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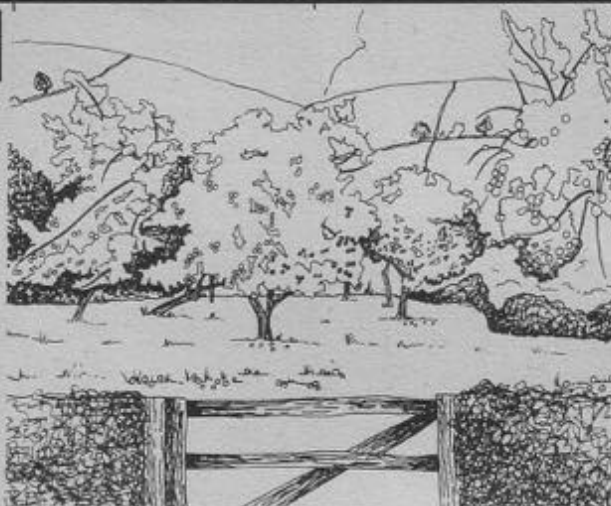
ORCHARD LINK NEWS

Introducing Orchard Link

Welcome to Orchard Link's first newsletter, Orchard Link is a brand new organisation and an independent company which will help Devon's orchard owners, cider, juice and preserve makers and the local landscape and economy into the bargain!

Membership of Orchard Link is open to anyone interested in orchards and apples in Devon. Its aims are to collect and market crops from small local orchards in South Devon and to act as a focal point for all interested in apple growing in the county. By linking together those with small orchards, local firms who could use this crop and a whole host of orchard experts - who may provide orchard maintenance and restoration, training, apple trees, or orchard events. All those interested in orchards can work together to:-

- * use a wasted resource - tonnes of apples which go unharvested each year
- * produce local food and drink products and



Information and advice is just a phone call away!

provide income to orchard owners producers and the local economy

- * conserve and restore traditional orchards
- * enjoy learning about and exploring the area's rich heritage of orchards and local apple varieties.

Read on to find out how!

Testing the Water

To test out our ideas for the collection scheme, we ran a trial collection service in the South Hams for a month last Autumn. Thanks to the help and enthusiasm of orchard owners and cidermakers, plus all the valuable feedback, we managed to gain

funding towards the establishment of Orchard Link from Leader II so we'd like to say a big thank you to all who helped and took part. We couldn't have done it without you! (See page 4 to find out all about it).

If you have any expertise to offer Orchard Link members on orchard management, old Devon varieties, cider production, knowledge of old orchards in your area or links to other interested organisations then let us know.

Orchard Link Line:-
Tel/Fax:01548
511549

Advice and information is available through Orchard Link.

This service will be available to members. Calls will be answered by a Link representative on:-

Thursdays 4pm-9pm
Saturdays 9am-1pm

The link line will be operational from the sixth of August onwards. An answerphone service will be available at all other times

Don't be left out on a limb. Join Orchard Link today and share in the benefits available. See the questionnaire at the back of this newsletter for more information.

INSIDE:

1. Welcome...
2. How it all works...
3. Some orcharding tips...
Crop prices...
7. Win a flagon of cider...

Orchard Link's development.

In 1989, we at the Coast & Countryside Service (then Environment Service) thought that local people might be interested in a new, national campaign run by Common Ground to save traditional orchards. So we sent out letters and press releases and were deluged by the response! This first initiative clearly hit a chord with many local people who were saddened at the loss of orchards from Devon's unique landscape. Devon County Council and several other local authorities responded to public interest and concern, with separate initiatives.

As the campaign grew, hundreds of people became interested in finding out more about traditional, local varieties of apple and the propagation of new stocks.

Many participated in organised events such as training days for pruning, restoration, and orchard planting. Several celebrative orchard events were held including Apple Days which attracted over 2000 people. The Countryside Commission and South Hams District Council supported all these initiatives with funding for several years. Nine years on, the interest in orchards throughout Devon is thankfully as strong as

ever and acres of new trees have been planted in addition to the restoration of many acres of previously neglected orchards. These initiatives alone have made a real impact upon the Devon landscape and the newly planted trees could produce another 45 tonnes of apple per year. Apples produced represent a valuable resource to local cider, juice and preserve manufacturers as each year sees them clamouring for more and more local apples, especially the traditional varieties. Through Orchard Link we aim to use this valuable local resource.

Trudy Turrell,
Coast & Countryside Service

How it all works

If you own an entire orchard, part of one or just a few trees and like many others, you are proud of the seasonal bounty of fruit produced but are dismayed by the sight of the majority of the crop going to waste then;- contact Orchard Link's Co-ordinator, Andrew Carden.

Firstly, Andrew will visit your orchard and assess your potential crop yield. By liaising with local cider, juice and preserve makers, he will already be aware of local markets available for this year's harvest and he will be able to allocate different varieties of apple to match the individual market

requirements as the character of a specific cidemaker's product is the result of blending several types of cider apple. Both dessert and cooking apples may be required by juice and preserve makers.

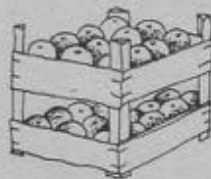
It may even be possible for Andrew to give you an idea of expected return from your crop. When your crop is ready, you can either pick up and bag your apples leaving them at a suitable vehicle access point for collection on an agreed date or, a team of pickers will harvest and bag your apples for you, ready for collection.

After a few weeks, the cidemakers will pay Orchard Link, who will then pay you a cheque for either;- 50% of the crop value if you pick and bag the fruit or 25% if the crop is picked and bagged for you.

Only by organising the collection of apples from small and isolated locations over a wide area can we make this viable and for its first three years, grant aid from Leader II has enabled Orchard Link to set up - after which time it should be entirely self financing. Orchard Link can help you learn to prune, manage and care for your orchard which will increase your crop over the coming years.

If your apples are not already collected, the cheque you receive could be a welcome windfall around Christmas.

Why not give Andrew call on the Orchard Link Line and start preparing for your harvest?



Orchard Link and You

Orchard Link has been set up by the Coast and Countryside Service, Devon County Council, local cider/juice makers, Leader II and local orchard owners all working in partnership.

Representatives of each of these groups will be on its first board of directors.

By joining Orchard Link you will be able to use its services to sell your apples and gain support and advice. You could learn more about your trees or orchards and benefit from contact and exchange of information with others. (see back page for details)

Visit the Orchard Link website at:-
<http://www.demon.co.uk/orchard.htm>

Adding it all up

A small orchard with around 15 mature trees can produce 2 tonnes of cider apples per season. If sold at the lowest available price (scrap apples) this could be worth £160. (£40 or £80 to you under the Orchard Link scheme).

Good quality, single variety cider apples can be worth £90 - £95 per tonne and mixed loads £80 - £85. This gives an average £2.05 per bag (approx 40 bags/tonne). To benefit from all of the services outlined in this our first newsletter, membership fee of just £15.00 per year.

To join Orchard Link please fill out the on the back page and return it with your remittance.

(Please make cheques payable to Orchard Link Ltd).

Orchards Knowledge helps Tom jump to Kew

Tom Hoblyn, who some may know as half of 'South Hams Orchard Services' has recently been accepted to study for a diploma in horticulture at the world's top horticultural establishment - Kew Gardens. In the nerve racking selection process (all the more so since it was filmed by channel 4 for a new series following students through their course) Tom said that he won through due to his talk on managing traditional Devon apple trees - his specialist knowledge so impressed the panel.

Summer Orchard Care

A lot of people think that at this time of year, they can sit back and watch the apples develop (and what with all this rain you can almost see them grow) and await August to commence harvest.

Well, you can sit back and do nothing if you want to but if you'd like to increase the quality of your crop and maintain the health of your trees, a few minor tasks could be undertaken. By going out into your orchard from time to time and monitoring the trees progress, you can eliminate any potential problems while they are still manageable.

On newly planted trees, check your ties to see that they are the correct tension. The tree can rapidly expand in this ideal growing season and severely damage the tree. The tie should be firmly holding the tree but not cutting into it. Is the stake still firmly in the ground? If you have used well rotted farmyard manure, the birds could have scattered it everywhere or it could have rotted away by now. If this is the case, then top it up. It should be at least 3" deep. Spread it all around the tree beneath the canopy, not just by the trunk. The rain and worms will take nutrients down to the feeder roots.

On those mature trees that you have faithfully started restoring, you

should be watching out for signs of suckering and watershoots. Quite often on trees that have been heavily pruned, small lumps of soft growth will appear. These can be easily rubbed off with your fingernails. It certainly beats doing it when they have grown to six feet tall in the middle of winter! On some rootstocks, suckers will form and these should also be removed, in much the same way as you would do a rose. In fact, many practices are similar for apple trees and roses as they are both from the same family *Rosaceae*.

Therefore if you can grow roses well you can have no excuse not to succeed with your apple trees.

It would appear that we may get a good season for apples this year and many branches are already weighed down with a heavy load of fruit. A certain amount will fall off to alleviate the potential for broken branches, however sometimes this is not enough and the fruit needs to be thinned. Fruit thinning can also result in more evenly sized crops of better quality. By now, if your tree has the ability to shed its surplus fruit naturally, it will have done so. What you are trying to achieve is evenly spaced fruit with one apple per cluster with four to six inch spacings between apples. If this sounds

complicated then there is an easier way of doing it!

After your Sunday lunch (and if there is no Grand Prix on), go out to your trees and shake them. You will find a lot of the smaller, deformed fruit will drop off. Have a rest! Then look at the clusters and pull off the less perfect apples leaving uniform and evenly spaced fruits.

This should be done over a period of weeks. Due to our current wet season, there will be a lot of scab about and treatment is the same as blackspot on roses. But do you really want to spray a twenty foot high tree every ten to fourteen days?

Personally, I believe that a certain amount of blemish (and that's all it is) is acceptable. After all these are not supermarket apples!

Aphids can be a problem but I would only treat them on young trees if the infestation was really bad. Probably the biggest problem for trees in Devon (especially the South Hams) is canker. You can cut the damaged branches back to healthy wood and try putting canker paint on the wounds. Personally I have not had much success with this and generally if your tree has canker, you will have to live with it.

- Tom Hoblyn

Contributions to last seasons collection

Last year's harvest was carried out rather late in the season. As such only a small quantity of apples was collected for the pilot project. In addition, the needs of local cidemakers, and other markets for crops was not fully exploited. Thank you to all who took part - including ...

428.8Kg, (20 bags)
Mr & Mrs Reeves,
Buckfastleigh

107.2Kg, (5 bags)
Mrs Gill Buckfastleigh

535.8 Kg, (25 bags)
Mrs Lowe, Brixham

428.8 Kg, (20 bags)
Mr B Thompson,
Stokenham

107.2 Kg, (5 Bags)
Mr Harding, Modbury

1125.0 Kg, (45 bags)
Mr Webber, Totnes

2910.7 Kg, (145 bags)
Mr B Thompson,
Stokenham

843.6 Kg, (35 bags)
Mr Skipwith, Totnes

643.6 Kg, (24 bags)
Mrs Cleave, Brixham

268 Kg, (10 bags)
Mr Webber, Totnes

321 Kg (10 bags)
Mr Showell, Aish, Totnes

625 Kg, (25 bags)
Mrs Brassley, Chudleigh

455 Kg, (17 bags)
Mr Church, Stoke
Gabriel

What can you do to prepare for this years harvest?

There are a few things that can be done to improve the quality and quantity of apples collected from your orchards. In addition to the Summer orcharding tips from Tom Hoblyn, you can also prepare your orchard for harvest by carrying out a few simple tasks that will enable the crop collection teams to maximise their efforts whilst in your orchard. The first and probably the most important of these is to

- * Ensure that areas of grass and undergrowth around your trees are kept cut short. This is not essential for the collection of your crops but it does make it a lot easier for the collection teams.

- * Access points to your orchard should also be kept clear so the collectors are able to transfer the bags of apples collected to a suitable collection and loading point for the lorry.

- * If you wish to collect and bag your apples yourself and hence maximise the potential income from your orchards, it is most important that the bags you use should be strong, clean and have preferably not have been used for the storage of fertilizer or any other similar material which would be considered as a contaminant.

- * Make sure that you contact the co-ordinator

as early as you possibly can. This will enable him to advise you on any additional preparations required and allocate the fruit from your orchards at an early stage.

If you have any orcharding tips or experiences that you wish to share with other orchard owners, drop us a line and we will try to include them in the next newsletter.

What is Leader II?

LEADER is a community initiative which aims to test new solutions for rural areas by supporting local development programmes. It is based on the principle of active involvement of local people, businesses and local authorities.

Check McEwen, Programme Manager of South Devon and Dartmoor LEADER II said "Leader II and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are happy to provide funding towards Orchard Link because it is tailor made to meet the aims of LEADER. We see it as a very important for the local rural community. It will optimise revenue for orchard owners and those involved in the many other local food businesses.

"Orchard Link is a very important part of the project" Check said. "It will provide a source of valuable information and help, which will assist members to restore and manage their orchards. It will also provide the opportunity for people to come

together to form a support network, exchange experience and swap best practice.

It is a model of a working partnership of the public and private sector, coming together to make the best of opportunities for intelligent and sustainable use of the area's inherent resources.



See us at Dartmouth Orchard Day

Sunday 25th October

Come and explore Dartmouth's 10 acre community orchard - now stored and replanted to its former glory. Orchard Link will be there with a stall and will be pressing apples collected on site - so you can taste the fresh juice. Bring the family for a packed day of activities organised by the Coast and Countryside Service including apple and autumn tales by Clive Fairweather, apple basket making, apples games, orchard walks, lots of apple things to make including foam orchard insects, apples cards and jewellery - from recycled materials plus you can learn the 'historic virtues of cyder' - told in stories and song! 10.30 am to 4.00pm at College Way Orchard, Dartmouth. Entrance off Ridge Hill - follow signs from Coronation Park and the Ship In Dock Pub. Adults £2, children £1.

The Devon Orchard Project Ben Pike

For seven years and until recently, South Hams District Council ran a tremendously successful project propagating old varieties of

Westcountry apple trees and selling them to the public at subsidized prices.

As was always intended, the project completed its lifecycle but, so valuable was the work, that a small group of dedicated pomologists felt it right to take up the mantle and so last year the Devon Orchard Project was formed. Much discussion took place as to the scale and ambitions of the project, and eventually it was decided to bow to the limits imposed by members' busy lifestyles and to start the project on a small scale. Initial activity has ventured in two directions.

Firstly, we inherited about 25 trees which South Hams District Council had grafted from a fascinating old orchard near Ashburton known as Druid Orchard. This is a particularly interesting orchard as a planting plan from the 19th century came to light, marking the original locations of all the trees planted at that time, a most unusual find.

Sadly, time has taken its toll and many of the trees are no longer with us. However, the existence of the grafted trees will, hopefully, turn up some rarities in future years whereby they could be positively identified.

Secondly, We have purchased 60 rootstocks which, soon, we will start to bud and graft upon, to propagate any interesting varieties which we may come across. Our aim is to propagate cultivators which are not currently available commercially and are therefore in danger of dying out. If you have a variety of apple which you think may fit the bill, contact Orchard Link and they will direct your enquiries to us. (At present, only named varieties can be grafted) If you have a varieties which you wish to be identified you can contact Brogdale Horticultural Trust - Tel No: 01795 535286. It is anticipated that trees which we are propagating now, will be available to the public in two years time. Numbers may be limited at first and as such it would be wise to register your interest in securing trees at an early stage. More information is available from Ben Pike (Tel 01803 868962.)

Orchard Link at Kingsbridge Agricultural Show

Orchard Link will have a stall at the Kingsbridge and District Agricultural Show on 5th September.

Come along and talk to Orchard Link staff and other members. Find out more about local orcharding issues and practices. We'll be pressing apples on site so come along and enjoy a cool glass of freshly pressed juice from local orchards. You can sample some of the products for which your apples will be used and also learn how different apples can provide different tastes for the blending process in cider and juice manufacturing. For further details, contact Orchard Link.

Orchard Link available to all throughout Devon.

Orchard Link has close contact with growers and organizations across Devon. As such it has the ability to keep you in touch with local issues and aims to provide support and information to its members where ever they may be in the county.

Well Done D.N.D.T

Orchard Link recognises the important work of

Orchard Link

Dartington and North Devon Trust and the Save Our Orchards campaign, established in 1991. The campaign has supported Devon County Council's orchards initiative and has taken an active part in the Devon Orchards Liaison Group. The campaign has been concentrated mainly in North Devon, over the past seven years it has made an important contribution towards raising awareness of the need for urgent action if we are to conserve the traditional varieties of apple found in our orchards across the county. Find out how you can help DNDT a unique Devon Pomona in our next newsletter. Meanwhile if you have an orchard in North Devon and want to know more about the campaign call Michael Gee on 01271 76365.



Pest control: nature's way

Andrew Carden

The sun loving, wasp - coloured Hover Fly needs no introduction. They are surely familiar to everyone. The larvae of this little aerobatic wonder is one of the most voracious predators of any kind of aphid and hence they are of great benefit to the orchard owner.

These little flies are cunning enough to know that their larvae will need a good source of food, and since they only eat aphids, the adults can delay egg laying until the aphid population is such that an ample supply of the little pests have built up to a level that will sustain the larvae. The scent of a colony of aphids, stimulates the hover flies into egg laying. The eggs are laid on leaves close to the colony. (one particular species of hover fly larvae has been known to consume over 600 aphids in just 15 days!).

The larvae are small (1-2 cm), dirty white slug like creatures with no definite head. Their activity is not apparent in the daytime as they go to work on the resident aphid population during twilight and dawn.

After 10 - 15 days of intensive feeding, they form a small, oval, drop-shaped, brown pupa on the leaf. Hatching occurs after 2 weeks and there are several generations throughout the summer.

Generally, hover flies are not around for the early part of the summer and the greatest numbers can be observed, on the hunt, from June through to August - just at the same time as apple aphids build up on the young extension shoots of your trees.

The hover fly is a true fly. They have only one pair of wings whereas

bees and wasps have two. Unlike other flies, they have to feed on pollen to provide the protein source which enables the eggs to mature. Favourite sources of pollen are mayweed and umbellifers from cow parsley to giant hogweed.

Due to past agricultural practices of grubbing and spraying of field margins, the humble bumble bee was once in decline. Recent surveys show that numbers are recovering, but population levels have still yet to attain those observed in the pre-1960's. Never before has the bumble bee been so useful as we see the decline in the number of honeybees. Hives have become weakened by mites and viruses. In fact the humble bumble does a better job of pollinating apple blossom than the honey bee which is reluctant to fly for long hours or venture out in dull weather.

Leaving the hedge bottoms around our orchards will encourage hover flies to feed on the pollen and nectar of the many flowers which will remain but also provide suitable habitat for bumble bee colonies to develop. Orchard hedge borders also make a good refuge for other beneficials creating a reservoir of goodies ready for colonisation next summer.

Alternate year cropping.

E Dumas-Copas (Long Ashton Research Station)

Most traditional cider varieties have been selected over the years for their good fruit and juice qualities and their ability to produce a crop however irregular, with minimum maintenance in farm orchards. All cider varieties tend to overset. The heavy crop of fruit puts great demands on the tree's resources and competes, successfully with the next years developing flower buds to their detriment. A heavy crop

will be followed by a light crop whilst the trees recover. Both root and shoot growth is reduced thus a pattern of alternate year cropping is established as most trees settle down to operate in unison with each other and an "on" / "off" relationship develops. Any additional outside stress tends to accentuate the biennial tendency e.g. Drought stress will reduce flower bud production in an on-year whilst poor pollinating conditions in an off year will accentuate a small crop. Not only will orchards crop in unison but the whole cider crop tends to fluctuate similarly from year to year with many orchards "in phase" with one another, entirely "on" or more or less "off". The see-saw we see now began when the hot, dry summer of 1976 produced a heavy crop under drought stress and has swung further every subsequent year building up to a record crop in 1982. All cider varieties go biennial in time.

SOUTH HAMS ORCHARD SERVICES.



Planting

Renovation

Orchard reports

Management & advice

For a FREE estimate contact Ben Pike on:-

Tel / Fax: 01803 868962



OUR NEWSLETTER

Every quarter, the Orchard Link newsletter will be sent to Orchard Link members.

Each edition will contain a wealth of information about future events, training days and other Link activities. Regular contributions from local fruit tree experts can help you to get to know and care for your trees or help you to spot your 'Red Streak' from your Brown's Apple.

Special articles and a 'Your Letters' page, will let you share your ideas or experiences with other Link members. It can keep you in touch with what's happening at the 'core' of things including info about crop prices and collections.

- Advice and information is just a phone call away. Contact Orchard Link on:-
01548 511549

JOIN UP NOW!

The first ten members will receive a free flagon of Devon Cider kindly donated by:-
Heron Valley Cider.



Please return your completed application form and your remittance to:-

Orchard Link Ltd
Hazelgrove, South
Allington, Kingsbridge,
Devon. TQ7 2NB

Start gaining the benefits of Link membership today and help to keep our orchards alive!

What do you think of our Orchard Link Logo?



Can you think of a better one? Let us know!

Send your ideas or drawings to us at Orchard Link.

LOYAL SUPPORTERS

The concept of Orchard Link was thought up by the Coast and Countryside Service, and with help from Cathy Fitzroy - who until recently was Devon County Council's Orchard Advisor, they have obtained our grant funding from Leader II.

Over the coming three years the Coast and Countryside Service will still be offering considerable support and Trudy Turrell will be giving many hours of her time to the project - as it now replaces most of the orchard work which she provides on behalf of the Coast and Countryside Service. With support from the Service and from our funders and directors we have a wealth of advice and experience to draw upon - thank you all - we could not have done it without you.



Application for membership of Orchard Link.

First name: _____
Surname: _____
House/No: _____
Street: _____
Village/Town: _____
County: _____
Post Code: _____



I/we wish to apply for membership of Orchard Link. I enclose the sum of £15.00 as payment for this years subscription (August 1998 - August 1999).

Signed _____

Contact telephone No day: _____ evening: _____

How many trees do you have? _____

Acreage? _____

What varieties of apple do you have? (if known) _____

Are you? a) Orchard owner ... b) Cider maker... c) Horticultural contractor... d) Nursery...
e) Interested individual....

What condition are your tree stocks in? Good ---- Fair ---- Poor ----- (please tick as appropriate).

The information requested is solely for the use of Orchard Link and will remain confidential.

Use this page to make notes when you contact Orchard Link (*don't forget to return your membership form with your payment*).

