



ORCHARD LINK *NEWS*

Your Apples Have Been to Brussels

In a bid to promote the food and drink of the Westcountry to Europe's decision makers, 'Taste of the West' recently provided a buffet of Westcountry food and drink to the British Embassy who were entertaining a number of Euro MP's.

Philip Watts of Dartmouth Smokehouse, who was the organisations representative, chose to take Heron Valley Cider, as a non-alcoholic alternative to the beers and wines served. He describes it as 'a particularly refreshing alternative to alcoholic drinks'. Well, it does contain your apples collected by Orchard Link, let's hope that the way to Euro MPs' hearts (and budget) is through their stomachs!



Getting It Right?

'The whole process went like clockwork';
'Thank you for your prompt cheque';
'Great praise to the Herberts, who were so helpful in difficult conditions';
'Glad to see the apples used rather than going to waste.'

These were just some of the positive comments on our feedback forms sent to those who had used the collection service this year. After all the hard work, your feedback was encouraging, but we won't rest on our laurels, as new challenges meet us this coming autumn: a smaller harvest! (last year's was a real bumper one), an extended area for collection and finding a market for all those early Bramleys. We'll carry on with your help, trying to get it right.

INSIDE

- ◆ Join us FREE on Blossom Walk and learn to keep your orchard healthy.
- ◆ Attract bees to your trees, make a nesting block for summer.
- ◆ Seasonal orcharding advice from Ben Pike South Hams Orchard Services.
- ◆ Premium Cider from small cidemakers – read Steve Bradley of Heron Valley Cider's point of view.



A special **FREE** event for Orchard Link Members. Join us on a

BLOSSOM WALK

ON SUNDAY 30th APRIL

10.30am – 12.30pm

with Charles Staniland
Orchard Specialist and ex instructor Breton College.

Spend a Sunday morning wandering through Berry Pomeroy's 6 acres of orchards in blossom, where you can see trees old and young, including 'Paignton Marigold' and other old local varieties in blossom.

Along the way, expert Charles Staniland will offer some topical tips, show you how to keep your orchard healthy and demonstrate summer pruning for the months to come. A pleasant and informative morning and a chance to meet and exchange ideas with other Orchard Link members.

There's an optional pasty and cider lunch in the barn after the walk for just £2.

To join us, simply complete and return the form on the back page.

We shall meet at Berry Farm, which is on the Totnes to Berry Pomeroy road (from Totnes: take the main road through Bridgetown to Paignton at True Street, take the turning to Berry Pomeroy, Marlton and Torquay. The farm is ¼ mile along on your left).

We look forward to seeing you there!

Brothers in Brewing

Steve Bradley of Heron Valley Cider muses on the lot of small cidemakers in Devon

Some time ago I was at Chris Coles Green Valley Cider Shop in Exeter, enjoying a glass of "Rum Tiddly Tum" and musing on a fine piece of furniture I had seen and admired earlier in the day. This was a handsome refectory table, beautifully made from hand crafted oak, and large enough to sit a good number of friends around for a convivial supper. The table carried a small plaque, discreetly attached to one end, which bore the legend "Cap of Liberty".

In case you are wondering what on earth is the connection, let me tell you that "Cap of Liberty" is the name of one of the large oak vats (many cider makers used to use them and they ranged in capacity from 1000 gallons to as much as 25,000 gallons) sold off from Inch's Cider Premises in North Devon in 1998.



The giant company which bought Inch's moved the entire operation, which was the last remaining of its size in the county, up country to merge with its existing enterprise, which initially seemed a great shame, or was it?

What remains in Devon today; if you judge professional cidemakers by the yardstick of production of more than 15,000 gallons; that is the amount which obliges you to register with, and invite the keen attention of, the Customs and Excise Authorities, there are just eleven stout souls who run their smallish operations with great dedication and enthusiasm, and who succeed in making a decent drink out of our local apples.

"Cap of Liberty" was just one of the huge oaken vats bought by furniture makers and transformed by them into works of art of a different kind. There were just

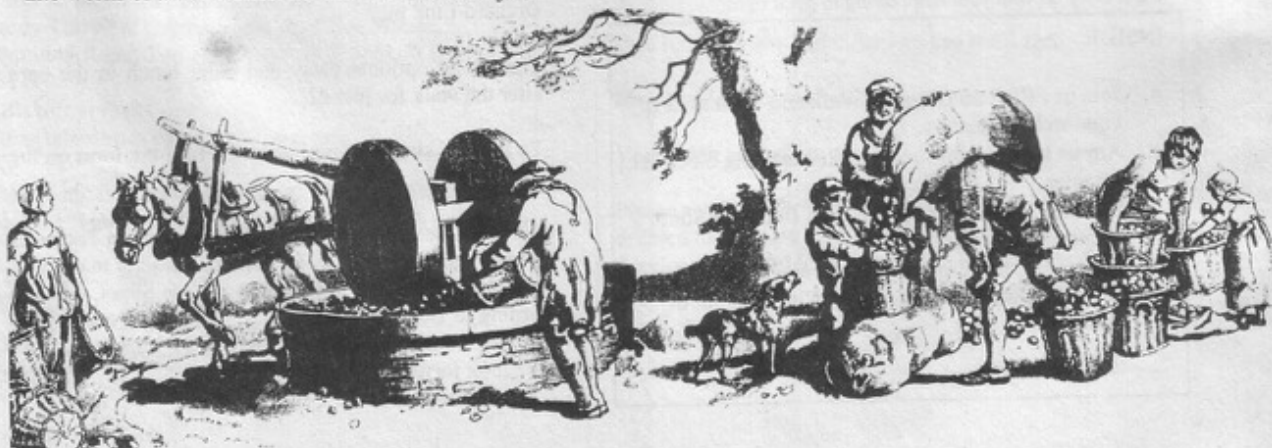
not enough cidemakers left in the area to find a use for these vats, and large commercial cidemakers tend to favour stainless steel and fibreglass in which to concoct their drinks. Among the band of eleven brothers (cidemakers tend to be mad I'm afraid) are Chris Coles, aforementioned, the writer of this article, and David Bridgeman of the Winkleigh Cider Company, who, in partnership with his wife Jackie (Oh! There are lady cidemakers after all), his brother Graham and his wife Margaret, are making cider at the very premises once owned by Inchs and closed down by Bulmers when the operation they bought was moved to Hereford a few years ago.

David Bridgeman worked at Inchs for 30 years and he and his partner's love of cider has kept Winkleigh associated with the trade and has ensured the replacement of a large factory type cidery with a small "hand made" marque. Thus the Bridgemans have strong links with all of us who are in their own way trying to produce a top quality product which refuses to give up its strong historical roots. The merging of large national companies has left a vacuum which is being filled to some extent by a group of thriving, smaller, "real" cidemakers who are catering for an expanding discerning public.

In South Devon, we are blessed with a busy tourist trade an abundance of country pubs whose licencees actively encourage locally made produce – and they know there is an increasing market for it. This niche area leads to a kind of cross fertilization of tastes which enables the interested customer to order a glass of local cider, or beer, to wash down his oysters from the Rivers Avon, Exe and Teign, or his Devon Blue Cheese or Sharpham Brie (the latter also make one of the very best English wines on the market).

So, far from being the tragedy for local cider that the closure of Inchs threatened to be, it has provided space for the starting up and growth of several family run businesses, my own included.

Working in conjunction with other quality food producers in the area, we are actually stimulating an increasing desire for tasty local products from an area where we can still find the time to seek out treats not normally available at the supermarket. Many of us ferment our cider naturally, which is to say that the yeasts present on the outside of the apples eat the sugars



within, giving the by-product (and what a by-product!) alcohol.

Obviously it would be impossible to maintain the individuality of this organic process if thousands upon thousands of gallons were made at one time. Thus we have the advantage of offering you a rich and differing experience every time you try individual Devon ciders where every barrel sampled can be deliciously different.

There are further spin-offs from this exciting interest in local food and drink products. In our area we have Orchard Link, a body which seeks to promote and maintain local apple orchards by acting as a non profit making broker, putting owners of small orchards, or even a few garden trees, in touch with cidemakers and jam and chutney producers.

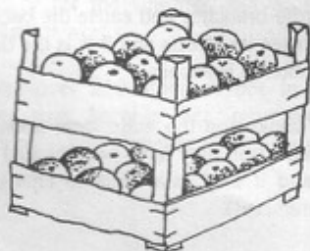
Finally as for "Rum Tiddly Tum". Barrels used in the traditional cider industry normally follow a progression from Sherry or Port cask to Highland Whisky or Rum barrels before finding their way via the second-hand market to us cidemakers. If you put made cider into recently bought rum casks (whiskey doesn't seem to work well, though port is a fine thing) you produce a deliciously mellow, alcoholic, aromatic and intoxicating brew which is a true assault on the taste buds - "Rum Tiddly Tum"; and you'll have to wait a long time before you find a bottle of that on your local supermarket shelf!

Steve has just written this article for the CAMRA guide to real Cider and has kindly allowed us to reproduce it here. He also helps Orchard Link in a voluntary capacity, as an advisor and more. Thanks for all your support Steve!



Lofty Ideals

Do you have a sound apple loft which you are not using? If so, are you willing to rent it out, for a small consideration to a newly formed organic food processing company? One woman and her preserving pan! Please let me know. Many thanks. GM Laver. Tel 01803 865653.



Wassailing Through the Seasons

James Armstrong Evans, who has for many years been researching, grafting and saving the rare apple varieties of the Tamar Valley gave us this wassail poem.

He composed it himself following the format of a traditional wassail song, and James and friends read it to wassail his orchard of local apples trees this January.

I think it's a lovely evocation of the seasons in the orchard and am sure it will bring on more fruit!

Wassail

Old/young apple tree we wassail thee
Come rime or gale or wet,
Now stand thou square till May blows fair
When bees your fruit will set

Bright sun with heat then forge them sweet
And summer rain make swell,
Till boughs all ache and almost break
With bounty proud to tell.

Soon creeping cold and misty gold
Will herald winter's dress:
We'll glean the sward and make a hoard
To fill the pound and press.

From emptied sacks to brimming vats -
Pig's Snout, Tom Knight, Curl Tail,
With craft and care we'll close the year,
Brave friends, good cheer: wassail!



Beasts Behind the Blossoms

Seasonal Orchard Advice from Ben Pike of South Hams Orchard Services.

Very soon you will be sitting out in warm spring sunshine with apple blossom swaying on a gentle breeze. But what does it take to transform the fragile beauty of an apple flower into the crisp juiciness of a ripe apple fresh from the tree?

The main requirement is that your blossom must be pollinated. Most apples are known as diploids, that is they produce fertile pollen of their own. A few varieties (Beauty of Bath and James Grieve are examples) will produce a limited crop from their own pollen. Yet realistically you will need a second tree to act as a pollinator. The requirements of this tree are that it flowers at the same time, that it is not a triploid (more on this later) and that it is close enough, preferably less than 20 metres.

Once these conditions are satisfied, it is down to that humble servant, the bee, to spread pollen from tree to tree. For this reason it is essential when choosing varieties to plant to ensure that trees meant to pollinate each other will be flowering at the same time. Ask your supplier for advice.

All is fairly straightforward up to this point until we come to the knotty problem of triploids. Triploids have an extra set of chromosomes rendering their pollen unviable. So a triploid requires two other trees to pollinate it, all three flowering at the same time. The Bramley is the best-known example of a triploid.

Now that you have the right varieties sorted out you might think your work is done, but there are a few potential hazards to consider.

The first is frost. A heavy frost when the blossom is open can severely damage the potential crop. You could light a bonfire on nights when frost is forecast, but a more sensible and restful approach would be to avoid planting in a frost pocket (if possible), or to choose late-flowering varieties.

There is also the possibility of damage to the blossom from disease or creepy-crawlies. If flowers wither and die soon after appearing, then blossom wilt is the most likely cause. A wind-borne fungus (*Sclerotinia*) thriving in damp conditions, blossom wilt can be treated by spraying copper oxychloride just before the flowers open.

The most troublesome pest is the caterpillar of the winter moth. They eat blossom as well as leaf buds and fruitlets. They are looping, yellow-green caterpillars up to 25mm long, also noticeable by their habit of binding leaves together with silky threads. The traditional remedy is tying grease bands around the trunk in autumn. These prevent the wingless female moths climbing up the trunk.

Other less common pests to look for are apple suckers (small pale green insects) and apple blossom weevils (creamy white grubs inside damaged blossom).

It's probably time to stop depressing you about pests and diseases; after all it might spoil your enjoyment of that warm spring sunshine.



Sharing Common Ground

Dan Keech, Common Ground's Orchard Campaign organiser is fast compiling a very useful set of notes on orchards, caring for, conserving, using and enjoying them. On my desk are the latest hot off the press.

- ◆ 'Small Scale Apple Juice Pressing'
- ◆ 'Small Scale Cidermaking'
- ◆ 'Infant Fruit Tree Care - The First Five Years'

Each double sided A3 leaflet costs 50p and is available, as is 'Orchard News' (with details of orchard campaigns, community orchards, Apple Days and more all round Britain) from:

Common Ground, PO Box 25309 London NW5 12A.
www.commonground.org.uk

Timely Advice

Taken from Common Ground's new advisory sheet 'Infant Trees- The First Five Years'

◆ Cut out the canker

Living and growing apple trees in the damp South West, we need always to be on the look out for canker. It's a severe fungal infection in apples, causing fissures and brown flakey bark. It will eventually girdle branches and cause die back. In spring you can see its effects and this is the time to cut out any cankered branches.

If you notice canker on the main stem soon after planting, the infection may have been picked up in the nursery, and it may save time to change the tree (and the nursery!).

◆ Pick your blossoms?

The sight of the first fruit blossom will be a delight just a few months after planting. Some gardeners advise removing the flowers to encourage the tree to put all its efforts into growing rather than fruiting. Certainly the first fruit is unlikely to be very palatable. A compromise could be to leave the flowers to nature and remove the diminutive fruit in the first autumn.

Some varieties, such as the apple James Grieve, quickly set an abundance of fruit which can cause young branches to bend down or even snap, rather than encouraging the tree to establish a strong branch framework. During the second fruiting season, such plentiful clusters should be thinned to one fruit only. Fruit borne at branch tips, as with Cornish Gilliflower or Grenadier apples, should be discarded until the third season for the same reason.

◆ Loosen your ties

May is a good time to wander round the orchard and to check that tree ties are not strangling the trunks of young trees. You should also check that trees still require their ties. The Tree Council recommends the following procedure to check whether a stake is still needed: 'Release the ties and then push the tree gently to one side. If it returns to an upright position, carefully remove the stake by pulling it upwards. Gently using a crow bar will help. Shaking the stake may damage the tree roots. Fill in the hole. If the tree does not return to an upright position, move the tie down the trunk until you find the point where you can push the tree and it does return. Try this again annually until it is safe to remove the stake altogether'. In our clayey soils, trees can establish a good root system quite quickly and so at least a yearly check is advisable.

Make a Nesting Block for Bees

This ingenious device has been pioneered by the 'Home Orchard Society' in Oregon USA and was passed on to me by the Hertfordshire Orchard initiative. The simply constructed hanging block of cells attracts species of solitary bees to your apple trees to assist pollination and offers pollination boost, if as in so many areas, local honeybees have declined in numbers in recent years.

The blocks are easy to construct and could be made now, ready for the summer, out of scraps of wood. Here's how it works:

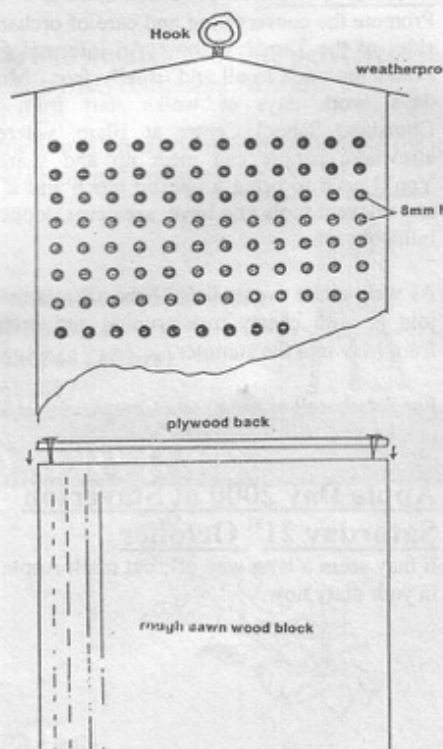
There are over 250 kinds of bee in Britain and the honeybee and bumble bee represent only a tiny proportion. The honeybee and bumblebee live in

colonies and belong to a group known as the social bees, the majority of other species are solitary bees. All bees, are completely dependant on flowering plants for food, in the form of pollen and nectar, and in turn plants depend upon bees for pollination. Fruit growers rely on honeybees to pollinate their fruit blossom in the spring and it has been estimated that, in Britain the honeybees' share in increasing the yield of crops and fruit is worth millions of pounds.

Honeybees are kept in hives from which we take honey and other bee products such as wax. Unfortunately during the past few years honeybee colonies throughout the UK have been decimated by a parasitic mite. This has serious implications for fruit production. In Britain solitary bees are to be found in many gardens during the spring and summer months but go largely unobserved. Common species include the mason, mining and leaf-cutter bees. The female solitary bee constructs a tiny tunnel in a lawn or wall in which she lays a single egg. Nectar and pollen is collected, made into a paste and then placed in the tunnel near the egg to serve as food for the developing bee. The tunnel is then sealed.

Solitary bees such as the mason bee can be attracted to fruit trees by supplying a bee nesting block of rough cut wood 30cms (12ins) long and 10cmx10cm (4in x 4in) square filled with artificial nesting tunnels. Holes 8mm (5/16ths) in diameter are drilled right through the block of wood. Tack a thin piece of plywood on the back of the block to seal off the ends of the tunnels. A block this size can accommodate about 80 or 90 holes of this diameter. Attach a makeshift roof and fix a hook and wire so the block can be hung from a fruit tree branch.

NESTING BLOCK CONSTRUCTION



What's on?

For Coast and Countryside events call 01803 861140. Tamar Valley Orchard Volunteers courses call Sheila Camplin 01822 833804. South Hams Organic Gardeners Society SHOGS - Liz Collins or Anna Brindley 01548 853220

March

Sat 18th Learn to graft, make sheep and rabbit guards. Stoke Climsland 10am-4pm. Tamar Valley Orchard Volunteers. Free

**Sat 18th
Sun 19th** Organic gardening-Weekend Course SHOGS

Sun 26th Learn to graft. Stoke Climsland 10am-4pm. Tamar Valley Orchard Volunteers.

April

Sat 1st Fruit tree planting (of mostly containerised local variety apples, pears, cherries - 10 to 4pm. Tamar Valley Orchard Volunteers.

Sun 30th Don't miss Orchard Link's Blossom Walk at Berry Pomeroy, simply return the coupon the back page.

The Tamar Valley Orchard Volunteers

Promote the conservation and care of orchards on both sides of the Tamar Valley. An informal group, their events are open to all and usually free. Most training days, work days or walks start from the Stoke Climsland School Centre at 10am, where if going elsewhere people can meet up and share vehicles. You'll need to bring a packed lunch and a flask, plus any relevant tools you have, secateurs, loppers, spades, billhooks etc.

As well as the events listed here, there's the chance to join in with cherry tree pruning and orchard walks from May into the summer.

For details call either Sheila Camplin on 01822 833804 or Caroline Villiany on 01579 37042.

Apple Day 2000 at Staverton Saturday 21st October

It may seem a long way off, but mark Apple Day 2000 in your diary now.

The day will be a bumper event centred around Woolston Green, Landscope, Staverton. With craft stalls, displays of pruning, pressing, apple trees to buy, apples and cider to taste, plus two apple cafés and lots

of children's events, it will be a superb day out for all ages.

Orchard Link will be there with our stall and selling apples. (Could you spare an hour to help?). We look forward to seeing you!

Produce from Land and Sea

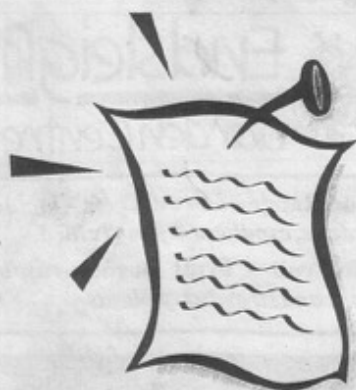
Pick up a copy of the Spring 'Coast and Countryside Events' programme and you'll notice a number of visits and walks which focus on food, drink and timber which are produced locally, meeting those who grow, process and sell products from the South Hams.

You might like to visit Sharpham Vineyard, to see vines and vegetables growing and taste locally produced wine and cheese (**Sunday 16th April**) make willow garlands and see an egg cookery demonstration at an Easter Workshop at Kitley Farm Shop (**Tuesday 18th April**), or tour Riverford Farm's fields of organic vegetables (**Sunday 21st May**).

Full details of these and many other events can be found in the programme. Available at local shops, libraries and Information Centres, alternatively call 01803 861140 for a copy.

Talking of local produce. Why not pay a visit to Kingsbridge Farmers Market. Nothing can beat fresh, locally produced food. Rediscover the joys of market shopping at Kingsbridge Farmers Market, on the first Saturday of every month. You'll find everything from cabbages to farmhouse cheese, sausages to sponge cakes, all sold by those who grow or make them. The markets will be held in the town square on the following Saturdays from 9am to 1pm, **1st April, 6th May and 3rd June.**





Could You be Part of the Orchard Link Team?

If you enjoy your orchard and being a member of Orchard Link, how about becoming more involved?

The small team of people who organise Orchard Link need the help of members if the organisation is to continue to succeed and grow.

We don't ask for a regular commitment of time, but could you help with running our stalls at the Kingsbridge Show in September and the Kingsbridge Farmers Market or Staverton Apple Day in October? Could you help collect up small quantities of apples in your area, to make the collection scheme more efficient? Or would you be able to fill (reused) envelopes with newsletters ready for posting each season?

Whilst we cannot offer payment, we may be able to offer you free membership, travel costs and of course, you'll be able to extend your orchard knowledge and meet other members.

Ultimately we're looking for extra directors for Orchard Link, so if you'd like to play your part in steering us into the 21st Century, come and get involved!

Orchard Link News is produced by Orchard Link. It is free to members. For details on membership contact Trudy Turrell at Orchard Link, Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5NE. Tel 01803 861140.

Visit our website on:

||<http://httn:telematics.ex.ac.uk/fr-mn.htm>.

Orchard Link is supported by South Devon & Dartmoor Leader II Project and the Coast and Countryside Service.

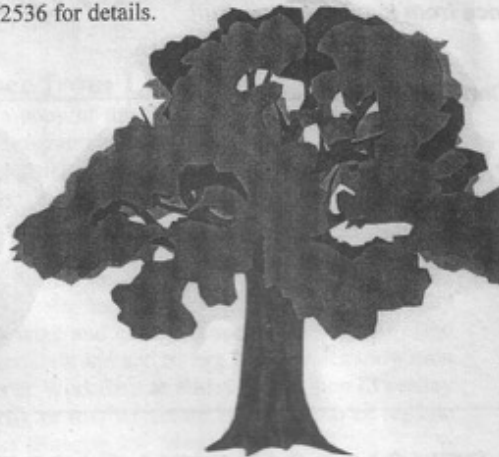


Don't burn it – Turn it!

If ever you have to fell or heavy prune an apple tree and have reasonable amounts of apple wood, you can try to sell it locally. Whilst apple wood does burn well and gives off a lovely smell when burning, wood turners prize its close grain and pale colour. It can make fabulous bowls. So ask around, maybe at your local craft fair or shop where you see turned wood, or tell us and we'll put your apple wood into Orchard Link News free of charge. After all, Orchard Link is all about trying to get a return on local orchards and so keeping them sustainable.

Apple Wood for Sale

Mrs Jones, who lives near Kingsbridge has one large apple tree trunk (5' long and 4' diameter) plus numerous smaller round wood. Any offers? Call her on 01548 852536 for details.



Reply slip for

BLOSSOM WALK SUNDAY 30th April

Name(s).....

.....

Address.....

.....

.....

I/we require pasty and cider lunches at £2 each.

Meat pasties required

Vegetarian pasties required.

Please send this form and a cheque to cover lunches ordered to Orchard Link, c/o Coast and Countryside Service, Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5NE