of form, together with the architectural instructions on which form is based. Horn manure can be said to support the former, while horn silica the latter.



NEWS AND NOTES

Val Collett's Involvement with this Newsletter – A small newsletter was started in 2001 by Gwen Attwood and others. Derek Lapworth then took it on and brought more content to it until November 2006. Val (and Christine Walton for a few years) further expanded the Newsletter and added a colourful front page, making the publication more appealing. The consistent manner in which Val approached this task despite all her health difficulties was exemplary. Jessica Standing from the national Biodynamic Agriculture Association (BDAA) often said our newsletter and circulation was the best she knew – this indeed prompted Jessica and Sebastian Parsons (then CO of the BDAA) to visit Devon, and shortly after we held the BDAA AGM and a small conference at the South Devon Steiner School in 2016. All good wishes to Hesther Somerville who has stepped forward to see that the production of the Newsletter continues.

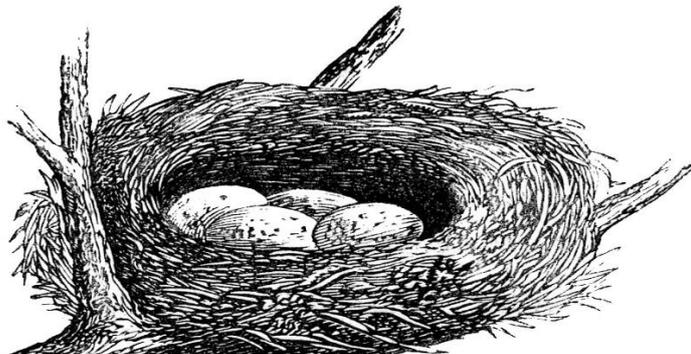
Good news from the BDAA – In the BDAA (national) Newsletter it was recorded that the number of Demeter-registered producers has increased to its largest ever number with 105 Demeter farmers and growers plus 42 organic farmers and growers. Also, Jessica Standing (BDAA Secretary) tells me that the sale of BD Preparations has doubled over the last 12 months. Perhaps we can learn lessons here in Devon starting with the new website established by Jeremy Weiss. *Derek Lapworth*

Joining the National BDAA – Membership provides you with two 'Star & Furrow' journals a year and their quarterly newsletter which keeps you abreast of all the events around the country. Contact Jessica on 01453-759 501 mornings only, email: office@biodynamic.org.uk or visit the online shop.

BD Books – A small 'mobile' library goes to each of the Spring and Autumn Gatherings. The entire library is currently held at 10 Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh – call any Wednesday or Thursday between 2.00 – 5.30pm or 'phone Derek on 01364-644 010 *Derek Lapworth*

From Tom Petherick – A few BD happenings at Chollers (Cholwell Farm, Dartington). Our study group continues, of course. I have been trialling some of Frankie van der Stok's BD ashes and peppers for controlling rats and Himalayan balsam. Updates later. Also, Kit Buckley made a BD508 brew for fungal control (Equisetum) which I sprayed on my potato patch for blight prevention, my strawberries to control botrytis and my gooseberries to check the dreaded American mildew. How's that for some BD activity and some nice top tips! *Tom Petherick*

The biodynamic preparations made by the South West Biodynamic Group are stored at and distributed from Velwell Orchard. Cowhorn manure, cowhorn silica, and all the compost preps are available to all members free of charge. Please contact Jeremy Weiss to arrange collection – velwellorchard@yahoo.co.uk 07962 432 317.



THE SWBD GROUP SPRING & AUTUMN GATHERINGS – Kate and Jeremy

Farewell Velwell... Hello Huxhams

After seven years of holding Biodynamic Group Gatherings at Velwell Orchard, where we've hosted AGMs and many amazing talks by Richard Thornton Smith and shared great lunches, the Gatherings are now re-locating from Velwell Orchard to Huxhams Cross Farm. We feel honoured to have been able to host these events for so many years and we're very excited by all the new developments at the farm at Huxhams Cross. We will continue to store and distribute the BD preparations from Velwell Orchard.

HUXHAMS CROSS FARM NEWS - Marina and the team

The farm has been registered with the Biodynamic Association from the day we signed the lease in 2015, and we will achieve full registered BD status on the 15th September 2018, so anything we plant after that date can be sold as fully Biodynamic with the Demeter symbol. Our eggs will become Biodynamic at that point as well.

Our Training Centre, Wellbeing Room and Food Processing Room are all flying up and should be completed in mid-August. We hope to have a celebratory event to mark the completion of the new Apricot Centre and the achievement of the full Biodynamic status in September some time. This feels like a massive achievement from both the Apricot Centre's team and from the BDLT team, and after four years of very hard work we think we deserve a bit of a party! We will let you know when we have a date.

If you would like to buy our produce then you can order online at www.apricotcentre.co.uk or 'phone Bob Mehew on 07507 841 158. We deliver to your home or we're at Totnes market on Fridays. For further details see under PRODUCE FOR SALE.

A SNAPSHOT of the CURRENT STUDY GROUP - Hesther Somerville

From Rudolf Steiner's 'Agriculture Lectures' we were reading the bit about chaos in chapter three when we broke into a flurry of enquiry that fizzed and popped with ideas and anecdotes. We were talking about how the chaos that happens between creating the clockwise vortex and the anti-clockwise vortex in the stirring of the preps is just as important a part of the process as creating the vortex itself. Observing the chaotic discussion going on in the room, I saw that as a group we were embodying the chaos we were talking about, and it felt alive and exciting. I thought of the diversity of micro-organisms in fertile soil and saw how diverse the group is – we have gardeners, farmers, carers, teachers, musicians, therapists, engineers, crafters, chemists... each with diverse backgrounds, interests and skills.

This reminded me of the diversity displayed in the cosmos and the varying natures and qualities of the planets and the interrelation between the cosmos and the soil. The symbol of the star came into my mind, made by two triangles, one facing up and one facing down, symbolising 'as above, so below' and I thought how enriching it is when each individual, within the chaos, brings themselves in to the process. Even if nothing is said, being present and engaged energetically is adding something into the mix.

There is a place for the chaos between the vortices. There is a place for the interruptions, the messes, the mistakes that slip in unintentionally, the in-the-moment unexpected occurrences. The in-between spaces are often where the potency and magic are, and where some unknown 'other' can slip in from who-knows-where...

PRODUCE FOR SALE, grown on Biodynamic principles

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: Rosehip, Blackcurrant, Strawberry, Sour Cherry, Blackberry, Sloe, Elderberry & Elderflower. All fruit is from biodynamic farms or gardens. Cost: £5 for a 500ml bottle.

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

SUMMER EATING – Wendy Cook

What a gift we have had in this period of prolonged sunshine. How it changes everything – people talk to each other, garden together, the swallows have arrived. Joy! A time to marvel at the 'porphyrin ring' (*see below*) – a total miracle, and I have seldom found someone who is as interested as I am and could explain it to me.

I have just returned from a conference at Emerson College for doctors, gardeners and community careworkers. It was here that I did a three-day Goethean workshop on comfrey with Dr. Michael Evans. It was Michael Evans who could share knowledge of the porphyrin ring. I share this as it is something that I think should be known and appreciated more widely. It is the central part of the chlorophyll process, part of the intricate chemistry – a 'net' which captures photons travelling through the atmosphere (imagine, if you can, the speed of light!) and transforms them (the particles of light) into starches (matter).

In the leaf the central molecule is magnesium – have you ever seen a strip of magnesium burning (found in indoor fireworks)? If so, you will know of the extraordinary amount of light emitted. The magnesium can only be activated by the presence of iron – the colour of chlorophyll is green. In the human blood the process is symbiotic and complementary. The central molecule is iron and can only be activated by the presence of magnesium – the colour is red. [See 'Foodwise' Wendy Cook p.162]. So when we eat plants we are eating transformed 'sunlight'.

This leaping and blossoming has been particularly extravagant this spring – held back by a long cold winter. It is truly a cacophony of abundant life and I only hope it doesn't go over as quickly as it has arrived.

And here is a delicious way to enjoy your raspberries: a good tempered **EASY RASPBERRY JELLY**:

Ingredients: 1lb/450g raspberries; 1.5 pints/800ml water; juice of half a lemon; 1tsp honey; 2 packets vegetarian raspberry crystals (seaweed based, found in health food shops).



Method: Boil the water and add the honey and raspberries. Leave them a few minutes to release some of their juices. Strain the fruit off and make the liquid up to 2 pints/1.2L including lemon juice. Heat, then dissolve the jelly crystals in it. Allow to cool a bit, but not to setting point. Divide the raspberries between sundae glasses or bowls and pour on the jelly mixture. Refrigerate. Serve cold and really enjoy it!

FUTURE EVENTS

VOLUNTEER DAYS – We have regular volunteer days at **Huxhams Cross Farm** on **Thursdays**, 10am onwards, and are thinking of evening volunteer sessions in the summer months, to help with the fruit picking, on **Wednesdays** 5.30-7.30pm starting on 13th June.

OPEN FARM SUNDAY – **Huxhams Cross Farm** is looking rather gorgeous right now, so come and visit on **10th June, 10am onwards**. <https://www.dartington.org/whats-on/open-farm-sunday>

COURSES and ACTIVITIES at Huxhams Cross Farm – Rachel Phillips has just joined the team and has organised a wonderful array of courses that can be booked online www.apricotcentre.co.uk/training-courses or if you want to speak to someone then call Marina or Rachel on 07780 757 958.

SCYTHING COURSE at Huxhams Cross Farm – Jeremy Weiss is hosting a camp-over Scything Course. 30th June-1st July, see the website at Velwellorchard.org

WATER in the FARM ORGANISM – with Simon Charter and Kai Lange, 13th-15th July.

CLAY OVEN BUILDING & COOKING – with Gordon Clarke and Wendy Cook, 24th-26th August.

STIRRING at HUXHAMS CROSS – A special volunteer day for our next BD stirring on **Sunday 16th September 2018**, to put the 500 onto the crops and fields. 9am start, everyone is welcome to come along and we will provide refreshments and a convivial atmosphere!

AGROFORESTRY – with Professor Martin Wolfe, 21st-23rd September.

PERMACULTURE DESIGN COURSE – starts in late September.

INTRODUCTION to BIODYNAMIC FARMING & GARDENING – planned for Spring 2019.

COB BUILDING PROJECT at Velwell Orchard – Volunteers are welcome to come and learn the skill of cob building and help with our cob building project on **Thursdays**, from sunrise until 4pm. Volunteers are also welcome to **help in the garden**. We also take WWOOFers. To keep up to date with happenings at Velwell Orchard, please sign up to our blog at Velwellorchard.org.

*Asleep is the soul of the Earth
In Summer's heat,
While the Sun's outward Glory
Rays through the realms of Space.*
(Rudolf Steiner)



Farewell Val Collett...



Biodynamics and me: As a child I learned of the beauty of trees and the miracle of their self-composting via the autumn leaf-fall. The natural world has been my sanctuary for the following seventy years when all my other activities have overwhelmed me; first organic then Biodynamic has been the healing impulse that enabled me to find myself again. My ailing body has now led me to live near my children and take gentle care of an acre of garden where I can at last immerse myself in the rich, rich world of Biodynamic growing.

The trees, grass, hedges, birds, insects, cats, chickens; the flowers, fruit and vegetables; the sun, rain, light, dark, the wind; with time to sit and watch I see not just a nature-village, but a whole nature-city.

My own, human, needs are to grow Biodynamic quality food for myself and my family; to make the rich BD compost and spread it on the soil, plus Preparations 500 and 501; to tend the hedges, grass, flowers, seedlings etc to enable their best growth and usefulness to the rest of the garden; to connect with the invisible beings from the cosmic realm. I have found that the observing, tending, loving and merely resting in a Biodynamic garden is undoubtedly healing, inwardly nourishing and expansive. My enthusiasm for Biodynamics is as strong as ever. I shall continue to learn and practice on my own garden and attend some of the local BD events.

The changing shape of Biodynamic enterprises in South Devon: Ten years ago, South Devon had three BD farms, each with their individual qualities and intentions. We lost the three farms but gained dozens of smaller BD enterprises. Now we have the 35-acre, BD Land Trust-owned Huxhams Cross Farm, providing soon-to-be Demeter-registered food to the local public. To have this in our midst is a delight and to which many contribute their talents and support. There are still dozens of smaller striving-to-be-BD much loved enterprises locally. This seems the right time for the SWBD Newsletter to have a change. Hesther Somerville, I'm delighted to say, has taken over the task of preparing it. I shall help Hesther get going on it, in whatever ways she might need help, and my good wishes and support are with her. Welcome Hesther.

Hello Hesther Somerville...

Taking the Newsletter Forward – how it came about: At the Spring Gathering at Velwell (April 8th 2018), the news of Val's stepping down was announced. There were sounds of *"Oh, it would be a shame if the paper copy becomes an online version only!"* followed by a dozen or so thought-bubbles in the air filled with question-marks: *??Who would be willing to take on such a task and do it justice, as Val has done so well over the years??* There were awkward silent glances.



After sleeping on it, and in a spirit of wanting to see the SWBD Newsletter continue in its quaint handmade format, I tentatively showed an interest, hastily adding that I have no experience and what's more, I'm dyslexic! Val and I met, and I was impressed by the sense of dedication and heartfelt care she has for the biodynamic movement and for the work of Rudolf Steiner. Val made the process of producing the Newsletter seem straight forward and simple, though I know it's not, and I have a feeling I will need to refer to Val for quite a while yet – there's much to learn.

Biodynamics and me: A Herefordshire apple orchard, where I took a summer job after leaving school, was where I first encountered the terms 'biodynamic farming' and 'anthroposophy'. It seemed to resonate with me and felt soulful. A seed was sown. Meanwhile I had living to do, and life experience to be gained, and anthroposophy got in the way... Encounters with anthroposophy continued over the decades until now, when I feel I've earned some measure of maturity and stature from those life experiences. I practice 'Psychotherapy from a Soulful Perspective' (evolved from Psychosynthesis) in Dartington, and it was through my training in London that I found my way back to Rudolf Steiner and my interest in the soil and biodynamic farming. I am interested in how biodynamics has a place in my life, and in the wider context how biodynamic farming has a place in the world in this shifting transition time.