

# South West Biodynamic Group Newsletter

## Winter 2019-2020



### The Darkling Thrush BY THOMAS HARDY

I leant upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was spectre-grey,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

### **South West Biodynamic Group Accounts.**

Normally the Group holds its AGM at the Autumn gathering. As this did not take place in 2019 I will publish the figures for March 2018 to Feb 2019 below. The figures look very healthy, but are a bit distorted with payments for 5 newsletters in the previous year and then a late/lost printing invoice not being sent, so there is only payment for 2 newsletters. This will be balanced up with payment for 5 newsletters in the current year.

Here are the totals:

Brought forward from 2017-18	49.54		
+ Income from subscriptions:	£1,093.50	Total Cash	£1,143.04
Expenditure Newsletter costs £289.76			
Website costs	£ 96	Total Expenditure	£ 385.76.

We therefore started current year with a healthy £757.28 in the bank.

We will be holding the belated AGM on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 at 2pm, after a bring and share lunch at 1pm. This will take place at The Apricot Centre, Rattery Lane, Week, Dartington TQ9 6AA.

Hopefully we can have a discussion about the future of the group and review its function now that we have a Biodynamic Farm and training centre in the area.

#### **South Devon 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.

We Issue quarterly newsletters and organise 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.

We also organise the library of Biodynamic books kept at The Apricot Centre.

Preparations are available from Velwell Orchard. Please contact Jeremy Weiss 07962 432317, [jeremydweiss@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jeremydweiss@yahoo.co.uk)

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Diana White (Treasurer) at [dianawhite35@hotmail.com](mailto:dianawhite35@hotmail.com) or phone 01803 473551

## **A visit to Craxton Gardens, Diptford.**

Some of you may remember an article in the summer newsletter about Craxton Garden near Diptford. On a rainy afternoon three of the core group visited Daniel and Mary Sutherland. Daniel's life's work has been concerned with the environment, studying in his native Holland and in America. He has been responsible for planting many thousands of trees over a long career, working in many parts of the country and influencing local government policy on the environment.

He has created many wildlife corridors along dual carriageways and motorways. In his retirement he has created a beautiful haven at his home, with a beautiful vegetable garden with ponds.

He is sympathetic to biodynamic methods but has not been able to apply preparations on his land. However, his holding proves that working with great sensitivity and consciousness to the particular needs of the piece of land one is working on then the health of the soil, trees and plants can be optimised.

He and his wife have invited the South West Biodynamic group to hold their summer gathering and stirring at Craxton. More details of dates and directions in the next newsletter.

## **An Almost Secret Garden**

I've taken on half a dilapidated Walled garden. I was walking one day in the field above where we live thinking how content I was to be 'settled' after so many years of moving around. Our home is part of an old farm stead with several households living in the converted farm buildings, a little ramshackle but it feels like home. It's nestled within a hollow in the land surrounding it and has an ancient almost protective feel. Indeed there are foundations here that date back to the 12th century at least.

Although we have some garden around our flat the one thing that I felt missing was an area of land I could really get to know and work with, so I could learn to make a deeper connection with this place. As I thought this I looked down over the farm stead and as if for the first time saw the old walled garden. It was as though it was trying to get my attention and was saying "Hellooo, what about me?"

It turned out my landlords were more than happy to let me take it on being elderly and unable to work it themselves anymore. For many years they'd worked the land, fed their large family and all the many guests who stayed in the big house.

Walking into the garden for the first time it reminded me of when Mary Lennox first opens the door onto the 'Secret Garden' (In Burnett's book of the same name). Maybe that's a bit fanciful but it did seem a little magical as I tried to imagine what it would have looked like before the rampant brambles which now cover at least half the area. I also felt a buzz of expectancy and that this garden missed the busy-ness of human interaction.

I do not have a great deal of spare time so will not be charging in and making great changes. For the moment I'm quite content to slowly clear brambles, open up the space

and observe the plants, the wildlife, the elements and myself as I get to know this special piece of land.

### Melissa Milne



**Before**

**After**

### Recipe – Spiced Red Cabbage from The Biodynamic Cookbook by Wendy Cook

1 Head of red cabbage approx 1 ½ lb or 700g  
1 red onion, sliced  
1 small eating apple studded with about 10 cloves  
1 heaped tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp ground nutmeg  
½ tsp cayenne (or to taste)  
2 tsp muscavado sugar  
1 tsp sea salt  
¼ pt/130 ml wine vinegar  
A little vegetable stock  
Freshly ground pepper



#### Method:

1. Boil a kettle of water. Finely shred the red cabbage, removing tough stalks and inner core. Pout the boiling water over the cabbage and let it steep for 10 minutes or so. This removes the excess sulphur qualities or 'yin' as in the macrobiotic scheme. Drain.
2. Sauté red onion in a mixture of butter and olive oil (just enough to coat the bottom of the pan), add spices and sugar, steeped cabbage, salt, vinegar and clove-studded apple and some stock if necessary. The liquid should not cover the cabbage but the mixture must not boil dry.
3. Bring to the boil and reduce the heat to simmering. Depending on the quality of the cabbage, the cooking should take about ¾ of an hour and should be gorgeous colour of magenta tender and subtly 'pickled'.

Lightly sautéed leeks would be a fine accompaniment.

## **News from Velwell Orchard.**

A big thank you to all the volunteers and supporters of Velwell Orchard over the past year. Volunteer days will resume again at the beginning of March on Wednesdays. There'll be lots to do preparing the beds, sowing and planting, as well as finishing of some winter jobs such as log splitting and stacking, etc. You can stay up to date with all our news at [velwellorchard.org/blog](http://velwellorchard.org/blog)

## **News From The Apricot Centre, Huxham's Cross.**

### **Training Courses:**

#### **Introduction to Biodynamic Farming and Growing with Marina O'Connell**

Saturday, 21st March, 2020 - Sunday 22nd March 2020 and Saturday 18th April - Sunday, 19 April, 2020

£250 inc VAT including refreshments

Biodynamic Farming was the first form of ecological farming system, arising in 1924. It has also proven to be one of the most sustainable forms of farming with the highest levels of soil biodiversity found on farms.

This course is designed for the gardener, grower or farmer who wants to find out more about the principles and practices of biodynamic systems in a simple and practical way. You will cover the context of biodynamic systems and the Demeter regulations; how to carry out the practices of biodynamic systems, the use of the preparations and the calendar on both a practical and theoretical way. You will look in-depth at how preparations are made by working with local biodynamic practitioners who will give an insight in to the preparations and their uses. The course will be held on a registered biodynamic farm and will enable you to carry out some basic biodynamic systems on your own land.

Please note that this course takes place over two weekends. For more information or to book contact Rachel Phillips at [rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk](mailto:rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk)

#### **Biodynamic Approach to Food, Nutrition and Cooking**

A Cooking Master Class with Wendy Cook

Friday 18th September (eve) - Saturday 19th September 2019

£75 inc VAT including nibbles and lunch

Wendy Cook is a local biodynamic cook and author, she will be hosting a wonderful workshop at The Apricot Centre, Huxhams Cross Farm, where you will be able to harvest food from the farm, cook and eat the produce whilst learning about the culture of food and cooking. She will demonstrate a range of techniques and recipes from her cookbook *The Biodynamic Food and Cookbook*. You will explore how to cook fantastic healthy food on a budget. On the course you will have the opportunity for an evening farm walk and discussion with Q and A, where Wendy will talk about the link between culture, healthy food and cooking. This will be followed by a full day Saturday of harvesting organic/biodynamic vegetables to produce wonderful cost effective meals.

For more information or to book contact Rachel Phillips at [rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk](mailto:rachelphillips@apricotcentre.co.uk)

#### **South West Biodynamic Group Spring Gathering - Preparation making day at Huxhams Cross Farm**

Sunday 19th April 10-4 pm

## Volunteer Days

Our popular volunteer days are starting again in February. These sessions take place on the farm on the first Thursday of every month and provide volunteers with the opportunity to carry out authentic farming experiences including biodynamic stirrings, compost making and harvesting. The next session will take place Thursday 6th February and includes a soup and bread lunch. 10am - 3pm

## Biodynamic and Organic Fruit and Vegetable bags.

you can now order your vegetable bags to be delivered to Ivybridge. To find out more information please check out our website [www.apricotcentre.co.uk](http://www.apricotcentre.co.uk)

## Concentrated fruit juices

from Derek Lapworth, 01364 644010. These are made with Demeter apple juice concentrate, no water or sugar added, Varieties currently are: Rosehip, Blackcurrant, Sour Cherry, Sloe, Elderberry and Elderflower.

## Diary Dates

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 1pm** for bring and share lunch, then formal **AGM at 2pm**, This will take place at The Apricot Centre, Rattery Lane, Week, Dartington TQ9 6AA. All Welcome.

**March 14th 15th and April 11th 12th 2020** - A Practical Introduction to Biodynamics at Apricot Centre, Huxhams Cross, Dartington, Totnes See details in news from Huxhams Cross.

**19th April 2020** – Spring Gathering at Huxhams Cross, Dartington. More details in next newsletter

**June 2020** - St Johns Gathering at Craxton Gardens. Details to follow in Spring Newsletter

**20th September 2020** –Autumn Gathering at Huxhams Cross, Dartington. More details in Summer newsletter

