



ORCHARD LINK NEWS

OPEN YOUR ORCHARDS FOR OTHERS TO ENJOY

If you've ever enjoyed walking around someone's private garden, appreciating their plants, trees and perhaps enjoying tea and cake, consider that others may enjoy your orchard in the same way. The highly successful National Gardens Scheme offers garden owners the chance to share their garden with the public for a day or so a year and in a similar way, orchard owners could open orchards which are otherwise just glimpsed over a hedgebank, that we could all enjoy. Why not share the spectacle of your orchard in blossom, the joy of picnicking under the trees in summer – or invite others to help pick and maybe press the fruit in autumn?

By asking for an entrance donation, selling teas and cake or apples in season, opening your orchard could also raise funds towards its upkeep or for a favourite charity. Get some friends to help and you could include a few games for children or a 'bring and buy' stall. Link in with neighbouring landowners, with orchards and you could offer an *open orchard weekend* around your village in the same way that garden owners often do.

Inside;

- ❖ Join our research into apple canker.
- ❖ Add plum trees to your orchard.
- ❖ See us at the Summer shows.



If sufficient 'Orchard Link' members are interested in this initiative, staff at 'Orchard Link' have many years experience of organising events for the public and we would be happy to help. We could assist with:

- Publicity:** through 'Orchard Link News' and through the local media
- Posters:** to help you publicise your open day locally.
- Guidance:** and ideas for running a successful event from ideas for games and activities to advice on insurance and minimising risks.

If you would like to take part contact us and we will help to co-ordinate open days for 2003. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a diary of orchard open days in Devon next year?!

Those who came our Annual Gathering will remember meeting Derek Rugg also showed us the wonderful cider Press at Middle Cyst William. Derek told me that he is writing a book of childhood memories in rural East Devon so we thought you enjoy this evocative view of cidermaking. Derek is publishing his childhood memories later this year. We will keep you posted in future newsletters.

Cidermaking: years agone

As the tinted leaves drifted about, and bags of apples begin to stand sentinel in orchards, my mind also drifts – back to cidermaking in the 1930's, at Kentisbeare in East Devon.

I am just outside the barn, in October, and one Farmer Charlie, grandfather of the writer, is pushing a scientific instrument into the bunghole of the barrel.

After extracting the piece of sensitive equipment, a large reddish proboscis, he says: "None too sweet yet. Give'n another voo buckets of water and I'll push zum more lime into un!"

I pump three or four buckets of water and pour it into the barrel, I hope Granfer will soon do what he does when he has a brainstorm: give me "all I've got in me pocket", which is always two pence.

Granfer suddenly makes a proposition: "Go up in the goyle sumtime tomorra and dig some clay ver to pack across the lip of the dish of the press. It's purt near time us laid up a cheese. Then I'll give ee all I've got in me pocket." (Now you see what I mean!)

Tomorrow arrives and I take a bucket, scoop out some clay, and Granfer packs it across the outlet of the bottom wooden platform of the press, before pouring buckets of water to cause the planks to swell and become 'cider tight'.

"Come down Saturday", Farmer Charlie says, "and us'll make a start".

I cannot wait for Saturday, as cidermaking is special.

Saturday arrives, and I help to put Smart, the mare, in the shafts of Granfer's second – best wagon, and in a few moments, Uncle Arthur, Granfer and I, are in the orchard shovelling into a heap of apples.

When the wagon is full, the boss man, who possesses, except for the two pence caper, boy psychology, says, "Us'll ev a drink and then make a start."

Going on a couple of steps; the wagon is there, backed in the door of the barn. Blind Jack Wright has arrived with Jack Salisbury, and we only need a starting pistol.

Wait though! I have to get one bucket of water from the mill stream and pour it into the tiller, which is in the bunghole of the barrel that is soon going to have cider in its belly.

"Makes the cider work better." Granfer told me when I asked.

We are under starters orders now. And climbing onto the wagon, shovel in hand. Uncle A and Jack Wright are each side of the apple mill, clutching the handles.

Jack (Lordie) Salisbury is at the delivery end of the crusher, and the gaffer is by the dish of the press.

We are off! I load apples to the hopper on top of the mill; the cobs, meshing inwards, chew them up, and Lordie starts shovelling the apple 'muck' across to the maker of the cheese.

On the dish is a square wooden frame, and when it is about half full, Granfer spreads oaten straw across the masticated apples, and then the frame is filled up.

At the point Farmer Charlie moves the frame up and pokes thatching spars into the cheese to keep the frame from slipping back.

The ends of the straw that hang over the edge of the square; more crushing apple is added, then straw and then apple.

Of course I have been forgetting the important bits: the cider that has been running over the lip of the dish into the wooden tub. Every so often 'Lord' Salisbury has had to dip out a bucket of juice and pour it through the suspender straw filled funnel into a barrel resting on staging that we always call jibbing.

We have been going for some time; I am cornering the apples, and the cheese is growing up out of Granfer's reach.

Good! We have finished.

Good again! The boss man is about to speak: "Us'll ev a drink!"

Uncle Arthur lifts off the frame, put a special board on top of the cheese and screws down the top of the press until the cheese is held firm.

"Us can leave 'un now for an 'our or so," says Granfer. "Then you can dip the tub out, boy!"

That was Stage One of cider making at Guddiford Mills.

"When do I get my two pence?" I ask myself as I grumble cheerfully home.



HELP SURVEY SOUTH DEVON'S ORCHARDS

Look at any old map or landscape photograph of rural Devon and you will probably see orchards that no longer exist. We are probably all aware that thousands or acres of traditional orchards have been grubbed up since the last century, however few 'on the ground' studies of just how much, when and where have been undertaken. Few areas of Devon have data showing just which orchards have been lost or even how many are left and where new orchards have been planted.

Next year, as part of its programme of work for the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Coast and Countryside Service aims to do just that. With the help of maps old and new and volunteers on the ground, they are aiming to produce a baseline study of the state of orchards in the South Devon AONB.

To start the project off, Community Tree Officer, Julia Pugh, is initiating a pilot project this autumn-enlisting the help of some of the areas many volunteer Tree Wardens to spot orchards old and new in their parishes.

This is where 'Orchard Link' members in the South Hams can help. Julia hopes that members in the area will wish to work alongside Tree Wardens to record the orchards around them. The surveys will be simple and straightforward and will entail you walking around your local area, noting down what is there. A free training day is being arranged later in the autumn to introduce the scheme. Following which Julia and the team hope to extend the survey across the whole of South Devon AONB.

If you live in South Devon and would be interested in helping out and discovering a little more about the orchards in your area, call Julia Pugh on: 01803 861367 leaving your name and phone number. You will be contacted later with details of the survey and training day.

PLUM JOBS

Because Orchard Link focuses largely on apples, it is easy to forget that many different fruits can be grown in Devon orchards. This article is the first of a series looking at the growing of less common fruits

Nothing beats the flavour of plums straight from the tree, so while it is certainly worth growing plums here, they are not ideally suited to the damp Devon climate. Given a choice, plums prefer what is known as a continental climate, cold winters, late short springs and hot summers. Those of you familiar with the Devon climate will certainly not recognise these conditions! One way that you can improve conditions for plums is to grow them fan-trained against a sunny wall. Indeed for some cultivars this is the only way you will get a worthwhile crop. One potential problem with plums is that they flower early in the year when frost can damage the blossom, and when few pollinating insects are around. Many varieties are at least partially self fertile, and some, Victoria included will set a good crop without a pollinator. Damsons seem to grow well here, while it is the gage family that needs the hotter summers to prosper.

Plums require plenty of sun to ripen well, so it is best to train trees into a shape like a pyramid or Christmas tree, so that the top growth does not shade plums on the lower branches. There is not space here to cover the formative pruning of plum trees; that will wait for another day, but it is worth covering the general principles of pruning plums. The two main diseases that affect plums are silverleaf and bacterial canker. Both can enter the tree easily through pruning cuts, so pruning is carried out in the late spring and early summer, when the tree is growing fastest and can therefore heal itself quicker. Even then it is worth painting large cuts with a wound paint. For the same reasons it is important to deal with any broken branches promptly. This may mean

cutting a branch outside the recommended times, but it is far better to have smooth cut than a jagged wound where spores can lodge.

Plums do not require pruning in order to produce a good set of fruit in the way that apples and pears do. Once the formative pruning has taken place, little pruning will be needed. As with all fruit trees, the first task is the removal of dead and diseased branches, followed by branches that are rubbing or crossing. After this it is usually a question of thinning out any overcrowded growth, especially in the centre of the tree.

Many cultivars will set too heavy a crop so that branches will break under the weight of the fruit. Where a heavy crop has set, the fruit should be thinned in the early summer, leaving fruits about 5-8 cm apart depending on their eventual size. Branches can also be supported with forked sticks.

Bacterial canker is the most common problem on plum trees (as well as cherries and other members of the *Prunus* family). It can be noticed in the spring when buds do not burst, or leaves are small and yellow. Other branches on the tree may have large leaves, and grow vigorously. Flattened cankerous wounds like warts can be seen on the branches. These often exude a brown gum, although gumming can occur because of various stresses to the tree. If only a few branches are affected they can be removed and the cuts painted with a wound paint. Otherwise treatment has to wait until the autumn when the tree can be sprayed with Bordeaux Mixture. This is a copper based fungicide which is organically acceptable.

If you have nurtured your fruit through all these potential problems, then it is time for harvesting. Fruit is best left to ripen on the tree, but take care or someone else may get there before you! Wasps and birds are both fond of sweet, sticky plums, so you will have to keep a close eye on ripening fruit and time your picking carefully.
Ben Pike, Devon Orchard Services.

ORCHARD LINKS WITH MEMBERS

Do you know what varieties to plant, are you interested to hear how well orchards crop around Devon? We would like to collect information from you and feed it back to members via the newsletters.

Two particular things to focus on:

1. We would like to draw on members' experience of apple canker and list those varieties that are definitely canker free, those that tolerate a certain amount of canker and those that suffer badly from the dieback caused by canker.
2. How well do varieties crop? It would be excellent to be able to suggest varieties that really do crop reliably and regularly in our area!

How do we collect the information?
Charles Staniland, member (and pruner) from Buckland in the Moor would like you to contact him by
E-mail: c.staniland@lineone.net
Telephone/ fax: 01364 653169

He will send you a recording sheet and start the ball rolling. It may be that you would like to share in organising the project....There are obvious problems – how do you measure the crop? The effect of canker is also difficult to measure....so we will devise a simple Objective guide....! It is likely that you would like to hear from members about other issues – plums in windy sites, root stocks used, etc – this could be the chance for you to post requests for information.

APPLES WANTED IN LYDFORD

If you have an orchard in or around Lydford and will have surplus apples this autumn, then Edmund Empres would like to hear from you. He would like to make

contact with a local orchard owner to buy up to 20kg a week season for his own and friends to enjoy. Contact Edmund at:

The Sanctuary, near Lydford,
Devon, EX20 4AL
Tel: 01822 820203

ORCHARD LINK GETS CONNECTED

Look out for a copy of 'Connect', the free South West health and lifestyle magazine this coming autumn. Following their coverage of local food and farmers markets, they were keen to feature our work and all those involved. We have been given a major article in the autumn edition that is sure to boost local interest and just at the right time of year.

TLC FOR THE LAND AT HAZELWOOD

Hazelwood estate near Loddiswell South Devon has 67 acres of neglected land which includes walled gardens, fruit cages and 2 orchards. An arts centre and bed and breakfast, which also offers a break for Chernobyl children each year-Hazelwood is enjoyed by many.

This summer and autumn, Hazelwood is asking for volunteers to help restore some of the estate's fine features and offers a refreshments and a chance to enjoy the estate whilst picking up a few skills. Volunteer days are on August 1st, 10th, 11th and 21st, September 6th and 7th and October 20th. Call Wendy Stayte on 01803 868305 for further details and look out for their forest garden training day in 'What's On?'

PERRY ANYONE?

Ben Pike at Devon Orchard Services has 2 perry pear trees which crop well, but at present the pears are not used and go to waste. So if you are hiring our press and crusher and wish to try your hand at perry making, give Ben a call on 01803 868692.

WHAT'S ON?



For further details:

Contact:

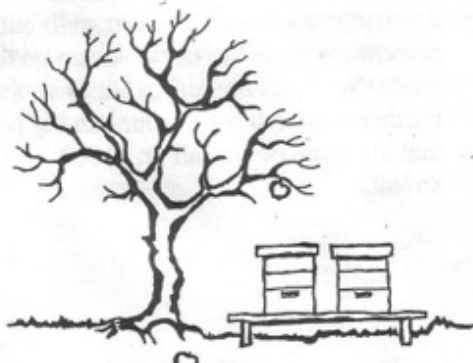
- ❖ Coast and Countryside Service
Tel: 01803 861140.
- ❖ Orchards Live (the new name for North Devon Save Our Orchards Campaign)
Tel: 01884 861181.
- ❖ Devon Beekeepers Association – Jane Ducker
Tel: 01647 221225
or 01803 874108.
- ❖ Hazelwood House . Contact Wendy Stayte. Tel 01803868305.
- ❖ Orchard Link
Tel: 01803 861183
or: 01548 550516.(Harvestline)

July

Friday 12th – Sunday 14th Devon Beekeepers Association, Biennial conference at Seale Hayne (for details see contact above). Informative talks for beekeeping enthusiasts. We shall have information at the conference- but cannot staff it- so if anyone is planning to attend please let us know.

Saturday 13th – South West Forest Wood Fair, Roadford near Okehampton. Come and help or just say hello at the Orchard Link stall. Further details in this newsletter or call Orchard Link.

Sunday 14th – Learn Summer Pruning with expert and trainer Charles Staniland in Berry Pomeroy's old orchards. 10am – 1pm. £10. **Booking essential.** Contact the Coast and Countryside Service.



August

Wednesday 21st - Learn to create a forest garden in the old orchard at Hazelwood House near Loddiswell. Led by Martin Crawford of the Agroforestry Research Centre.

September

Tuesday 3rd - Tour of Thornhayes Nunnery near Cullompton. See a variety of Devon apple trees and early fruit. 6pm FREE ADMISSION. Call Orchards Live for details.

Saturday 7th - Kingsbridge Agricultural Show, Sorley Cross near Kingsbridge. Come and help or watch us pressing apples into juice on our large mobile press. Call Orchard Link for details.

Saturday/ Sunday 28th-29th - Apple Weekend. Celebrate Autumn with apple demonstrations and apple juice tasting. Children's activities, exhibitions and workshops. Cotehele House, St Dominick, Tamar Valley. Normal admission charges apply. Call National Trust for details- Tel. 01579 351346.

Looking ahead to October:

Saturday 5th – come and sell your fruit at our Farmer's Market stall at Kingsbridge Farmers Market on the quay. 9.am-2.pm. Call Orchard Link for details.

Sunday 13th – Autumn Festival at Avon Mill, Garden Centre, Loddiswell. We will be taking the wooden press and pressing apples all day. Last year we had such a fun at this event plus there were lots of craft, food stalls and plant displays to enjoy. Call us if you would like to join in and could lend a hand.

SUMMER SHOWS – COULD YOU HELP?

Over the summer, 'Orchard Link' will be attending two major shows thanks to the organisers who have provided us with tree space and a little sponsorship.

On Saturday 13th July we will be attending the South West Forest Woodfair at Roadford Lake, near Okehampton. With over 80 exhibitions, showcasing everything to do with trees, woodlands and their use; from forestry organisations to hurdle makers, boat builders to wood crafts, it promises to be a fascinating day for anyone who enjoys woodlands and trees. We'll be taking our stall plus the small press and mill (not working-as we would have to use imported apples to do so!) For Orchard Link, it will be a great opportunity to publicise our work in the middle and North of the country and Okehampton member, Janet Loaden, has offered to come and help me on the day. We would love a hand for about an hour from any other members who might enjoy the fair.

Looking ahead, we will need lots of pairs of hands to help at Kingsbridge Agricultural Show on Saturday 7th September. This year they have a special 'woodland' themed area and are keen to have our large wooden press in action as a star turn. To press apples and staff the stall we will need up to six people – so if you fancy either handing out information or getting stuck in with pressing apples, please give either myself or Nicola a ring. We would love to hear from you!!

If you do come to help at the shows or events we are happy to pay travel expenses, your entry to the show and for your lunch, plus you will acquire a warm satisfying glow!



FIRST FRUITS

As autumn approaches the staff and directors anticipate a slightly different harvest – babies! Coincidentally, Cathy Fitzroy is expecting her first baby in September, whilst I am expecting mine in late November. That's what eating all those apples does for you!

I'll still be dealing with your enquiries – albeit between feeds and nappies and all calls and mail will reach me at home (please be patient if I need to call you back!). When I return to work at the 'Coast and Countryside Service', things will return to some sort of normality in the spring.

Nicola Herbert will be operating Harvestime on 01548 550516 and dealing with all your enquiries regarding the hiring of presses or bringing apples for sale at the 'Farmer's Markets'.

Harvest time will be open from 2nd September – 1st November. During that period please leave your 'harvest' enquiries at the number above and if Nicola is not by the phone she will return your ansaphone message promptly.

After 1st November, could you please direct all 'Orchard Link' calls to 01548 550516 not to my usual office number 01803 861183. Your calls will automatically be diverted to me on another line at home from which I can answer with your call directly or call you back as soon as I am able.

Meanwhile those who you that come to our stalls and events may be seeing more of me and perhaps even spotting our own homegrown produce of next year!

Keep in Contact

Trudy Turrell

Our address is ;
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