



ORCHARD LINK *NEWS*

Season of Success

On a boiling summer day as we collected a van full of gleaming kit from Vigo Vineyard Supplies – I wondered whether we had done the right thing. Members had asked us to buy a mobile press which they could hire and use – and we had purchased not one, but two. As apple trees bent down with fruit – it has the bumper season everyone predicted, the phone started to ring and we stopped worrying.

When our wooden press arrived; quarter of a tonne of green oak, ash and acacia, handcrafted for us in Shropshire we were thrilled- as were those who attended our first cidermaking course where it did its maiden pressing. Beautiful to look at and fun to use; everyone immediately got stuck in with making up 'cheeses' of milled apples, screwing down the press with its huge twin screws- then squeezing out the last drops of juice using long wooden staves or levers to pile on the pressure.

The impressive piece of kit proved wonderful for group events- and we were to soon experience what a crowd puller it could be, pressing at Avon Mill Garden Centre's Autumn Festival on 14th October. People were asked to bring their surplus fruit and take home juice and a constant supply of that kept five of us busy milling, pressing and bottling all day. Maybe it was just the warm up for our pressing day at Riverford Farm Shop, where around 200 people turned up with loads of apples in sacks, boxes even washing baskets!

Inside:

Buy rare Devon apple trees.

Come to a wassail.

See an historic press restored



Nicola Herbert and Polly Stone working the mill at Avon Mill Garden Centre's event

In the meantime, the mobile press and mill all packed into its trailer was constantly out on hire. From the beginning of October until December it travelled from Stoke Fleming to Looe, Blackawton to Bodmin. Deceptive in size, Oak from Keveral Farm in Looe told us that he managed to press 1 ½ tonnes of fruit in a day on it! Many who hired the presses came to our cidermaking courses, so as well as freezing their fruit, will now be turning it into the amber nectar. As we now store the presses and mill until next autumn we raise our glasses to a truly successful and enjoyable season.

Looking Ahead

Book ahead in good time to hire the press kit next year and don't forget to start saving clean plastic bottles and other containers during the summer. We shall be having more community pressing days next year where you will have the opportunity to bring your apples and take away juice (great if you only have a small surplus). We will also be at the next Autumn Garden Festival at Avon Mill on the 13th October 2002.

A Big Thank-You

To Nicola Herbert – who once again has enabled all the hiring to go so smoothly. The autumn season is exhausting but Nicola has managed to deal with all the hiring and to help with pressing at shows and the Farmer's Market. Time to put your feet up for a break! To the rest of the gang who helped with pressing and the Farmer's Markets Phil, Polly, Jackie, Alan, Heather and also Janet Voaden who pressed apples and gave out information at Rosemoor's Apple Day in North Devon.

Finally, thank you to Riverford Farm who was so helpful and hosted our training days, as well as the pressing days. The large press is now stored at their vegetable packing station and it is hoped that if Riverford are able to construct an eco-educational centre on the site, it will be a central feature and used by visiting schools, student and family groups too.

To Market We Went

This year Orchard Link had stalls at Kingsbridge Farmer's Market in September, October and November; selling members' apples and with books, displays and advice. At November's market we pressed juice and were a noisy and sticky attraction. we managed to press over eight sacks and sold all the juice by 1pm. Those with surplus eating and cooking apples found the stall a good way of selling them for a better price. Our 'filling a bag and donating a pound' method of selling proved very popular.

We hope that next year we can extend the season a little and expand to have stalls at Totnes Farmer's Market and beyond but we need members help to staff these stalls and sell their fruit. Everyone who has helped on the stall agrees that it is great fun and there's a definite buzz to the morning. We all came home with baskets full of fresh local produce, vegetables, fish, meat,

plants and cakes: Shopping just as it used to be.

Legacy buys Land for the Barn Owls

A generous legacy has enabled the Barn Owl Trust to buy 25 acres of farmland to turn into ideal Barn Owl habitat. Part of the land may be planted with apple trees. Senior Conservation Officer David Ramsden said, "This is a tremendous opportunity for Barn Owl conservation. Barn Owl's need rough, tussock grassland in which to hunt for voles and shrews. We want a mix of habitats, some may create an orchard where Barn Owls can fly between the trees".

If you would like to know more about encouraging Barn Owls please contact: The Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon, TQ13 7HU. Tel: 01364 653020.

A little Story and a Few Trees for Sale

Amazingly it is now ten years since South Hams Environment Service (the precursor to the Coast and Countryside Service), set up a nursery to propagate old varieties of apples. The project was established in response to the number of rare, local apple varieties being discovered in the South Hams and by the work of enthusiast James Evans in the Tamar Valley. The project was started and guided by Trudy Turrell, with expert nurseryman Alan Barnes running the nursery. Over eighty varieties were grafted into two thousand rootstocks, with the resulting trees being made available to the public as well as being used to establish community orchards such as those at College Way, Dartmouth and Colwell Wood, Totnes.

The project was part funded by the then Countryside Commission and planned to last for three to four years. It actually continued until 1997, at which time it was clear that interest in

these old varieties had been stimulated to the extent that their survival had been ensured.

When the tree nursery was being wound up, a number of individuals came together who were interested in continuing the good work that had been started. George Lacon, Hilary Cooke, Hilary Burns and I formed the Devon Orchard Project, initially with grand plans to obtain grant funding and to set up a nursery on a semi-commercial footing. Sadly reality got the better of us and our plans were scaled down to a more realistic voluntary footing.

For several years we have been travelling around the South Hams collecting graftwood for unusual varieties. Our expertise in grafting and budding was highly limited, but fortunately we were again able to rely on the help of Alan Barnes to guide us. Success in propagating new trees as variable; when Alan was there they usually all took, when he wasn't the odd disaster occurred.

Particularly memorable was a cold, rainy day when we decided to manage without Alan's help; after all it was the only way we were going to learn to do it for ourselves! We diligently worked away for several hours, slowly getting colder and wetter, until we at last returned to the warmth, satisfied of a good morning's work. A few weeks later, as the trees were looking decidedly lifeless, I made the usual call to Alan to rescue us. "Oh you should never graft in the rain", he replied.

Still some more varieties have been 'saved', and it is most gratifying some such as the Totnes Apple now being taken up by commercial nurseries. Sadly it is now time for the Devon Orchard project to be wound up as well. We are all leading busy lives, and are unable to devote the time needed to keep things going. Hopefully we have done some good. We still have a few trees that are available for sale below. One thing that we are able to do is to offer Orchard Link a substantial donation

from the income we have made over the years. Finally a big thank-you to all those who have helped us in the past five years.

DEVON ORCHARD PROJECT TREES FOR SALE

NAME	TYPE	STOCK	COST
Sally Sherry's Apple	Dessert?	M25 M	£8.
Stockbearer	Cider	M25 FM	£10.
Blackmoor Pippin	Cooker	M25 M	£8.
Watgate Russet	Dessert	M25 M	£8.
Watgate Russet	Dessert	M25 M	£8.
Limberlimb	Cider?	M25 M	£8.
Herefordshire Pippin	Dessert	M25 FM	£10
Rough Pippin	Dessert	M25 FM	£10.
Rough Pippin	Dessert	MM106 M	£8.
Coombe No.2	Dessert	MM106 M	£8.
Coombe No.2	Dessert	MM106 M	£8.
Coombe No.1	N/K	MM106 M	£8.
Blackmoor Pippin	Cooker	MM106 M	£8.
*Stockbearer		M25	FREE!
*Herefordshire Pippin		M25	FREE!
*Pig's Nose III		MM106	FREE!
*Jackson's Cider		MM106	FREE!

*A few trees are in need of TLC, free to a good home!

M= maiden FM= feathered maiden

Finally a word on pruning: It's that time of year again, and it really is worth doing - if done well it helps cut down on fungal diseases, gives you bigger, healthier fruit, shapes the tree for the future and helps with the formation of fruiting spurs. However don't prune too hard - most of the problems that I see resulting from pruning are because the tree has been pruned too hard. This causes masses of vertical, usually non-fruiting growth, a problem which can be difficult to correct later.

Ben Pike,
Devon Orchard Services

Restored Cider Press the Star of Cockington Court's Apple Day

Many will remember that last Autumn Orchard Link arranged a major display of apples and old pressing equipment at Kew Gardens. The centrepiece was a huge old cider press which the Holbeton, Yealmpton and Brixton Society had saved from a barn conversion and which had been stored in an outhouse in Yealmpton, but had not made cider for a long time.

When it was returned from Kew we and the Society were delighted that the Torbay Countryside Trust wished to have and renovate the great old press. This year its rebirth to a working cider press was celebrated in glorious sunshine on Apple Day 21st October. Education Officer for Torbay Countryside Trust Lisa Brunwin, continues the story.

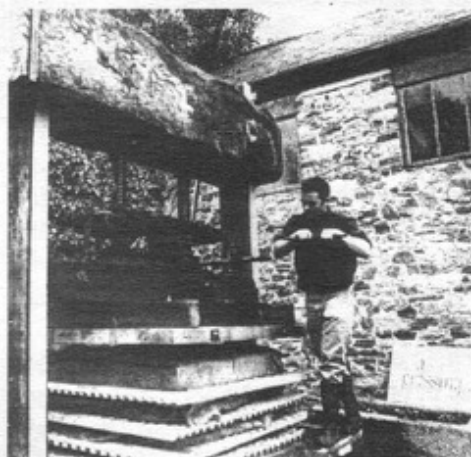
Renovating the press represented a major challenge and the Trust was obliged to cannibalise parts from another old press, rescued in 1993 by the Devon Rural Skills Trust, to complete the job. The two old presses finally came together as one to create a new working machine. The final structure weighs about 5 tonnes and stands about 15 feet high. An £1,800 grant from the Devon Rural Skills Trust made the whole project possible.

The press did us proud on the day crushing 1½ tonnes of cider apples and producing 200 gallons of juice. Many people took some juice to ferment into cider at home. This magnificent cider press is now on permanent display at Cockington in the stable yard. The plan is to produce a high quality cider for sale in the future.

Whilst the cider press was the central attraction, people of all ages got stuck into the many other apple activities. There were 22 different varieties of English apples to taste and 12 types of apple juice. The local Devon cider flowed and there was food, music, dancing, fire juggling, archery, storytelling, orchard walks

and many childrens' craft activities to enjoy. Around 3000 people went home smiling, so here's to another apple-obsessed day next year!

For further details of Torbay Countryside Trust, contact them on Cockington Court, Cockington, Torquay, TQ2 6XA Tel: 01803 606035



Stoke Climsland's Orchard Day

The Tamar Valley Orchard Volunteers organised a hugely successful orchard day in October this year. Held in the Old School at Stoke Climsland, near Callington, the day was packed with activities and fun, giving visitors the chance to find out more about the many varieties of apples in the area; to learn about the management and wildlife of orchards, and – best of all – to taste some of the products!

The Tamar Valley is home to many varieties of fruit trees – some unique to the area. Examples of different named varieties were on show, and visitors brought along samples from their own old orchards.

Orchards of apples, pears, cherries and other fruit were once features of most Tamar Valley farms. Today, many have disappeared, but the Tamar Valley Orchard Volunteers are working hard to keep the tradition alive. For more information, please contact Shelia Camplin on 01822 833804.

TAMAR PRUNING COURSE HELPS CONSERVE VALLEY'S ORCHARDS.

Amongst other industries, the Tamar Valley has a strong tradition of market gardening. In its heyday, the Valley was covered with orchards and plots growing daffodils, strawberries and cherries. Today, although a fraction of its former size, the industry lives on. In order to raise awareness of the AONB in general and the various projects the Service are involved with, a programme of events is produced each year. In an attempt to encourage owners to plant and care for orchards to ensure survival in the Tamar Valley, the Service held an Orchard Pruning Workshop on 12th February, at Botus Fleming and Callington. Led by Charles Staniland, who has 30 years experience in pruning and has his own orchard business in the South Hams, 12 people turned up to learn more about pruning and acquire skills. Following a brief theory session where Charles discussed with the group why they should prune, how to prune, tools to use and safety, there were opportunities for practical work. The orchard in Botus Fleming included over 100 trees of different ages and varieties where trainees had the chance to assess the pruning requirements of the trees, then put the theories into practice.

Those who attended the workshop were keen to know whether other workshops would be set up in the future and felt that the day had provided a really good opportunity to understand a complex subject in a straightforward way.

CARING FOR THE TAMAR VALLEY AONB.

The Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located on the border of Cornwall and Devon, and encompasses the valleys of the Tamar, Tavy and Lynher.

The area, which covers 75 square miles (195 square kilometres), was designated an AONB in 1995. The purpose of such designation is to conserve and enhance the

landscape, whilst recognising the needs of people who live in, work in and visit the area.

If you are interested in learning more about the Tamar Valley AONB or would like to receive our events programme (due out in May 2003) please do get in touch.

Alternatively, please visit www.tamarvalley.org.uk for further details about our area. The next pruning day should be held sometime in July 2004.

Contact: Charlotte Maunder, Information & Communications Officer.

Tel: 01822 610679, E-mail: cmaunder@tamarvalley.org.uk

BREATHING LIFE INTO LANDSCAPES.

In Winter Orchard Link News, we reported on a new landscape grant scheme for the South Devon AONB. Offering payments for managing and conserving a wide range of habitats and landscapes from flower-rich meadows to green lanes to wetlands, it includes work to restore and replant traditional orchards. With up to £2000 per holding available, the scheme should help many South Hams landowners to undertake real management work to restore and conserve countryside features which make up the areas distinctive landscape. Grants are available for a three year period and although they have to be match funded- if landowners undertake the practical work themselves this can be counted in terms of labour as well as cash.

The scheme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund is to be launched under the name 'Life Into Landscape' on May 14th at Hazelwood House, when guided tours of the grounds and nearby Blackdown Rings ancient monument will demonstrate the range of sites eligible. Tickets to the event (which includes a buffet lunch,) are free, but need to be booked in advance.

If you have land in the South Devon AONB and would like one or to know more about the scheme or would like a ticket to the launch day, contact David Leach, Devon Wildlife Trust, Shirehampton House, St. David's Hill, Exeter. EX4 4DA. Tel. 01392 279244.

WHAT'S ON?



For Coast and Countryside
Service events, call 01803
861140

For North Devon 'Save Our
Orchards' events contact: Jane
Schofield, Lewdown Farm, Black
Dog, Crediton, Devon, EX17
4QQ

January

Saturday 12th:

Bring the children to a **wassail lantern making workshop** and join the parade at Stoke Gabriel wassail. Adults £3- Children £2. From 1.30pm-5pm Stoke Gabriel. Booking essential, contact the Coast & Countryside Service.

Saturday 19th:

Come and celebrate **Stoke Gabriel's Wassail**, in Church Orchard at Stoke Gabriel, near Totnes. Meet at 7pm outside the Victoria & Albert Inn. Wassailing, mumming play, singing by Global Harmony, morris men, storytelling until the pub closes! Adults £2 Children £1. Contact the Coast & Countryside Service

Saturday 26th:

Orchard Restoration and Management, near Chumleigh – Indoor talks followed by outdoor pruning and planting. 10.30am – 3.30pm £10. Book via North Devon Save Our Orchards.

Sunday 27th:

Improve your pruning course with Charles Staniland at Berry Pomeroy near Totnes. Will cover improving tree shape, renewal planting and dealing with awkward shaped trees. 10.30am – 4p.m. booking essential. Contact the Coast and Countryside Service.

February:

Saturday 16th:

Learn to Graft with Kevin Croucher of Thornhayes Nursery, at Swimbridge, North Devon. 10.30am-3pm £10 booking essential, contact North Devon Save our Orchards.

Saturday 23rd:

Learn to Graft with Kevin Croucher at South Brent. 10.30am-3pm. £8 includes a rootstock. Booking essential contact the Coast & Countryside Service.

Gathering Ideas

For the past two years we have had a very enjoyable and stimulating Annual Gathering for Orchard Link members. Anyone who attended cannot forget the ploughman's lunch and cider picnic by the river at Heron Valley Cider – or the juice tasting extravaganza, orchard visit and hot pasties in Grimpstonleigh Cider's warm kitchen.

Now we are putting our thinking caps on to devise next spring's event, which we aim to be just as informative and to deal with subjects or visit venues that interest you. So here is your opportunity to let us know where and what you would like the next event to focus on. Maybe you can offer to host the next Gathering? As the Orchard Link team provide all the food – and do the cleaning up both the Frosts' and the Bradleys' found that inviting us in to their homes was a great way to meet everybody and they positively enjoyed the day. So ideas please for late February or early March – call Trudy on 01803 861183 who will be happy to hear from you.

Unsung Heroes

It is now three years since we established Orchard Link (doesn't time fly?) and we could not have initiated it without grant assistance from the European South Devon and Dartmoor Leader II scheme. Having a 'cushion' of grant aid allowed us to establish a business from scratch (we had no collateral when we started) and to experiment with different ways of supporting orchard owners and selling surplus apples. Although further grants may be on the horizon, we will be standing on our own two feet for a while- which is both challenging but exciting. As you can imagine, it is very hard to run a business/ support organisation on just membership and a little income from the apples and we will still be receiving office support and support for Trudy Turrell's time from the Coast and Countryside Service. But meanwhile, we would like to say a big 'thank you' to LEADER, also to MAFF (now DEFRA) and Cheek McEwan and the LEADER team for all their help and support over the last three years. Thanks for giving Orchard Link wings!

Could You Be Involved?

Orchard Link is an independent organisation and limited company run by two part-time staff, helpers and volunteers. We try to always respond to member's needs and interests and would welcome help and involvement - both paid and voluntary from members.

Would you like to help at:

- Stalls at Farmer's Market
- Apple Days, agricultural shows
- Apple Pressing Days
- Or as a director?

If you have a little time to spare or specialist orchard / business advice to offer,

Please contact Trudy - 01803 861183.



Remember Your Membership!

Orchard Link membership runs from 1st January - 31st December or 1st July - 31st June each year (depending on the time of year in which you join). So all existing members whose membership is due will receive a renewal form with this newsletter - if you would like to join Orchard Link now is an ideal time.

Membership entitles you to:

- 4 seasonal newsletters a year; full of news, events and advice.
- Two free tickets to our Annual Gathering (with food and drink!)
- Advice over the telephone from Orchard Link or Ben Pike (South Hams Orchard Services).
- The Harvestline Collection service (for members in South Devon).

So it is excellent value! Especially with our superb Annual Gathering coming up in February.

Membership also makes an ideal gift for a friend who is keen on orchards. What's more we'll send them a special Christmas card, newsletter and a message from you- so there is no wrapping or posting to do! Call and send a cheque by 14th December to ensure Christmas subscriptions arrive in time.

Keep in Contact

Our address is ;

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PO BOX 109,

Totnes,

Devon.

TQ9 5XR

Phone 01803 861183

Email- trudy.turrell@south-hams-dc.gov.uk.

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