

ORCHARD LINK *NEWS*

JOIN THE PRESS GANG!

Back in February at Orchard Link's Annual Gathering, we asked members whether they would like to the use of a press – to produce their own juice and cider on site. Since then, several of you have enthusiastically responded and so we have taken the plunge and have purchased not one but two presses for Orchard Link!

Whilst some members wished to have a mobile press to use on their land, for others, being able to bring apples to a larger on site facility, where help would also be on hand was a more attractive option. Having a press at a prominent site might also make it easily available to the wider community and provide a 'shop window' for Orchard Link. So out of a dilemma we've managed to achieve both options, and you have only to choose how to press your apples!

To make milling and pressing apples on site easy, we've purchased a high speed centrifugal mill in stainless steel. With a two horse power motor powered from the mains, it will be able to mill large quantities of fruit at a time and by milling efficiently, you'll be able to get the most juice from your fruit when it is pressed. This is accompanied by a small but efficient press from 'Vigo', which although weighs only 60kg, will press ½ tonne of milled fruit a day.

Inside;

- Hire Orchard Link's press and mill.
- Learn to Summer prune.
- Act Globally, Shop Locally



Together with instructions and press cloths, this whole package can be delivered on a trailer to members houses or orchards and they can invite friends and neighbours to bring their apples and take away the juice. Juice can be frozen, (perhaps easiest of all) or pasteurised, or turned into cider.

Alternatively, you can come to Pressing Days on our community press. The press is being specially made for us by the Shropshire Apple Trust (an group of enthusiasts like ourselves). They have designed a traditional twin screw press, a scaled version of the old presses, built from green oak with steel screws. With three or four people to help, it's easy to work by hand, and will provide gallons of juice at a pressing. What's more is that we have a superb site for it- at Riverford Farm, just off the main Totnes to Buckfastleigh road.

It will be an ideal place for people to bring their apples and to join in with pressing. We also plan to run cider pressing training days there, using both the small and large press.

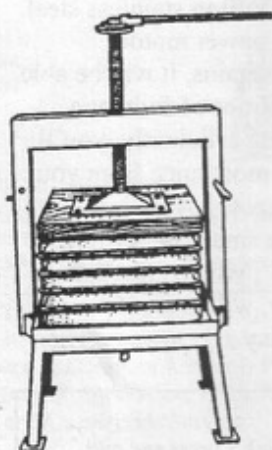
If you need any further inspiration to come along and press some of your apples at Riverford this Autumn, read Michael Pooley of The Shropshire Apple Trust's account of their first pressing:

'I still have an abiding memory of the day; a picture of industry with people surrounded by piles of apples, shovelling them into a water tank for washing, of two men nearby, arms flying, operating the scratting mill, of other people hurrying hither and thither with buckets of apples, of someone else pouring samples of juice out of a big jug at a table for people to taste and 'ooh' and 'ah' over. And at the centre of all this was the working twin-screw press that a few volunteers with a good idea had built, its ironwork nearly pristine, its timbers still relatively clean and unweathered. Someone is shovelling milled apple pulp into the wooden frame, spreading it out by hand, folding over the press cloth. Then the screws' winged collars are being turned, first by hand then with long ash poles bringing down the top block onto the cheese and out of the chute apple juice is cascading into its container below. Someone's two year old daughter is leaning over the container, holding her cup below the lip, entranced with its filling, its overflowing. Again and again she empties it, fills it. She's centre stage. The cameras are popping. It is a very happy occasion, lots of smiles and laughter, sweat and noise, a genuine community event. It's what every community needs. And we know we are doing right because we even have glorious warm October sun on our backs!'

HIRING THE MOBILE PRESS

The whole kit will be available to hire to Orchard Link members only. When delivered you'll have around an hour's instruction, (obligatory for your first hire unless you have attended one of the short cidermaking days planned for the Autumn.) Hire will be for 2 days to allow you plenty of time to use the equipment, and will be cheaper if you can hire it during the mid week. We have still to finalise charges, but aim to keep prices as low as we possibly can to allow members to use this wonderful kit (worth around £1,500!) for themselves.

Of course we all have lots to learn – and as the summer progresses I'll be starting to organise cidermaking workshops and to sort out all the practicalities of trailering the press and back up equipment around the area. Meanwhile if you fancy the idea of having the hands on experience of pressing, and drinking your own apples, call 01803 861183 and let me know. By August I will have an information sheet with hire charges and full details to send out.



GETTING A BUZZ FROM YOUR ORCHARD

The hum of bumble bees is surely the sound of summer in the orchard. Sadly it's a sound that is heard less and less in the countryside as tracts of suitable farmland habitat disappear. In the last two years a species of bumblebee has become extinct and 6 types only out of the 16 common species are to be found easily and there are far less number than 20 years ago.

As orchard owners we have an opportunity to provide habitats for bumble bees – which in turn is a suitable habitat for yellowhammers, grey partridges, skylarks and barn owls. In return they reward they reward the orchard owners with pollination of the apple trees – often in lower temperatures and poorer weather than honeybees can. So what do bumblebees need from the environment.



Bumblebee colonies are started anew at the beginning of each season by a single queen which has hibernated in the ground during the winter. The queen seeks out a suitable location for the new colony. While there may be plenty of potential nest sites – perhaps an abandoned mousehole or shrew's nest – whether or not the colony survives the first perilous weeks will depend on the quality of the surrounding forage.

The colony needs both nectar as a fuel for the adult and pollen for the developing larvae. Bumblebees will fly half a mile or more from the nest to find these, searching for new supplies when the old ones run out. However, a constant supply of food must always be present in the

foraging area during the lifespan of the colony between April and September.

Fortunately, the favoured forage plants are widespread and not difficult to grow. These include such common species as white deadnettle, red and white clovers, common birdsfoot, trefoil and black knapweed.

At the end of its life, the colony produces new males and females; and after mating, the new queens hibernate.

Providing habitats within an orchard is easy – You can:

- Encourage white dead nettle growth in hedgerows (it's an important forage crop in Spring).
- Leave some tall grass and moss around the edges of the orchard.

Some species nest underground whilst others, the carder bumblebees, nest on the surface. They make their nests from moss and dead grass and are attracted to the tall, open grassland that develops when a grazed or cut area is left for two or three years.

So try to allow orchard margins to develop a rough tussocky structure where mice and voles will nest. These areas will also provide good hunting grounds for barn owls.

If you have farmland and grow clover as a crop – leave small areas to flower again after cutting. Food for grey partridge chicks and skylarks will also be provided by such areas.

With our help we will still hear these amazing and beneficial insets for years to come.



LOCAL FOOD FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

The disinfectant mats were out and all conversations led to foot and mouth, but it didn't stop over 100 people packing a hall in St Loyes College, Exeter to attend a Westcountry Food Links Conference on local food. Attendees came from every walk of life and connection with food production; from organic farmers to local authority staff, teachers to farm shop managers – all shared a common bond to produce and sell local food to local people.

It seems a simple and logical concept doesn't it? But in the 'Alice in Wonderland' world of food production – things just don't make sense. Keynote speaker, Rob Brighton from the Land Heritage Trust illustrated with just a few statistics. Did you know that

- 35% of the total freight moved on UK roads is food.
- We use 22 million kilograms of pesticides a year. We also pay £120 million a year to clean up rivers and streams from pesticide pollution. Although food may be 'cheap' in the shops – we are really paying for it twice through our taxes.
- Chicken don't just cross the roadthe average chicken travels 200 km before it reaches the table. In fact we export 33,000 and import a further 66,000 - WHY?

Caught up in this world some had decided to take matters into their own hands. Highfield Farm, Topsham opened its own farm shop after witnessing a supermarket taking their organic cauliflowers to Wales to be shrink-wrapped before transporting them back to Exeter to sell.

Rob Brighton warned that unless we take things into our own hands, we shall truly feel the effects of an environmental backlash. He cited the recent animal disease crises – BSE, salmonella, laminitis – foot and mouth being the latest which could largely be traced back to a lack of 'healthy' soil. Denuded of minerals by erosion and sprays and grazed by commercially developed stock; less suited to fattening on grass and reliant on concentrate feeds and

antibiotics, he warned that more disease was inevitable.

So who is to blame? Is it us? Martin Caraher, a researcher at the Centre for Food Policy argues that 90% of the food eaten today is processed in some form. A quarter of all the food eaten is between meal snacks! Do we demand every fruit and vegetable throughout the year, easy cook meals, glitzy packaging and endless variety? Partly yes, but the supermarkets who provide it (six large retailers now control 70% of the UK's food sales) have spent a great deal of time and money convincing us. They have achieved their aim, now that 94% of people do their main food shop in a supermarket – and they are always ahead of the game.

Organic growers from Devon were distressed to relate that now 75% of the total organic food sold is retailed through supermarkets. Whilst it is organic, it most certainly is not green, having travelling thousands of miles often by air and probably produced by very poorly paid workers. Due to the interest in farmers markets, supermarkets are offering their lobbies or car parks to farm traders, effectively blocking benefits to local town shops by the increased trade and keeping some control over who sells what, at what price?



HELP TO TURN THE TIDE

Thanks to Westcountry Food Links, vegetable box schemes, community supported agriculture (share in farms) and in a small way, Orchard Link – people are being ever more encouraged to buy local.

Not only are you purchasing fresh, often organic food, in reality you are supporting the local economy for all of us.

The good news is that in Devon

- The 550 Devon businesses which produce local food, employ 583 more full time people than ordinary farm businesses
- 38% of these businesses recently created new jobs
- Local food created £16.5 million pounds which has been spent in the local economy.

Reconnecting people with the landscape and farmers around them via the food which they eat makes obvious sense – but we still have a long journey to travel!

APPLE FACT:

The energy required to transport 1 kg of New Zealand apples to a UK shop produces
100 g of carbon dioxide emissions.

The energy involved in delivering 1 kg of apples through a local vegetable box scheme produces just 50 g.

POLLINATION, PEAR MIDGES AND PLUMS

If you take a walk now amongst your fruit trees, you will hopefully notice that this has been an exceptional year for the pollination, or setting of fruit. From April, when plums and pears were in blossom, through May when apples were displaying their wares to the bees, the weather has been very kind. There were no late frosts to damage the blossom, and the days have mostly been dry and sunny. This is ideal weather to lure bees to the flowers, with many windy days the only deterrent to their vital activity.

I was amazed to see that a rather grumpy old Conference tree in the garden, which normally sports just a handful of scabby pears, was this year showered with healthy – looking young fruitlets. For a few weeks I was able to gleefully imagine that I had inflicted some magical cure on the poor tree, so you can imagine my horror when I suddenly noticed that the fruitlets were going black and soft, and dropping off. When I picked one from the ground, and opened it up,

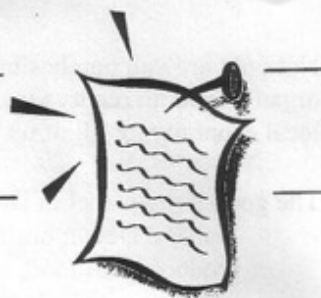
the tell-tale signs were obvious. Inside were several brown and white caterpillar-like maggots. These are the larvae of the pear midge, *Contarinia pyrivora*, which lays its eggs on the blossom. The larvae then eat their way into the developing fruitlets, munching away until the fruitlets drop off. They then live in the soil, pupating inside silk cocoons, and re-emerging as adults the following spring.

So what I can I do to repel this voracious invader? Well, firstly there is very little that I can do this year. I can pick off the infected fruitlets, or pick them up from the ground before the larvae finish eating them, thus breaking their reproductive cycle. Or I could wait until next year and spray the blossom at white bud stage with pirimiphos-methyl or fenitrothion. As I am generally of organic persuasion, I shall be relying on the first method; I don't grow fruit trees so that I can cover them with the same expensive pesticides and fungicides that commercial growers use. This is however a pest that needs to be kept on top of, as once it is established it can keep re-infesting the same tree for years. There is another remedy which I cannot consider, which is the use of tar-oil. I cannot use it because it kills grass, and my pear tree grows in the middle of the lawn! The method is to spray around the base of the tree at the end of March.

Plums have also enjoyed a good fruit set this year with one attendant danger; some varieties, notably Victoria, can carry such a weight of fruit that their branches break under the strain. So thinning the fruit, painful as it may seem will give better results in the long term, particularly as wounds where branches break are places where infections can enter the tree. It is not too late to prune plum trees now. Plums are pruned in the early summer to avoid the problems of silverleaf and bacterial canker entering through pruning, although even in the summer it is worth applying a wound paint to larger cuts.

Finally spare a thought for Norwegian apple growers. Yes, there are such people, even growing apples commercially. They are currently suffering an infestation of the Rowanberry worm, a pest so severe that if left unchecked it will strip an orchard of every single apple. The pesticide used is so harmful that no one is allowed in the orchard for 5 days after its use. And you think you have it tough!

What's on?



For Coast and Countryside events call 01803 861140.

JUNE

Saturday 30th -

Not about apples but anyone interested in making (or drinking!) wine will enjoy a **guided tour and tasting at Sharpham Vineyard**, Ashprington near Totnes. Meet at the top of Sharpham drive at 10.30am return around 1.3 pm or bring a picnic to enjoy in the fields. Adults £3.50 Children £1.50; includes samples of local Sharpham cheese and wine. Call the Coast & Countryside Service for further details.

JULY

Saturday 14th

South West Forest Wood Fair – Roadford Lake near Okehampton.

Of interest to landowners, foresters, craftspeople and anyone who appreciates trees! Plenty of hands on demonstrations, from heavy horse logging to charcoal making. Free entry 10 am to 5 pm. Call 01409 221896 for further details.

Sunday 15th

Summer Pruning Workshop.

Led by orchard expert, Charles Staniland, at an orchard in the South Hams. Come and learn how to contain the shape and size of your trees and harvest better fruit. £10. Booking essential. Call the Coast & Countryside Service.

Tuesday 24th

Make a slot together compost bin and learn to make garden furniture from waste and pallet wood. Very environmentally friendly! 10am to 4 pm. Tresillian Community Garden Kingsbridge £10.00 Contact the Coast & Countryside Service.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 1st

Return of South Hams Farmers Markets.

Come to Kingsbridge Quay from 9am for a bumper farmers market with a harvest theme. Vegetables, fish, meat and lots of country crafts

to join in with plus music too – make this a great way to do your shopping. We hope to have a small display there too. Anyone able to help?

OCTOBER

Saturday 6th

Kingsbridge Farmers market (See September for details). We will have a stall, bring your apples to sell and we'll be pressing juice on site. If you can help or wish to bring apples call Trudy on 01803 861183.

FARMERS MARKETS ARE BACK!

Following the foot and mouth restrictions, Totnes and Kingsbridge Farmers Markets will resume in September. We aim to have stalls at both at which you will be able to sell your apples. (The Orchard Link stalls will need to be staffed by members – so if you are able to help out whilst selling your own produce, call Trudy on 01803 861183 as soon as you can.)

Meanwhile put these dates on your calendar and enjoy fresh local foods, straight from the producer.

Kingsbridge 9am to 2 pm on the Quay

Saturday 1st September

Saturday 6th October

Saturday 3rd November

Saturday 1st December

Totnes

9 am to 2 pm Totnes Civic Hall

Saturday 29th September

Saturday 27th October

Saturday 24th November

Saturday 22nd December

MARKET GARDENING

The Tamar Valley has a wonderful tradition of market gardening. For about 200 years until the 1950s and 1960s the industry dominated the parts of the Tamar Valley. This included extensive orchards, the Tamar Valley being particularly noted for its cherries.

A favourable climate and mainline railway to the south-east allowed a range of crops to be produced ahead of other parts of the country. Improvements within communication and horticultural technology over last fifty years have led to its almost disappearance, and now the landscape footprint and cultural legacy are fast disappearing. This industry had a profound impact upon the local landscape, community and culture. Its remnants are widespread including walls and packing sheds, orchards daffodil plots and smallholdings. Work has already been undertaken, for instance the collection of local varieties of fruit and daffodils, and we wish to build upon this.

The project is a partnership of the Tamar AONB, Calstock Development Trust and National Trust. The work will include finding out about the historical development of the industry, the type of things which were grown, the people involved, and will develop a catalogue of what remains today. The information will be used to produce a management plan for the future conservation of the living plant, landscape and cultural resource. Part of the project will assess measures to help the remaining industry survive and expand.

In a recent newspaper article by Virginia Spiers a local writer, she talks of how noticeable it was that in South of France these old varieties of fruit are treasured by locals. The fruit may have a short shelf life but it tastes far better. They consume all of the fruit themselves within their communities rather than letting others into their

secret. We hope that we can revive this ideal here in the Tamar. We would welcome the opportunity to talk to and work with people involved and those with knowledge and ideas about the industry past, present and future. Please contact Tim Selman on 01822 610678 or Jo Dixon on 01822 834303

NORTH DEVON ORCHARDS – SURVEY CONTINUES

Last winter the Northern Devon Coast & Countryside Service launched a special survey of orchards in the North of the county. Although they have sent out hundreds of survey forms and publicised their project – there still seem to be many gaps which need filling if they are to build up a picture of North Devon's orchards – and how they can be conserved and managed for the future.

If you live in the area – there is still time to contribute information. Dave Edgecumbe and his team will be delighted to hear from you – simply call 01271 – 817485 or write to Northern Devon Coast & Countryside Centre, Caen Street, Braunton, Devon EX33 1AA for a brief and simple survey form



Keep in Contact

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