Agriculture Section Australian Branch

SPIRIT MATTERS

SPRING 2026

Soul Calendar

Rudolf Steiner Verse 52

When from depths of soul
The spirit turns to Worlds Existence
And beauty wells from distant spaces,
Then streams from heavens vastness,
Life's power into human bodies
And working mightily, unites
Spirit Being with Human Existence.

Edition 4

"Spirit in never without matter, matter is never without spirit" (RSteiner)

Welcome to edition 4 of Spirit Matters - the newsletter of the Agriculture Section Australian Branch (ASAB).

We encourage "co-workers" of ASAB to submit articles, reflections, questions, details of those in some way connected with this work who have passed, updates on any relevant gatherings, research in which you have been involved on in which you would like to participate, upcoming events, book reviews, etc to be considered for publication in this newsletter: (ag,section@must@gmail.com)

The views expressed in individual articles are not necessarily those of the ASAB.

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MEETING THE EARTH'S CHANGING NEEDS THROUGH GROWING CONSCIOUSNESS AND PRACTICES - Reflections on the Agriculture Section Australian Branch (ASAB) second conference.

By Cole Bradshaw and Trevor Crowe with contributions from the Steering Group.

The second ASAB conference was held at the Samford Valley Steiner School Wights Mountain QLD between 10 -13 JULY 2026.

We had started planning for the conference before the middle east conflict had started.

Our main farm based activity had to be cancelled just prior to the start of the conference

Although we had hoped for a larger number of people to attend, there appeared to be several factors (e.g., inflated travel costs) working against us this year.

There was talk of not even running the conference this year considering the circumstances, but the steering group felt that the calling for this work in our time was worth pushing ahead even if few could attend. In the end, having smaller numbers (approx. 30) allowed a more intimate ambiance and more effective facilitation of group dynamics and open dialogue than previously. It really felt like being carried by the spirit and love.

Immediately preceding the ASAB conference, the AGM for the Anthroposophical Society in Australia occurred at the same venue, with some involved staying over from the AGM to participate in first parts of the conference.

The Welcome to Country was given by an extraordinary aboriginal elder Uncle Alan, who in a heartfelt way told us the story of the relevance of this Country on which the Samford Valley Steiner School is built. To the original custodians the site we were on was a meeting place. This was followed by a Eurythmy performance by Jan Baker Finch with speech by Alan Drysdale and pianist Stewart Wood truly worth being there!

The last event of the first day was given by Rod Tomlinson who spoke of “The Foundation Stone Meditation-A Source of True Soul Nourishment and Remedy in our Time.” He laid the foundation for a deep understanding of the work we were going to do each morning.

Our second day started at 7.00am with the Rhythms of The Foundation Stone Meditation led by Alan Drysdale. A powerful workshop increasing the depth of the content shared the night before by Rod. Cole noted that he had worked with the Rhythms of the Foundation Stone Meditation previously but never had they been brought to life with such eloquence. Hamish Mackay presented on his experiences of teaching BD “in the field” and the varying readiness across students/participants to explore the spiritual underpinnings of BD.

Brian Keats then took us on a journey with silicon a powerful agent in the biodynamic world and the world of silicon chip manufacture for artificial intelligence. He talked about the social aspect of water and the speeding up of time and how we need to recognise and meet the challenge we are all facing.

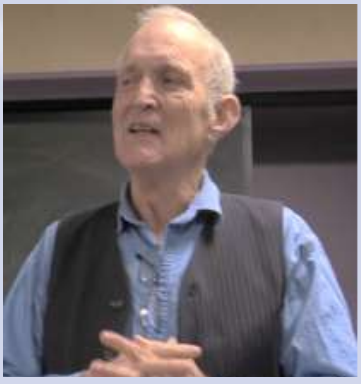
After a break, Trevor facilitated our first strategic planning event (including some co-workers participating online). Reflecting on the guidance from Ueli Hurter of the Goetheanum we identified the key dimensions of Section work were: 1) the social dimension (intimate tolerance) 2) the experimental circle (Inspiration) and 3) the School of Spiritual Science (exploring Self).

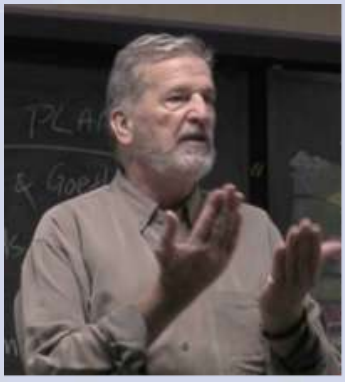
Rhythms of the Foundation Stone with Alan Drysdale

The choice of topics presented at the conference were clearly of a more esoteric nature than the previous conference and fewer farmers were present, as well as very few connected with the SV Steiner school itself unfortunately. Perhaps the focus of this year's conference was less attractive to those only interested in more practical BD applications/experiences, hard to tell as there were also some local and distant events clashing with the conference dates. This topic was raised at the ASAB open strategic planning session. The absence of general regular BD conferences and the dissolving of some regional BD groups, and fluctuating memberships in other BD groups has left a void, and perhaps a yearning for connection, particularly amongst those less ready to dive deeper into the spiritual underpinnings of BD.

The discussion led to a few key points: 1) section work necessarily has a focus on and desire to grow the esoteric aspects of BD, 2) the more these esoteric experiences can be grounded in BD practices the better (and vice versa), and 3) there is a real need to renew, reconfigure and support general BD community energy points, as well as seed new ones around the country, from and to which the broader BD networks can be connected. Where available Steiner Schools might become initiating hubs (particularly for engaging younger people) for BD work and community building. Elsewhere we may need to start with one or two people in a region and build from there. This is one of the key strategic planning directions of ASAB over the next couple of years.

There were a number of other development areas/projects that emerged from the ASAB strategic planning group discussions at the 2026 conference. Participants were asked if they were willing to self-nominate into small working groups to help move these projects forward. The list below is just the start, and we encourage others to consider expressing their interest in any of these specific projects or even suggest other relevant projects via email (ag.section.aust@gmail.com).





Various presenters: Brian, Rod, Hamish, Trevor, Hendrik, Paul

Some of the other strategic directions include:

- Establishing a national BD internship program. Very early planning days for this.
- In line with the first direction mentioned above, to support educational gardens in Steiner Schools. Rob Birse (Qld) and others spoke to this need from his decades of experience with this work.
- Building working collaborations with Indigenous groups (particularly regarding traditional land management and plant wisdom).
- Researching BD in tropical and subtropical regions/countries, including adaptations to making BD preparations in these areas.
- Connecting in meaningful ways with related groups/practices (e.g., permaculture, regen ag, bush regeneration, erosion management, etc.).
- Pursuing a range of research projects including:

a. Working with the BD preparations/plants and complementary plants.
b. Studying weather and seasonal patterns across different regions and ecologies and microclimates.
c. Using other sheaths for BD preparations (e.g., difficulty accessing cow horn, skulls, etc)
d. Utilizing the relatively new BD Research Network setup by the Goetheanum.

We then played a video involving Trevor interviewing Ueli Hurter and Eduardo Rinćon (the co-leads of the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland), where they outlined how important groups like ASAB are for the global BD movement and encouraged us to connect with the new online BD Network.

Hendrik Dierich gave 2 lectures on Goethean Observation “I and the plant are one its metamorphosis I recapitulate in my imaginative thinking.” An experiential exercise with the light and dark spectrum. A brief encounter with the projective geometry, quantum physics and the concept of infinite possibilities. He later gave a talk on etheric constructs, and many different ways that we can improve, protect and navigate the influence of electromagnetic fields we a living in and how to work with the etheric fields around our homes, gardens and communities.

Trevor then presented and lead a workshop on strengths and limitations or research methodologies, particularly in the context of consciousness and BD research. The main theme being experimenting with “opening our consciousness aperture” (pointing to meditation and Goethean Science as examples) to “let more light in” to counter the at times overly constrictive views of conventional science and its dominant methodologies. He then took the project of setting up a national BD internship program as a case study discussion. We broke up into groups to brainstorm this issue and the associated research questions. Trevor’s interview with Eduardo about a range or research topics affecting BD practitioners in Australia (e.g., drought, flood, etc.) was then played and discussed, and people were once again encouraged to register with the international Biodynamic Network (https://community.sektion-landwirtschaft.org).

Rod’s talk on” The Movement of the Impulse of Intelligence to Wisdom to Love” was the conclusion of the second day. Topics included the event at Golgotha and Christ’s gift of love to humanity, that matter was made from condensed light, and our souls were made of Love. A real gift to take took home to bed that night.

Various presenters: Uncle Alan, Tim, Rob

Next morning, Tim Dunn's talk “Hiding in Plain Sight- Spirit and matter not as duality but as whole.” He began by stating that we have become so imbued with materialism that it is difficult to see the self-limiting aspect of this, particularly when it is reinforced by the one sidedness of reductionist science. It was an inspirational lecture as it decoupled our imaginative forces from the rigour of particular scientific methods and world views, and yet suggested how they are best held in dialogue, if there is enough generosity of spirit and humility to listen.

Tim and indigenous elder Uncle Alan then had an open conversation. Uncle Alan shared his culture, family, life and an understanding of the lands in which we were meeting, on which the Samford Valley Steiner School was built. He is a truly remarkable spokesperson for his community, and spoke with enthusiasm of the potential of true dialogue between Indigenous and BD wisdom practices.

Paul Martin told a story of the other wise-man Artaban (the 4th Wise man) to end the night. Following this Paul Martin brought a picture of a Christian Community sacraments and their relationship with biodynamic preparations. And how they could be seen as the 7 red roses on the black cross. (See photo).

We finished with more localised discussions about working with young people (and parents) via BD gardening and the challenges and adaptability required to do BD in tropic and subtropic environment, including making BD preparations in areas of huge rainfall.

The weekend was stitched together with joyful song led by Jeunae, a very gifted and talented choir leader.

Another highlight was that BAA sponsored the section to the tune of $2000 which was great but more important was that a communication bridge was being built with one of Australia's national biodynamic organisations.

The conference closed with strong warmth and a sense that this section community has grown wth the sense we had a lot of help from "upstairs"!

Hallelujah! And close

Truly there was so much more to this conference than mentioned here. One of the most significant things that came out of the conference was a remarkable sense of open-hearted communication between all participants. We may not have ploughed the fields that some in the farming community would have liked but we certainly planted seeds of love and wellbeing in the participants' hearts.

Rhythms of the Foundation Stone with Alan Drysdale (photo and other group photos below by Simon Martin)

Satya and Jeunae

2. **Conference Reflection — Hamish Mackay**

It was a full program attracting and covered a wide range of contributions. I unfortunately missed the opening evening but enjoyed 3 days spending time with “like-minded” folk.

The hi-light events for me were the contributions by Tim Dunn and Uncle Allan. Two stories of very young individuals who brought about change. We know these stories because these young people were “noticed”. One by a teacher’s aid who shared with colleagues her observations of children playing by the creek and one by a scientist of significance who took the time to read and respond to a 10 year old’s letter about caterpillars and butterflies. The young girl who “stamped her foot” set in train a process that led to Tim Dunn and Uncle Allan developing a relationship that has greatly enhanced the cultural context of the school. The young Japanese lad with a serious question and a good heart has contributed much to our knowledge of whether caterpillars carry memory into their butterfly stage of life.

These 2 stories were well presented and left a strong impression on me, in a world where the question is too often, or not often enough, asked, what about the young people? Maybe we just need to pay them more attention at the right moment so they can open futures that many of us cannot imagine.

The event had a good balance of some thought-provoking contributions, open discussions about strategic planning and research, mixed with explorations of the Foundation Stone Meditation, storytelling, singing and, of course, good food offered in the social setting of the school kitchen garden – thank you Vicki Kearney and helpers.

Brain Keats took us on a journey into countering the deep dive into materialism, Hendrik Dierich introduced us to subtle energies and electroculture, subjects we need to “get our head around” in a world of regenerative agriculture where there are a lot of “alternatives” appearing. We had a pre-recorded interview of Ueli Hurter and Eduardo Rincon, from the Agriculture Section at the Goetheanum, by Trevor Crowe. The star gazing was clouded out so I took the advantage of an early night!

Each morning Alan Drysdale took us through the rhythms of the Foundation Stone Mediation and each evening Rod Tomlinson introduced us to deeper anthroposophical considerations for our work.

Rob Birse gave an excellent picture of the challenges of being a school gardening teacher. Finance is always an issue to fund such work but I have long felt this is something a successful biodynamic movement would be able to help staff and fund. Thank you, Rob, for bringing school gardens to our attention.

Three days well spent and a big thank you to the ASAB team for the considerable effort that made this possible. We need to create more events where “fellowship” can be shared and expanded – especially among farmers. Aye

Hamish Mackay North Dorrigo 6 August, 2026

3. Alex Podolinsky – personal memories of the life of — Hamish Mackay

In 1972 Alexei de Podolinsky introduced me to the rest of my life. After the best education money could buy and a 2 year sojourn travelling in Europe I was back at the family farm contemplating the fact that all this had been a wonderful experience but “nothing made sense”. My brother, Andrew, had been inspired by a talk Alex had given to a local agricultural group and invited him to visit. I was fortunate enough to be there that day.

The big, broad, progressive picture of the world we live in was just what my soul, stepping out of the 60’s, had been craving.

On that first day I let the descriptions of the Mystery of Golgotha and the spiritual explanations go past to the keeper - as a graduate of 12 years in an Anglican boarding school system, that all seemed superfluous to immediate requirements. Alex’s own education involved time in the British boarding school system.

What really caught my attention on that day was the possibility of adding humus to Australia’s soils and thus creating a landscape, not only more productive but drought and flood resilient. After having experienced the 60’s drought this was an inspiration that has directed the course of my life ever since.

One memorable challenge was Alex’s description of how a good wood fire gives out, radiates, warmth, whereas electric bar heaters suck in cold. An awakening to be vigilant to noticing my unthought assumptions. An experience that has had me thinking whenever I stand in front of a fire or electric heater - sensing the qualitative difference. Try it! Certain deep, personal senses led me not to follow Alex back to Powelltown. I then worked for Economic Wool Producers, a company that initiated a major change process in the Australian wool industry.

I did, however, become an enthusiastic regular at his annual Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association [BDAA] gatherings at Warburton, Victoria. Always an inspirational event with most interesting people.

This was at a time when entry level study of biodynamics expected us to be across Rudolf Steiner’s major works, Philosophy of Freedom, Occult Science, Theosophy, Knowledge of Higher Worlds and Christianity as Mystical Fact – this remains quite a challenge!

Alex, in the course of being a young man with energy and a strong will to ‘make things happen’ was assisted by the Ruby MacPherson Trust and established a biodynamic dairy at Powelltown in the foothills of the Victorian Dandenong Ranges where with his wife Kathryn they also raised 7 children.

By the time the first wave of agricultural “rationalisations” were rolling over us in the early sixties, partly as a consequence of Britain joining the Common Market, a number of dairy farmers went to the wall.

It was Tom Kennedy, the Australian Jersey Herd Society Field Officer during the 1960's for the Victorian Branch, who recommended Alex, a Jersey breeder, to speak at a Jersey cattle field day at the Chandler Jersey stud farm at Kyabram. Tom, a man of initiative and courage to foster new and innovative ideas, recognised the value of the new biodynamics he had witnessed at Powelltown.

This was a genesis for biodynamics to become known to local farmers and to the development of stirring machines by Kevin Twigg, Colin Cochrane, Farrie Greenwood, and the Chandler family [work now carried by Bill Chandler] to cover larger areas [8 and then 15 acres!], and the bringing of ‘practical’ biodynamics to farming Australia.

Alan Earle and Andrew Sargood were significant helpers of Alex’s – not forgetting Kathryn - at this time, carrying the work when he travelled.

This process was not without challenges and detractors but Alex’s charisma and articulation of a progressive agenda saw his ideas and methods taken up by numerous admirers.

One of the highlights of Alex’s work at that time was his tours, visiting BDAA members around the country on a regular basis. In a pre-social media world in which discussion about agriculture within a bigger, political/economic/spiritual worldview was difficult to find, this was a visit always awaited and welcomed – with the added stimulus of ensuring the preparations had gone out before he arrived to avoid censure!

1975 saw my work move to Sydney and Alex introduced me to Erwin Berney and thus began a long relationship with the Demeter Bakery, established by Erwin in 1972, which found a home in Glebe, an inner western suburb of Sydney. I started work at the bakery in 1976. This powerful collaboration between Alex and Erwin became its equally powerful opposite, as too often can be the case when cholerics clash, with numerous supporters and operational potential suffering along the way.

These were painful years for many of us but, for myself, I can now look back with some gratitude for the spiritual ‘schooling’ it provided which has set me in good stead ever since. It was, in essence, the failure to identify, explore and bring to balance 2 different concepts of what was being attempted. Both were ‘right’ within their own concepts but the outcome was a tragedy for all. A worthwhile lesson that still challenges too much of our biodynamic and community work.

In 1984 the ABC TV A Big Country did an excellent program, A Winter's Tale, on Alex and his biodynamic work.

In my current travels I find memories of this program still live in the depths of many souls, as a sort of call to something significant, that is important and should not be forgotten.

Apparently the ABC received 12,000 responses (written in those days) which Alex reputedly provided a hand written response to each. Given it was such a popular program it is significant, in my view, that it has not been shown since, maybe once, and I was unable to locate it through the ABC archives. [a version with French subtitles is available here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRM4t9NkWJA]

In the years following Alex's trip to South Africa and publication of his lectures in book form, the focus changed and his own writings and presentations replaced the core Steiner texts as the required source of biodynamic knowledge.

Alex became widely known for being a controversial figure, stirring emotions – of all hues – across the world. I believe his determination to ensure no-one "did it wrong", thereby giving biodynamics bad press, led to a certain dogma growing into his work which not only isolated farmers – if they didn't do it his way they were cut out upon a surge of pretty sharp criticism – but also limited experimentation and an enthusiasm and joy in seeing others experiment.

It also generated a reluctance to become involved. As a world traveller in the biodynamic space, if the connection with Australia became known there was always an inevitable conversation about Alex. The unfortunate thing was that it was his personality and foibles that became the focus rather than biodynamics, in other words it was a safe realm, an abstraction, to escape into rather than deal with the challenges in front of us. I was always amazed how much influence Alex held over many very knowledgeable people around the world for many years.

Following the great wheat export controversy I joined the not-so-exclusive BDAA ejects and my membership of the BDAA was formerly cancelled in 1982, in a letter signed by Alan Earle as Secretary; a letter I have unfortunately lost in my life's travels. I note I did not rate highly enough to have my cheque torn up and posted back to me.

By the end of the 80's a number of us became aware that perhaps the largest biodynamic group in Australia consisted of those who had been expelled from the BDAA or who had avoided joining it.

Encouraged by Peter Proctor the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association [now Biodynamic Agriculture Australia] was initiated in 1988 and incorporated in 1989. One could add this to an outcome of Alex's life!

There may have been some confusion in regard to Alex's views on the use of Horn Silica 501 in Australia. It is true that use of Horn Silica 501 has sunburnt some crops in hot, sunny conditions, but I am confident we should be using more Horn Silica 501 as a balance or complement to the Horn Manure 500 - bringing balance of Darkness and Light into the spiritual dimension of the Earth; the 2 chambers of the heart of biodynamics where we can exercise courage and conscience in our Earthly work. The logic that we have enough sunlight in Australia and therefore do not need the Horn Silica 501 is, in my view, equivalent to deciding we do not need Horn Manure 500 on a dairy farm as there is enough cow manure.

I am also confident increasing practice of biodynamics will lead to this one-sidedness being balanced out.

The Horn Silica 501 certainly is an artisan's tool requiring skill and sensitivity.
[An interview with Alex referencing 501 use can be viewed here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tecB1Ee8nyk

Over the last 30 years I have only met Alex briefly, we 'accidentally' sat at the same breakfast table at an organic conference. He had not lost his characteristic fire. Since then I have only heard snippets of his work, travels and shifting relationships. I listen to stories of his passing years with mixed emotions, from wonder at such a life and a certain sadness at potentials missed.

If Alex, and the rest of us, had been better able to collaborate effectively in the 1980's, then organic certification and what is now emerging as the regenerative agriculture movement would be synonymous with biodynamics.

I mean this not just as a label or method but as a leader in a cultural sense, a leadership that might have steered us away from the environmental disasters our soils and river systems are experiencing – not to mention farmers and consumers. We all carry responsibility for that failure but the quality of leadership, as opposed to authority, was lacking.

Rudolf Steiner had his challenges with the Theosophical movement – eventually resulting in a separation and establishment of the anthroposophical society – but he indicated that Helena Petrovna Blavatsky [1831 – 1891], also a controversial figure in her time, now, in her post mortem life, realises some of her errors and is working strenuously to make up for missed opportunities. I imagine Alex will also have lots to do, and there are many of his generation, friend and foe [which may be experienced very differently there!], who have gone before him to welcome him to a higher level of consciousness and work. I believe he will also benefit from our ongoing support. Whatever our personal life challenges are, the need and potential for collaboration, not only with those of us who remain incarnate but also with those now working in spirit world, grows with increasing urgency. Fare-well Alex and thank you for introducing me to the rest of my life. You certainly made it 'interesting' at times.

Hamish Mackay© North Dorrigo, NSW
8 July, 2019

3. Citizen Science — Hendrik Dierich

You don't have to be a researcher to do research. 'Citizen scientist' is a modern catch phrase that encapsulates this. Being interested and aware are the only pre-requisites needed, so assuming you have those - you are reading this newsletter - let's deep-dive into some exciting morsels.

At the outset we will need to realise that all is connected, there is no separateness, only in our thinking. Once this was conjecture, unproven by hard scientific evidence. Today it is much accepted given the advances in quantum physics. We do not have to follow these in any great detail. In fact, physics knowledge is far beyond the 'pay grade' of most of us. No, merely know that the ground of science has shifted and the etheric realm is now seriously researched and is no longer in the 'realm of the fairies'.

Step one: if you have not yet done so, watch an online explanation of the double slit experiment. Simple video explanation click:

Double Slit Experiment explained

or copy and paste into your browser (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9tKncAdlHQ)

More detailed explanation click: Observers affecting reality? The Double Slit Experiment

or copy and paste into your browser (https://devdude.me/blog/dblSlit)

What is the point of watching these? We, the observer, alter reality, just by our consciousness, by watching, by being present.

For those who like the scientific work of Goethe you can read his view of something similar to the 'observer effect' in his 1792 article 'The Experiment as Mediator of Object and Subject'. That's right 234 years ago - one of the reasons we study Goethe! (https://www.natureinstitute.org/article/goethe/experiment-as-mediator-of-object-and-subject)

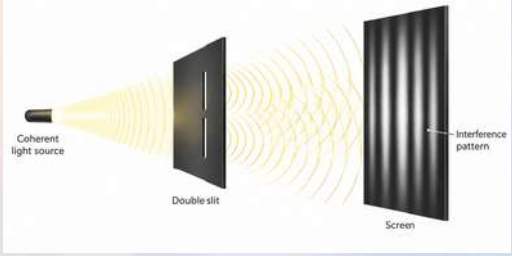
Secondly and moving right along is a lovely link to a video called 'The God Equation' that Steve Kapolice found and put on the Research Group Signal thread: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d538TbIM6QQ

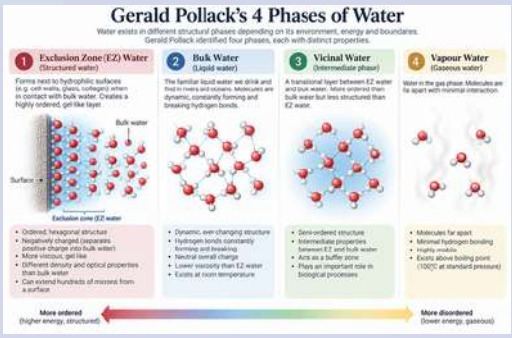
This talks about the struggle of conventional science trying to deal with science research findings that are difficult to explain, if one does not have a working notion of etheric forces. We can see how history is filtered and sanitised to present us a view that fits with the current social narrative.

Thirdly, another gem, this time exploring something we all know so well - water. It seems we don't know it all and here we find out about a fourth phase of water - along with solid (ice), liquid (water) and vapour (gas/steam/cloud) - a gel-like phase between solid and liquid. Trevor pointed us to the work of Dr. Gerald Pollock which shows us some AMAZING properties that have the potential to change the planet. Worth watching!

The Fourth Phase of Water
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-T7tCMUDXU

That's it for this little citizen scientist corner article. Enjoy reading and watching and by all means give your thoughts and feelings back to 'Letters to the Editor' in a subsequent issue of Spirit Matters. That way we can have some communication and interaction between us, even though we may not meet in person.





4. Steeples, Minarets and Mobile Phone Towers — Paul Martin

I feel as though I need to provide in introduction to this article as some readers may wonder: “What has this got to do with Biodynamics or the Agriculture Section?” The connection is the thought that “Man has created the Earthly Landscape!” I have heard Manfred Klett, and others, lecture on this subject in the distant past. I suppose this article will ask the question: “What do we place into our landscapes today?”

As I walked along the range in the early winter’s morning, the mist parted and I caught a glimpse of the “steeple” at the Dulong Lookout [On the Blackall Range]. Our mist doesn’t rise, it falls. It rises in the west, in the Mary River Valley, drifts towards the east, over the Range, and falls, or more accurately tumbles, down the slopes towards the sea.

The mist as it falls or tumbles doesn’t appear to behave like water, or like air, but maybe that’s because it is mist, it tumbles-down, but it’s tumbling is fascinating, wonderful to watch. And after tumbling down, it doesn’t amass like water but just disappears like air! The chemical ether works in mysterious ways!

Maybe it was the mist, maybe it was the pre-dawn time and maybe I was still half asleep, but I very soon realised it wasn’t a “steeple” but the mobile phone tower on the top of the hill. It didn’t even look like a steeple!

On a day off, or on holiday, when we were farming in England, we often went walking. In England you don’t have to walk very far before you see a church steeple or a church tower, sometimes you hear them (if it’s a Sunday or Bell-Ringer’s practices time) long before you see them. You tend to take them for granted, they have been there for so long, they are a part of the landscape, but they are always appreciated and become important navigation points, map reading aids, and reminders of what has gone before love and dedication.

I haven’t travelled extensively in Europe, but I have seen the simple small shrines on the roadside in Greece and Italy. And in Scandinavia there are the Stave Churches.

I imagine you would have the same experience travelling through an Islamic country, but instead of Church Steeples and Bell Towers it would be the Minarets of Mosques. And instead of bells ring it would be the Muezzin chanting the azan, the call to prayer.

Today, in our ‘man created landscape’, it is mobile phone towers! What are they a symbol of, what sounds/calls do they emit. Let’s dwell on this for a while. When the great Gothic Cathedrals were built (at the beginning of the first millennium, I understand), they became beacons of Christianity. I imagine the smaller churches you see throughout Europe were constructed before and after the Cathedrals. The Mosques of Islamic countries play a similar role. Cathedrals, Churches and Mosques reminded the people of the time, that includes today, of the existence of the spirit, of the existence of God in our daily lives.

At this point I am reminded of the opening lines of Adam Bittleson’s Prayer for Monday:
“When we go out into the world as we have made it
Everywhere there speaks to us Forgetfulness of Spirit.
If human work were to be without love The earth would become a bleak and barren dessert.
Through forgetfulness of Spirit Love ebbs away……”

In our Australian Landscapes we rarely hear or see Church Steeples, or hear or see the Minarets of Mosques, but we do see and “hear” Mobile Phone Towers, but Mobile Phone Towers definitely do not remind us of the Spirit.

In comparison: What are today’s Mobile Phone Towers beacons for? And what do we “hear” coming out of these towers, not the musical chiming of bells or the human voice calling us to prayers, what do we hear? I won’t attempt to answer these questions in this article, but these questions are an invitation for a future conversation.

Another question arises: When the Cathedrals, Churches and Mosques were built, people travelled from afar, formed communities/guilds, the community of foresters, the communities of stone masons, the community of engravers, of painters, of sculptors, of stained-glass window makers, of mosaic makers; with the construction of the Mobile Phone Towers what communities are formed and for what reason?

In attempting to answer these questions do we need to leave the realm of the physical and enter the world of the etheric? With the building of the First Goetheanum such an international community was also created.

When we mention the etheric or think about the etheric, we have to think about the Biodynamic farms and gardens within today’s landscape. Is there a similarity?

What is the Biodynamic Farmer's or Gardener's contribution to creating today's landscape?

With the regular and ongoing use of the Biodynamic Preparations, are we creating "beacons" in the landscape?

With such a comparison can we extend the analogy to the communities/guilds that came into existence with the building of the Cathedrals, Churches and Mosques? I can think of numerous examples (unfortunately mostly in Europe) with the establishment of a Biodynamic farm, communities have grown up. Communities with schools, businesses, housing communities, shops, community centres, etc.

Are Biodynamic farms and gardens"beacons" of "etheric life?" Do they invite change, major changes, to occur in the landscapes resulting from the "etheric signals" they send out? As in the past the Christian Churches and the Islamic Mosques brought about changes in the landscape of the period that they were dominant. Do Biodynamic farms create "etheric steeples" in the landscape?

As Biodynamic farmers and gardeners we have a responsibility to the earth, to the landscape, not to allow it to become a "bleak and barren dessert," not to allow "forgetfulness of Spirit" to come about.
Ref: Meditative Prayers for Today by Adam Bittleston.

Paul Martin, Flaxton Grove, SE Qld.

5. John Priestley Remembered — Hamish Mackay
(12 January, 1936 – 6 July, 2020)

John was an exemplar observer of the beauty, complexity, resilience and abundance of nature. Born to a family given to peasant wisdom more than the contemporary academic or abstract learning, he took full advantage of that family environment. He often spoke of the wisdom he gained from his mother, father and grandfather. I must add with emphasis that he also was fully able to hold his own with anyone from academe, often with devastating potency.

His practical, experiential wisdom was beyond the comprehension of many of the government departmental and academic personnel he encountered. There were, equally, others from these milieus who recognised his competency and were not shy of approaching him for advice. Much of his practical wisdom has quietly found its way into Australian mainstream agriculture through such individuals.

John lived through a time when traditional agriculture, based on experiential wisdom, manpower and horsepower, was largely replaced by technology and accounting.

John's observation and knowledge gained through personal experience lead him to develop and follow his own "intuitions" in seeking a different future for agriculture. He also lived long enough to see a new generation arriving who wish to address this abstraction of agriculture and bring life back to the soil and community. He not only lived to witness this but greatly encouraged these farmers of the future.

He was brought up with the traditional farm skills: milking, blacksmithing, horsemanship, budding, grafting, horticulture, breeding – plant and animal – and quality assessment of livestock, skills we (too few) go to college for today and are lucky if we find real teachers rather than technicians.

Still a teenager, he went to visit a German farmer in Victoria who he heard was doing things differently and it was there that he was first introduced to what we now know as the biodynamic approach to agriculture, a way of thinking about agriculture that he continued to explore and experiment with throughout his life, with great results.

By the mid 1990's there was a growing awareness among a wider population that all was not right in the paddock of Australian agriculture and John participated in the formation of the Hunter Biodynamic Group and took on a role of inspirer, teacher and mentor for many of those wanting to find a greater connection to the life and reality of farming and gardening, something more than applying solutions from a bottle or bag to satisfy a bank account.

John became known throughout the land as the go-to person for practical, farm-based, solutions to a wide, a very wide, range of challenges faced by modern farmers and gardeners. In this he was always respectful and modest, asking his questioners whether they would be prepared to try a suggestion rather than telling them what they should do. He was always keen that we develop or own intuitions and become independent.

He presented at countless biodynamic and progressive agricultural workshops over his lifetime, freely sharing his experience and enthusiasm. In recent years he became disappointed, even hurt, witnessing organic/certification/biodynamic networks tending to self-interested bureaucracies. He felt keenly, and I use those words advisedly, they have, like many contemporary farmers, lost sight of the true 'nature' of their purpose.

John's capacities were reflected in the quality of the produce he grew, always enhanced by Dorothy's support and insistence that only the best quality product be offered to the market; to represent organics and biodynamics as worthy of attention on every score.

These capacities were nothing less than his love for what he was doing and the purpose for which he was doing it; to build life in the soil and provide potent nourishment for life on Earth.

John eschewed any pomp and circumstance and was quick to call dogma or hubris in any manifestation that came his way. He had a wicked wit that cut through to reality and allowed truth to reveal itself as an inner experience of soul. All this was lived with an appreciation of the human condition, something that he carried with his deep Christian faith. His life was a service to his God, our Earth and his fellow Human Beings.

The organic, regenerative and biodynamic movements have been blessed by his enthusiasm and encouragement. Countless consumers have also been blessed by his artful agricultural skills.

In celebrating John's life, I am confident that his faithful work for the planet and its people will flow on through a growing generation who appreciate the importance of "life in the soil" in the service of the human spirit – and the taste of good food.

Journey well John, with a very personal Thank You.

Hamish Mackay 12 July, 2020

7. Notable Farms and Gardens

a) The Pebble Garden — Paul Martin

This experience came back to me as it had done many times over the years, when Lakshmi and Wakako came to visit and we started talking about gardens and gardening.

I write about this memory nearly 50 years later and after nearly 50 years of Bio-dynamic gardening, farming and horticulture and a healthy interest in trees and sustainable forestry.

I grew up on a farm and had been gardening ever since I can remember. I was hitching south to Napier with Penelope, I was to join Gerry on the MV Picton to fish at the Chatham Islands; a winter's month, on the sea, in the Chathams, in the Antarctic Convergence, I must be mad! Penelope was accompanying me to Napier then returning to Auckland to stay with Elsa.

It was the winter of '72. We were hitching along the coast in Hawkes Bay, heading east, we were not getting rides, it was getting late, we knew the coast was somewhere to our left, the north, we could even occasionally hear the surf breaking, so we decided to give up and sleep in the sand dunes and carry on in the morning.

We left the road and headed off through the scrub; we crossed the railway line and continued towards the sound of the surf. We came upon the dunes, but not sand dunes.

These dunes were made of smooth pebbles, the beach was obviously made of pebbles and the surf over the millennia had pushed these pebbles up into dunes, just like it does with sand. Clearly it was going to be an uncomfortable night; pebbles are not as comfortable to sleep on as sand! There was some scrub and salt bush growing sparsely on the pebble dunes.

We carried on. Suddenly we were amazed to find a little wooden shack (a batch, I suppose) nestled in the trough between two large dunes. It was in use, an elderly couple were sitting outside on a bench, they warmly greeted us and invited us in.

This little wooden shack was their home, they lived there amongst the stones, the salt bush and the roaring surf as it broke over the pebbles. They had no electricity; they did have a goat, chooks, and a vegetable garden. This was the most spectacular vegetable garden I had ever seen! (Many years later I realised it was the most spectacular and inspiring vegetable garden I was to witness in my life!)

The vegetables were flourishing, healthy and strong, but there was no soil, the vegetables were growing out of the pebbles!

These pebbles were not small and delicate; they were big pebbles, 2", 3" even 4" across! And the vegetables were coming up between them!

The elderly couple were very friendly, they invited us in for a meal and put us up for the night, also breakfast the following morning. We did have a good comfortable night after all!

I can no longer remember the names of this amazing couple, but when I think of them I always remember them as Felix and Felicity, characters in Rudolf Steiner's Mystery Plays, so in the this memory I will refer to them as Felix and Felicity.

Penelope went with Felicity to gather salt bush for the goat, milk the goat and feed the chooks and collect the eggs. I was fascinated by the vegetable garden so I went with Felix, we went down to the surf and dragged large clumps of bull kelp back to the cottage, not an easy task going up the pebble dunes.

Some kelp was for the goat, some for the compost and some to lay onto the garden.

Felix would lay strips of bull kelp onto his garden, when it was thickish and beginning to break down he would then sow his vegetables seeds into the kelp.

As the kelp continued to break down it disappeared between to pebbles and the germinating seeds would have nourishment and substance to grow. Even carrots were growing between the stones. I was over-whelmed and flabbergasted by the simplistic beauty, the health and the productivity of this garden, and the fact that it even existed in this harsh environment.

I have often thought about this garden over the years and being a keen gardener myself its image and memory has always lived on within me, but it was not just the garden that was so special. It was Felix and Felicity and their simple lifestyle so full of love.

Hidden away from society in their harsh environment it was their love for each other, for the earth, for their animals, for the occasional visitors, that caused their garden to flourish.

Their little wooden shack felt like a shrine, they had a wonderful goat, very happy chooks and the most amazing vegetable garden and they had each other and their love.

Sometimes I wonder if they truly existed as humans or were they angels or earthly elemental beings or spirit beings that had made their home amongst the pebbles and the roaring surf.

7. Notable Farms and Gardens

b) Trivial, Significant or Symbolic — Paul Martin

The following article has been taken and adapted from the Plaw Hatch Farm and Tablehurst Farm Coop Newsletter.

Tablehurst Farm surrounds Emerson College, Forest Row, Sussex, UK. Plaw Hatch Farm is a few miles south of Forest Row, they both sit on the edge of Ashdown Forest, the home of Christopher Robin and Winne-the-Pooh.

Both farms are Biodynamic and have been for many decades, probably at least 7 decades.

Both farms are under the umbrella of a very successful CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) venture.

Significant, because although it is an "unknown fact" that King Charles' Highgrove estate in Gloucestershire is managed under the principles and practices of biodynamics, and has been for many years.

Symbolic because the Queen of England chooses to carry a bunch of flowers in the public arena grown under the principles and practices of biodynamics.

Possibly Trivial, maybe for some, because Ashdown Forest is very rich in Elemental Beings, like Winnie-the-Pooh.

FLOWERS FIT FOR A QUEEN.

"Plaw Hatch Farm were thrilled to be invited to provide the flower bouquet presented to Her Majesty The Queen. Hand picked and tied by Emma Hams our garden manager. The Royal Literary Fund (RLF), the world's oldest literary charity, hosted Her Majesty The Queen, for her first official engagement as their Patron, in a special visit to Ashdown Forest to mark the 100th Anniversary of Winnie-the-Pooh."

Paul Martin, Flaxton Grove, Qld.

8. Useful YouTube/Article Links

Although some of the below YouTube and article links will be familiar to some of you it is always good to revisit. For others, enjoy for the first time!

We will make this a regular section for this newsletter, so if you have come across a recording that is relevant to biodynamic principles and practices, or related agriculture section work, please send the links through for consideration. (ag.section.aust@gmail.com)

Biodynamic Agriculture: Farming in Service of Life | Kiss the Ground

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyO9SyeO4ww

Dennis Klocek interviewed for the film The Challenge of Rudolf Steiner

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lLMCYZADKA

Or if you're up for it all parts of The Challenge of Rudolf Steiner can be accessed here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASqW2MRuvoQ&t=73s

BD Farming in service of life

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyO9SyeO4ww

Reclaiming Our Sovereignty: The Great Refusal.

https://www.globalresearch.ca/reclaiming-our-sovereignty-great-refusal/5933293

The Foundation Stone Meditation

At the turning point of time
The spirit-light of the world
Entered the earthly stream of being.
Darkness of night Had ceased to reign; Day-radiant light
Shone forth in human souls;
Light
That gives warmth
To simple shepherds' hearts;
Light
That enlightens
The wise heads of kings.
Light divine, Christ-Sun, Warm
Our hearts: Enlighten Our heads.
That good may become What from our hearts We are founding. What from our heads We direct
With focused will.

The Agriculture Section Australian Branch

Vision

Regeneration and enlivenment of land, consciousness and community, supported by leadership and facilitation in the sharing of central and evolving biodynamic principles and practices.

Mission

We strive to make Anthroposophia accessible to biodynamic growers and consumers.
We strive to explore the spiritual, elemental and material worlds through biodynamic and spiritual science practices.
We strive to respect, honour and engage with the soul and spiritual landscape of Australia.
We strive to build and strengthen active networks that support and share research, education, nutrition and curiosity about spiritual development in the practice of biodynamic farming and gardening.
We strive to stimulate and support dialogue within and between diverse biodynamic and other farming and gardening perspectives, insights, values and practices.