



FOR FRIENDS OF HARDWICK ESTATE

The Hardwick Newsletter

June 2025

Issue 8

50 Years Organic by Sir Julian Rose

1975 to 2025. Fifty years of hard graft interspersed with sparks of euphoria, leading to steady positive transformation – might sum-up the transition from chemically assisted conventional dairy farm to a chemical free holding supporting a wide range of natural biodiversity and high quality foods, mostly for local consumption.

Back in 1975 Hardwick (specifically Path Hill Farm) became the 7th certified organic holding in the UK. It was an auspicious and symbolic step.

That same year I had attended a Soil Association conference at Ewelme College in South London presided over by Fritz Schumacher (Small Is Beautiful), Lady Eve Balfour (Founder, Soil Association), the legendary John Seymour (The Guide to Self Sufficiency) and Sam Mayal, the pioneering organic dairy farmer from Shropshire – as well as other luminaries of natural health, nutrition and market gardening.

Hugely inspired by the vision and pragmatism on offer at this event, I immediately set about devising a plan for the estate's transition into organic management.

At that time we were running a herd of eighty Friesian cows at Path Hill Farm with the herd's milk being sold to the Milk Marketing Board and with maize and grass for silage being cultivated on the arable land.

With a limited budget and a largely experimental farming system to be initiated, it required some ingenuity to get things underway!

The permanent pasture that forms around 50% of Path Hill Farm had never been sprayed and was immediately

eligible for organic status.

The decision to sell the dairy herd was made a few years later and this freed-up the arable land to go into conversion. I decided to rent this land to our neighbour, John Goldsmid of Copyhold Farm, who wanted extra land to grow cereals on – which I agreed to – but only on condition that he used no chemical sprays or nitrogen fertiliser. Thus, when I took back the land a few years later, it became eligible for the farm's first organic rotation.

We kept back 3 cows from the original dairy herd that were looked after by Betty Jay, who lived in the cottage at Path Hill Farm and, along with her husband, had been the tenant on the farm in earlier years, milking and managing a herd of Guernsey cows. It was with these very 3 cows, Milly, Bugle and Valley, that I chose to form the beginning of the new dairy herd, selling their unpasteurised milk and cream on a doorstep delivery-round in the immediate area.

When another neighbouring farmer's son wanted to start a free range hen unit, I offered to rent him a field to get his enterprise started on. This added free range eggs to the milk

round. Next up was a small herd of Saddlebacks and soon organic pork became on offer alongside the milk and eggs. Meanwhile on the arable land I established a rotation of barley, oats and rye, followed by three years of grass clover and herbal leys.

The old market garden at Hardwick House was a right mess when I took over the farm. It had been abandoned by the tenant as economically non viable and grown weeds and brambles for around ten years.

In my mind I saw a return to its former glory, when it was the main supplier of the house at the time of my Great Grandfather. And of all those I interviewed who showed interest in becoming tenants, only Iain Tolhurst and his wife Lin had the vision and expertise to take it on.

It was in 1987 that Tolly and I settled on a share farm agreement which made it possible to clear the site and start the new organic enterprise going. And the rest – which includes the expansion of Tolhurst Organic onto the current field-scale stockless enterprise – is history - as they say.



operation of the Trust board.

- Working on a draft of the Articles of Association and associated policies (such as a Conflict of Interest Policy, Affordable Housing Policy etc) to be shared with the Hardwick community for your input when ready.
- Working with the Operations Team on a decision-making framework for the Trust.
- Getting a full understanding of the Estate's business (due diligence).

We expect this work to take us until at least September 2025 and will be in touch with you with regular updates.

Please also look out for requests to join time-bound working groups on specific issues. The work of the Transition Steering Group gave us a real example of the wisdom of the majority and we believe that the policies, procedures and structures we are developing will be much better with greater involvement from Hardwickians in setting them up.

We are also going to continue the quarterly Thinking Together days, which will continue to be led by Kanada Gorla, where you are all invited to get involved in shaping governance, as well as the culture, values and vision of the Trust..or whatever else needs addressing. The next one of these will be on Saturday September 20th, where we will work on creating an agreed Vision and Mission Statement which will inform and guide the operation of the Trust alongside the Charitable Purposes. Please save the date for this important session.

It is important to note that until the charity is set up and the land and property passed into it (current estimate March 2026) the Interim Board have no legal power to make decisions regarding the operation of the Estate. However, the idea of an Interim Board is that we slowly get involved in decision making so that we are already fully involved and knowledgeable about the Estate when the legal change happens. Therefore it is important to be clear about where you should direct inquiries on various matters.

Please do get in touch with the Interim Board regarding anything to do with

the setting up of the Trust or the involvement of the community in it via this email:

trustees@hardwickestate.co.uk For any questions or issues with day to day operations on the Estate please continue to get in touch with the Operations Team:

Alastair Dick-Cleland:

property@hardwickestate.co.uk – for all property related matters

Laura Lucas:

estate_office@hardwickestate.co.uk

– for general inquiries

Mike Faretra:

estate_manager@hardwickestate.co.uk – for all other matters (leases, events, developments, proposals etc.)

Ben Manning:

forestry@hardwickestate.co.uk – for forestry related matters.

We really look forward to updating you further and working with you all to protect and care for this beautiful place we all call home.

The Interim Board:

Natalia Zarate

Sophia Lysaczenko

Romilly Swann

Tamara Schiopu

Barrie Jackson

Miriam Rose

Dave Jackson

Property Matters by Alastair Dick-Cleland

Many of you will be aware that rent rises have had to include an uplift to reflect the fact that we have had some very large increases in our insurance premiums from the NFU, who insure the entire Estate. Sadly this year has been no better. Furthermore, we have had a visit to Hardwick House from one of the NFU's risk surveyors. He has said we must install a full fire alarm system at Hardwick House, which will be a very significant cost. He has also asked for a lightning risk survey to be carried out on the house, a fire extinguisher maintenance contract, and a fire risk assessment made for the Real Tennis Court. A big thank you to the two Daves – Dave Price and Dave Harney for their sterling efforts in keeping the biomass boiler fed with logs, I'm pleased to say

that the boiler has now been turned off for the summer and is soon to have its annual service. In discussion with the tenants, we have decided to take the Dower House off the biomass system and instead install a bulk LPG tank to give them greater autonomy and reliability over the heating.

Another David, David Howes, continues to do excellent work around the Estate on external, and in some cases, internal redecoration, and I'm grateful to all of you who have made him feel welcome. The windows to the south and east elevations of the South Wing of Hardwick House have been repainted in a new colour, 'Stone White' which looks very smart. The master dressing room has also been redecorated following water damage caused by a roof valley becoming blocked by a paper coffee cup, stuck in the outlet!



David has also repaired and redecorated the high-level windows in the Real Tennis Court. It looked as if these hadn't been touched for many years, possibly decades. They have now all been stained and repaired as needed, and several sheets of glass have been replaced. All a great improvement.

Holmes Oak has also had much attention given internally to some longstanding issues to do with cracking, damaged plaster and water leaks etc.

The tenants who have been renting Leigh Cottage for several years, although not currently residing there, have decided to give up their tenancy from the end of July. We wish them all the best for the future.

The BBC interview Tim

In 1983, Hardwick's Woodsman Tim Sheldon made a significant arms and bomb cache discovery linked to the IRA. The cache, including 112lbs of explosives and timer devices, was directly linked to the Hyde Park and Harrods bombings in London.

Tim has worked at Hardwick for 50 years and his outstanding management of the woodlands was recognised in 2002 when Hardwick was judged overall winner of the Chiltern Woodland Award, presented by the Chilterns Conservation Board. Tim is pictured here with the Award.

Listen to Tim's recent interview about his discovery in 1983 on BBC Sounds:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/polhxtob?partner=uk.co.bbc&origin=share-mobile>



Forestry Update by Ben Manning

Forestry operations continue steadily and after a productive Winter and Spring carrying out much needed thinning work in Hawhill Wood, attention is now back onto our summer maintenance program where we have to manually weed and check on all the young replanted trees to ensure they don't get out-competed or killed by a broken tree guard. With nearly 30 hectares to cover, with a lot of wild clematis, bracken and bramble to battle - this will be no small task! Luckily, we have 2 young and keen forestry students from Sparsholt College and the Scottish School of Forestry helping out.

A big thank you for all the work Suz Williams is doing, with help from Greenbroom residents and the Oxfordshire Countryside Volunteers group, on removing the Himalayan Balsam in Greenbroom woods. This is an incredibly invasive species that if allowed to spread would be devastating for this area of Ancient Woodland and so is an incredible important undertaking - thank you Team HB!

Details of a next month's Woodland Walk can be found under EVENTS

Friends of Hardwick Tennis Court

Tim Tomalin has retired as Chairman of FoHTC. At The AGM in May, new Chairman Peter Mawson thanked Tim for his many years of service and presented him with a trophy to mark his dedication and the Club's gratitude. A bouquet of flowers was presented to Pam in recognition of all she has done over many years.

"I am very pleased and proud to have chaired your committee for the last eight years. I have to thank all those who have served on the committee in my time. I am so grateful for your support and enthusiasm. While sorting out the chairman's boxes in preparation for handing over, I came across a letter dated 30th November 2005 from Adrian Snow welcoming me to the committee as the new clerk of works. I subsequently also enjoyed several years as fixtures secretary (I still enjoy jigsaw puzzles) when I was delighted to meet and work with representatives of all the other clubs in the UK. I have had a very happy and rewarding time pursuing a rather unexpected, but very special, retirement project. Thank you all. Chase the nick! Tim"



Peter Mawson

Tim Tomalin

David Banfield

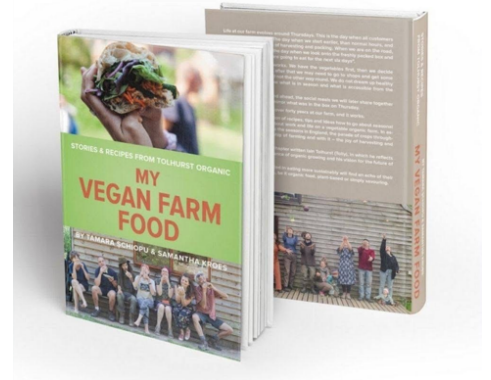
My Vegan Farm Food Recipe Book by Tolhurst Organic

Every food-growing farm eventually needs a cookbook to complement its produce. Amidst our hectic modern lives, this beautiful volume will help you connect with what's grown at Tolhurst Organic and transform it into delicious meals. Seasonal eating requires particular knowledge and skill, and this book delivers exactly that - a perfect match between what's in season and what we can eat.

It has taken us two years to complete the work, because we are growers, not publishers. Between sowing seeds, transplanting, growing, watering, harvesting and delivering we tailored time to cook multiple meals, enjoy them as a team and get memorable photographs and stories for the book. And now the work is in the hands of a talented designer and in your trust! We need your help to finish this journey and complete our offer, with an authentic book of recipes and stories.

Every pound you contribute helps bring this project to life, while supporting the sustainability of our farm.

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/my-vegan-farm-food-cookbook>



Hardwick Flour Update

Hardwick's stone-ground wheat and rye flour is available from The Organic Coffee Cart at Lin's Veg Shed on Saturday mornings, the Tolhurst Organic veg box scheme, and now excitingly from Garlands in Pangbourne and very soon True Food in Caversham! Locally grown and milled on Hardwick, it makes for a delicious and nutritious bread. Big Congratulations and thank you to the team that's been working behind the scenes on this!

Hardwick and the Organic Market: A Shared Vision for a Sustainable Future by John Twyford

The Soil Association's 2025 Organic Market Report showed that UK organic sales reached a record £3.7 billion last year, with independent retailers and box schemes driving some of the strongest growth. Public demand is rising not just for organic products, but for values-led, local, and community-based food systems, while national support is growing for a 10% target of UK farmland under organic production.

Independent retailers—farm shops, veg boxes, and health food stores—saw 9% growth in 2024, as shoppers sought quality, provenance, and ethical standards. With many of these sales linked to education, events, and wellbeing, Hardwick is well positioned as a community hub and land-based learning centre.

At Hardwick, we're committed to organic land management, ecological restoration, rural livelihoods and rural education. As the national conversation shifts toward food security, biodiversity and wellbeing, Hardwick is already showing what's possible.

Notably, the report finds that lower and middle-income households are key organic consumers. Our goal of public benefit—whether through biodiversity, organic food, or shared spaces—echoes this rising demand for ethical, accessible alternatives.



EVENTS

22nd June 2pm Haymeadow Walk to find out more about this rich agricultural resource and abundant biodiversity. Meet at the field entrance on the left hand side of Sheepwash Lane. What 3 Words: atoms.margins.rather

26th June 7.30pm Hardwick Talk The Packing Shed, suggested £3 donation: Rewilding in Practice - Letting Nature Lead by Neil Melleney

29th June 9am-1pm Jumble Sale details below

7th July 7.30pm Woodland Walk A short presentation, gentle walk and discussion about Hardwick's woodland management and the conversion to irregular Continuous Cover Forestry with the Estate's forester Ben Manning. Approx. 1hr. What 3 Words: supporter.modest.tent (Lady Rose Bench, into the woods from Path Hill Farm)

28th August 7.30pm Hardwick Talk The Packing Shed, suggested £3 donation: Cut Flower Growing: My Journey by the Flower Artisan by Sarah Fasoli

22nd-24th August Organic Growers Gathering <https://organicgrowersgathering.org/>



NATURAL FLOW
YOGA RETREAT

SACRED MUSIC AND EMBODIED BLISS

Daily Yoga • Breathwork • Meditation
Wild Swimming • Ayurvedic Food • Forest Bathing
Fire • Ceremony • Creative Artistry
Live Music

India Blue River Roots Bethan Lloyd Cheetah Ram

25th - 27th July 2025 - £244 Inc. all food & camping
Hardwick Estate RG8 7RA

Sadhana
sadhana.com | @sadhama yoga



AYURVEDIC YOGA

WEEKEND TRAINING INTENSIVE

Ayurvedic Asana | Pranayama | Meditation
Mantra | Massage
Elemental Eating • Embodied Learning
Personal One-to-One Consultations
Exclusive Online Course Access
Expert Q&A • Training Certification
22nd - 25th August 2025
Packages starting from £475
Includes: organic fine dining, deluxe glamping accommodation and sessions in Hardwick House, Hardwick Estate RG8 7RA

Sadhana



Organic Growers Gathering

22-24th August 2025

Hardwick Estate, South Oxfordshire, RG8 7RE

Tickets at organicgrowersgathering.org



WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK
AT
PATH HILL OUTDOORS

WILD CLUB
EVERY MONDAY, TERM TIME, 5-7PM

Wild Club is our brand new group for children in need of a school detox and some fun unstructured outdoor play.

LITTLE DUCKLINGS
EVERY FRIDAY, TERM TIME, 10-11.30AM

Looking for something a bit different to do with your little one? Want to get out in the fresh air more often? Then come along to Little Ducklings!

WWW.PATHHILLADVENTURES.COM



@tolhurstorganic

TOLHURST ORGANIC, LINS VEGSHED,
HARDWICK RD, WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES, READING RG8 7HL

ORGANIC COFFEE CART

COMMUNITY JUMBLE SALE

FUND RAISING TREASURE HUNT
SECOND HAND PRE-LOVED GOODS
BARGAIN BONANZA

Proceeds go towards the Tolhurst Organic Crowdfunder for the launch of the new farm cookbook: MY VEGAN FARM FOOD

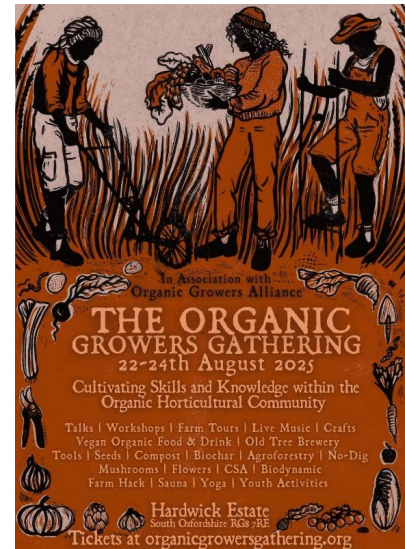
We're inviting everyone to come and browse through some interesting items!

If you would like to apply for a pitch (£10 + 10% of takings) get in contact: info@tolhurstorganic.co.uk

crowdfunder.co.uk

9AM - 1PM
SUNDAY 29 JUNE 2025

Parking available



In Association with the Organic Growers Alliance

THE ORGANIC GROWERS GATHERING
22-24th August 2025

Cultivating Skills and Knowledge within the Organic Horticultural Community

Talks | Workshops | Farm Tours | Live Music | Crafts
Vegan Organic Food & Drink | Old Tree Brewery
Tools | Seeds | Compost | Biochar | Agroforestry | No-Dig
Mushrooms | Flowering | CSA | Biodynamic
Farm Hack | Sauna | Yoga | Youth Activities

Hardwick Estate
South Oxfordshire RG8 7RE

Tickets at organicgrowersgathering.org



Farming For A Future

A Day In The Life On Tolhurst's Stockfree Organic Farm

SUNDAY 31 July 9 pm (UK)
Live On YouTube
Links & Info - www.veganorganic.net