



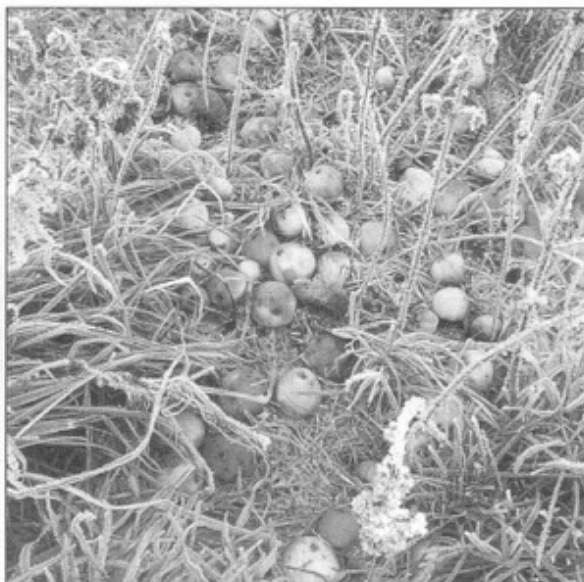
ORCHARD LINK *NEWS*

WHEN IS AN ORCHARD NOT AN ORCHARD?

This is a question that has been taxing orchard owners as they wonder how to respond to the latest E.C. directive about the Single Payment Scheme. The Single Payment Scheme (SPS) has been introduced as a result of reform to the much-maligned Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Farmers will now be able to claim subsidies of £220 per hectare for the implementation of very basic environmental practices on their land.

While this may seem a great idea, there has been considerable confusion surrounding the position of orchards within the SPS. Initial advice was that orchards (or any permanent crop) would not be eligible for this payment. This was followed by widespread outcry, culminating in George Monbiot's article for the Telegraph Magazine, and even a slot on Newsnight on BBC2 proclaiming the death of the English orchard.

Farmers were even advised that they had an economic incentive to grub out orchards before January 1st. I spoke to one farmer in mid-Devon who was considering grubbing out his orchards, and whose neighbour had just grubbed out a traditional orchard of more than 3 acres.



In response to widespread publicity DEFRA promised clarification of the guidelines before the January 1st deadline. Eager to keep Orchard Link members up to date I conducted a recent search of the DEFRA website. I was hopeful when I found the question "Will land covered by orchards be eligible for the single payment scheme?" It appears that only traditional grazed orchards will be eligible for the subsidy.

The difficulties start with the definition of a traditional grazed orchard. DEFRA say that existing EU guidance "states that a maximum of 50 trees per hectare should be taken as a rule of thumb." This would exclude a number of what I would consider traditional orchards where one could find over 100 trees per hectare. DEFRA obviously weren't sure either as they have asked the Central Science Laboratory to draw up some criteria to define a traditional orchard. These criteria are now posted on the website and are expected to be used to prove eligibility.

Continued overleaf ...

In this issue:

- ❖ **Natural resistance: Results on trials of local apple varieties.**
- ❖ **Rural skills for orchard owners.**
- ❖ **Apples with the WOW factor!**

If you answer yes to at least one of the following questions, then you may be eligible for the subsidy:

1. Is the orchard within an agri-environment scheme option for orchard maintenance or regeneration? (This is likely to be Countryside Stewardship.)
2. Are there less than 150 original tree stations per hectare?
3. Is the height of the 1st major fork/main frame branches of trees at least 1.5m above ground
4. Is there evidence of livestock grazing throughout the orchard?
5. Is the height of the foliage above 1.5m for 90% of the trees?

These seem to be sensible criteria to define a traditional orchard, although there still seems to be some confusion over the number of trees per hectare. It does appear that most orchards in this area would be eligible for the subsidy, as long as they are being grazed.

Countryside Stewardship has now finished, but will be replaced in April by Environmental Stewardship. This will offer higher subsidies for enhanced levels of environmental management. If you seek further enlightenment, then search the DEFRA website on www.defra.gov.uk

I expect those of you with just a few trees went to sleep long ago, but forgive the dryness of this article, as this issue has important implications for the continuation of the traditional orchard in the Devon landscape. It appears that some orchards have already been grubbed up as a result of the original confusion, but that if the new guidance is applied wisely, then Devon's landowners will be able to claim a considerable subsidy for grazing under their orchards.

Ben Pike

WANTED
Woodland (or orchard) in
South Devon.
ANY SIZE UP TO 10 ACRES CONSIDERED.
Please contact Ian on
07817 884693

WOW APPLES!

I would like to tell you the story of a little apple tree with a chequered history. It was planted in an old orchard on the backside of Torquay, just to fill a gap where an ancient tree had come down. Unfortunately it developed canker on its trunk, a life threatening condition for a tree as young as this. Along with several other trees with canker, this tree ended up on the bonfire pile. Before going home I looked through these trees and decided that maybe there was hope for this one. I took it home and planted it in a walled garden near my home. A year later the property was sold and the walled garden grassed over, so I moved the poor apple tree again. I planted it in a field, and this summer this tree, still only 4 feet tall, bore its first three apples. These apples were small and didn't look much but wow, did they taste good. The variety was Early Blenheim, one that had almost been lost a few years back. Don't tell anyone that I don't eat many apples – however, if they all tasted like these I would eat bucketfuls.

This got me to thinking how easy it is to concentrate on apples which are disease-resistant, and to forget about the taste when selecting varieties of apple tree to plant. Charles Staniland, Trudy Turrell and I have advised on the planting of thousands of apple trees over the last ten years, and it would be fascinating to now have some feedback on how they taste. Whether you love them or hate them, please let us know, so that others can benefit from your experience. Best is to e-mail us at benpike@talk21.com, or you could phone the Orchard Link mobile on 07792-664710.

Although taste is incredibly personal, here are some apples that gain my personal seal of approval that will also grow in our damp climate:

Ashmead's Kernel – another dull looking russety apple that has a wonderful nutty taste.

Tydemans Early Worcester – has that refreshing, juicy early season taste.

Pitmaston Pineapple – small rich apples with a hint of pineapple

Rosemary Russet – described in a catalogue as the best flavoured of the russets, it is nutty and aromatic, yet refreshing at the same time.

I'd better stop here before I think of a variety that has aromas of blackcurrant, zesty citrus fruit and vanilla moving on to a soft, rich palate with subtle undertones of vanilla and oak!

Ben Pike

MEMBERSHIP ROUND-UP

Eyes and ears around Devon

We're pleased to say that Orchard Link now has members all over the county – and into Somerset, Cornwall and beyond. As most of the organising team live in South Devon, however, it's often hard to keep up to date with what's going on further afield.

Over the coming years we'd like to hold events throughout Devon and to feature more news from North, East and West Devon, Somerset and Cornwall.

To keep in touch, we're looking for contacts in each of these areas. You don't need to organise events – unless of course you'd like to – but just to keep us informed of what's going on in your area for the newsletter and the web site and any ideas for events or training requirements, which local orchard owners may have. With your help, we'll be able to keep everyone more informed and to spread our wings more.

To contact us – just send an email or call the number on the back page.



Do you have an e-mail Address ?

Our thanks to all those of you who gave details of your e-mail addresses – and especially to Luke Fromant who telephoned many members for e-mail contacts too.

If you have an e-mail address, please let us know, as we hope to be able to communicate with as many members as possible, at the touch of a button. Whilst we shall still publish the Orchard Link News three times a year, we can let you know of any extra events, training days or opportunities

to sell or press your apples much more efficiently by email. During the busy Autumn season, things often change too fast for us to have all the information by late August, when the Autumn newsletter is compiled. Of course we promise we will not pass your e-mail address on to other organisations, nor bombard you with information (we don't have the time!).

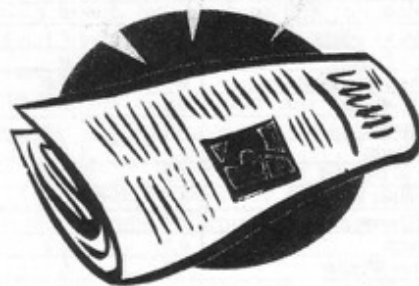
If you are not sure if we have your e-mail address, why not just e-mail us a line and we can check with our database ?

Thanks.

Changes to your membership

With this newsletter, you should have received the usual reminder for your 2005 membership of Orchard Link. After long deliberation, we've decided to slightly increase the membership fee to £18 – the first increase since Orchard Link was established 7 years ago. Still just £1.50 per month, this entitles you to free expert orchard advice, special members events, reduced rates for orchard training workshops, 3 newsletters a year, a ticket for two (with a meal) to our annual gathering and, of course, the presses and mills which are only available to hire to Orchard Link members. We think it still represents very good value.

Because so many people first joined Orchard Link in the Autumn (when they see us at the shows or wish to hire a press), memberships now run from the first of September – 31st August each year. This means it's just £12 to renew your membership to 31st August 2005 – and this period will include our annual gathering. Details and a voucher for tickets will be sent with your Spring Orchard Link News.



Apple cultivar disease-resistance trial

Martin Crawford, Agroforestry Research Trust

88 cultivars of apple identified for potential disease resistance against scab and canker were planted at our Dartington research site in winter 1998/9. Trees were grafted onto M9 rootstocks, staked and mulched.

Severity of leaf scab and apple canker was recorded during the growing seasons of 2002, 2003 and 2004, using a scale 0 to 9 where 0 = no symptoms observed; 3 = mild symptoms observed, 6 = severe symptoms observed to 9 = very severe symptoms observed. In addition, aphid damage to leaves was recorded in 2003 and 2004, using a similar scale.

The results averaged over the years of measurement were as follows:

Cultivar	leaf scab	canker	aphids
Alfriston	2.2	0	3.0
Annie Elizabeth	1.0	1.0	1.0
Bardsey	1.0	0	1.0
Beauty of Bath	2.8	2.3	2.5
Belle de Boskoop	1.0	6.5	1.0
Ben's Red	0.7	0	1.5
Bramleys Seedling	0.5	0	5.0
Brownlee's Russet	2.5	0	2.0
Catshead	0.8	0	0
Cheddar Cross	2.5	0.3	1.5
Cockle Pippin	0.5	0	0
Cornish Aromatic	1.8	2.0	0.5
Cornish Longstem	1.0	3.5	0
Court of Wick	1.5	0	0
Crawley Beauty	0.8	0	3.0
Crimson Beauty of Bath	2.5	0.7	2.0
Crimson King (dessert)	1.0	2.0	3.0
Egremont Russet	1.2	3.2	1.5
Emmett Early	2.1	0	2.0
Fair Maid of Devon	0.7	0	1.0
Farmers Glory	0.7	0	1.0
Forge	2.2	1.0	1.5
Gavin	1.8	2.5	0
Gladstone	2.7	0	1.0
Golden Bittersweet	0	0	0.5
Golden Harvey	2.0	0.7	1.0
Golden Nugget	1.5	0	0
Golden Pippin	1.2	0	2.0
Golden Russet	2.3	0	1.0
Grenadier	1.7	0	2.0
Halstow Natural	0.2	0	2.0
Hoary Morning	1.0	0	0
Hockings Green	3.5	1.0	2.5
Hollow Core	0.5	0	0
Isle of Wight Pippin	0	0	1.0
John Standish	1.0	0	1.0
Johnny Andrews	0.7	0	0
Katy	0	0	0
Keswick Codling	0	0	0
Lane's Prince Albert	0.7	0	0
Leathercoat Russet	0.5	2.0	3.5
London Pippin	1.2	0	1.5
Longkeeper	2.0	0.2	0
Lord Derby	0.7	0	1.0
Lord of the Isles	1.3	2.3	0
Lucombe Pine	3.7	0	3.5
May Queen	1.8	0	1.0
Monarch	0.5	3.2	0.5
Newton Wonder	1.2	0	0.5
Northwood	0.3	0	0.5
Payhembury	0.3	0	0
Pear Apple	1.2	0.7	1.0
Peter Lock	1.7	2.5	1.5

Cultivar	leaf scab	canker	aphids
Pigs Nose	1.0	0	0
Pineapple Russet of Devon	1.8	0	0
Plum Vite	1.5	1.0	0
Ponsford	0.8	0	1.5
Queen	1.8	1.0	1.5
Red Belle de Boskoop	1.0	1.8	1.0
Red Devil	2.0	0	0.5
Rev W Wilks	1.5	0.2	0.5
Rival	1.3	0	2.5
Rosemary Russet	1.5	0.7	1.0
Ross Nonpareil	2.3	1.7	0.5
Roundway Magnum Bonum	1.0	0.7	0.5
Sam Young	1.5	0	1.0
Sanspareil	1.3	0	0.5
Saw Pit	1.7	0	1.0
Scrumptious	2.0	0	1.0
Sidney Strake	0.9	0	0.5
Sour Bay	1.7	0.3	0.5
Sweet Bay	1.0	0	0.5
Taunton Cross	1.7	0.3	0
Tom Putt	0.5	0	0
Tommy Knight	0.4	0	0
Wellington	0	0	0
Wilhelm Ley	2.3	7.0	0
Winston	1.7	0.7	0.5
Winter Peach	2.7	2.5	1.5
Woolbrook Pippin	0.7	1.0	0

Disease ratings – canker

Many varieties continue to show no signs of canker at all, a very few showed moderate signs (scores 2.5 – 4.0 mean the canker is probably manageable by pruning it out each year), and a few showed severe signs. Most of the badly affected cultivars have already died in the trial (Wilhelm Ley died winter of 03-04).

D'Arcy Spice, Franklyn's Golden Pippin, Red Beauty of Bath, Tregonna King and Williams Pride were originally planted in the trial but died of bad attacks of canker.

Disease ratings – leaf scab

Very few varieties have suffered leaf scab of a severity where it would have affected general tree health – basically, anything under a score of 3.0 can be judged pretty healthy, and only a couple of varieties exceeded this on average.

Pest ratings – aphids

Aphid damage varied considerably between cultivars, but on most the problem was of minor importance – a rating of under 2.5 indicating no real problem. A few cultivars showed severe infestation and on these cropping is affected if no action is taken against the aphids.

Conclusions

Overall, results from the trial indicate that the original selection of cultivars was good; most show that neither scab, canker nor aphid damage is a significant problem. On a very few, severe problems have quickly shown up, and often the young tree has died as a result, which is exactly what the trial set out to show. The next stage of the trial is to whittle down the remaining cultivars to those with fruits of good quality and cropping potential.

'Graft a Tree' service

Are you concerned that your favourite, ageing, decrepit cider apple tree's days are numbered, or perhaps the neighbour's plum tree produces a wonderful crop, or Auntie Flo's cooker keeps until March whilst yours only produces scab and canker?

As a service to fellow Orchard Link Members I can graft you a replacement tree using MM106 or M25 rootstock for apples, St Julian A for plums or Colt for cherries.

Scion wood needs to be harvested December/January and stored cool ready for grafting in March. For this season one needs to act quickly or think about it at your leisure for next year. Contact me on 01548 821156, evenings best for more details.

Mick Godfrey.



Blossoming out

You'll see from 'What's On' that we've arranged two special visits - to enable members to enjoy some beautiful orchards in blossom. Reg Nicholls will be taking us around his 6 acres of orchard in Berry Pomeroy - which contain some fascinating Devon apple varieties.

The visit to member Steve Mittler's orchard in Stoke Gabriel includes the chance to taste 2005's 'Cider Nouveau' - and learn how it was made.

During the coming year, we'd like to include more visits and 'open days', both to Orchard Link members and the wider public. We'll organise the event and take bookings, so if you have an orchard which you think others may enjoy visiting - give us a ring on the main Orchard Link number or call Jackie Sarsby on 01803 866870.

A PENNY APIECE

Here is a clue, this title sounds like a new variety of apple, but it's more likely to be old than new.

I have recently become the proud tenant of an allotment in Totnes. It is situated under the Kingsbridge Hill by-pass, at the point where the road rises over Collin's Corner. There are just four small plots here belonging to the Farwell family; there is a Farwell road nearby. The Farwells are famous in Totnes and first came to fame in 1656 when Christopher Farwell became mayor. In this year he set up a fund for "poor decayed handicraftsmen." The Farwell family looked after the good citizens of Totnes and were active in local affairs from the seventeenth century up to 1848 and beyond. But somehow the "penny apiece" charity slipped through their fingers.

In 1677 Mayor Rooke gave to Adam Pierce, (and 3 un-named others), an **orchard** on the way to Follaton on trust that the yearly rents and profits should be distributed to 13-14 of the poor in Totnes. This was to be distributed at a "penny apiece" on a weekly basis. The custom could have continued for 42 years, although in 1719 there is another reference to this orchard "situate near Collin's Corner", when Totnes Corporation sells it off and states that there is no record of the charity still being distributed. It was sold to John Clark, clothier, for 45 pounds with the Corporation still charging a rent of 4 shillings per annum.

As my allotment is placed on Collin's Corner, all this summer I looked in vain up and down the other plots for evidence of this former **orchard**. Then, quite unexpectedly when walking into the allotments on a bright Autumn day I looked back and there, growing right up against the by-pass, on the other side of the road, was a very tall tree, completely overgrown with brambles and ivy, but with some bright red and yellow apples cascading through at the top. Could this be part of the seventeenth century "penny apiece" charity?

The tree now stands in a wooden palisade owned by the electricity board, but close to this palisade are remains of old horizontal wire and bar fencing in the form of a rusty post.

It might be fun to clear round this old worthy, identify it and maybe revive the "penny apiece" charity by giving its harvest to 13-14 deserving children. This could become the Harvest Festival answer to the Summer Carnival's orange rolling race!

If anyone has any more information or is interested in such a project please contact Valerie Belsey on 01803 866916.

WHAT'S ON?

JANUARY

Saturday 29th. Pruning course.

Meet at Greystone orchard Bere Ferrers. There will be 3 orchards to visit so you can learn to prune 4, 15 and 70 year old trees! Led by Charles Staniland. £15. Tel 01579 351681 to book.

Sunday 30th. Pruning course.

A chance to prune old mature trees and shape newly planted ones at Staverton, near Totnes. 10.30am-4pm. Led by Charles Staniland. £20 or £15 to Orchard Link members. Call 01364 653169 to book.

FEBRUARY

Sunday 6th. Prune, Work and Learn

At Dartmouth community orchard. Pruning, clearing and maintenance. 10.30am-4pm. Free to Dartmouth residents, £5 or £4 to Orchard Link members. Call Charles Staniland on 01364 653169 to book.

Saturday 12th. Pruning young trees.

John Pledger (RHS) will give an indoor talk and hands on practice at Great Gutton, near Crediton. 10am to 1pm. £10. Call Jane Schofield on 01884 861181 to book.

Saturday 26th Grafting course.

Learn the art of bench grafting from expert Kevin Croucher at High Bickington village hall. 10.30am-4pm. £10. Call Jane Schofield (above) to book.

MARCH

Saturday 12th Save Our Orchards Annual supper and film night.

Join N Devon SOO for a 3 course delicious supper with archive films to follow. At Filleigh village hall. £7.50. Call Jane Schofield (see 12th Feb.) to book.

Looking ahead.....

MAY

Monday 3rd - May Day. Apple blossom, cider and the maypole.

Come and see member Steve Mittler's orchard in Stoke Gabriel in blossom. Hear how he makes cider (sparkling and still) and apple juice and taste 2005's 'cider nouveau'. Stay on to enjoy the village's May fair in the orchard, complete with maypole dancing. Meet at 1.15pm at the Victoria and Albert Inn car park in Stoke Gabriel for a short walk to Yarde orchard. Adults £3, children £1.50. A Coast and Countryside event. Call 01803 861384 for details.

Sunday 8th Apple Blossom walk at Berry Farm.

Enjoy 6 acres of traditional orchard in blossom at Berry Pomeroy near Totnes. And find out about the

many old apple varieties they contain. Meet at Berry Farm, off the Totnes to Berry Pomeroy road at 2pm. This joint Coast and Countryside event is FREE to Orchard Link members. To book your free place, call Jacqueline Sarsby on 01803 866870.

Saturday 22nd Learn Beekeeping.

With Jack Berry and visit his hives in an orchard at Yalberton near Paignton. 2pm onwards. This event is FREE to Orchard Link members - numbers are limited. Please don't come if you know you are allergic to bee stings!. Call Jacqueline Sarsby on 01803 866870 to book..

RURAL SKILLS FOR ORCHARD OWNERS

So the trees are planted and the orchard established - job done; well, maybe not! Have you looked carefully at the boundaries, are there hedges, stone walls or stone faced Devon banks? Perhaps they would benefit from some attention, however maybe you are uncertain what's required or how to go about the work. Time to consider a Devon Rural Skills Trust course? DRST, a charitable trust established in 1980 organises a range of practical courses including hedge-steeping (laying), dry-stone walling, turf and stone facing Devon banks, coppicing, cobble stoning, hurdle making and rake making etc. Courses are held on Saturdays from 9.30am to 4.30pm costing £15 for non-members and £10 for DRST members. Membership costs £10 per annum. For course details phone Jenny on 01364 642480 after 6.30pm please. For membership contact David Carlisle on 01803 615634. Website: www.devonruralskillstrust.co.uk.

Current courses

12 th February	Rebuilding Devon Hedge (turfing) at Sticklepath
26 th February	Hedge steeping (laying) at Bovey Tracey
5 th March	Hedge steeping (Laying) at Bratton Fleming
26 th March	Hedge steeping at Chagford
9 th April	Stone facing a Devon bank at South Moulton
30 th April	Cob day at Drewsteignton
14 th May	Drystone walling at South Brent

An Update on Mistletoe

Last year, I mentioned that mistletoe is rare in Devon orchards, and that William Marshall, writing in the late 18th century, had said there appeared to be none at all in Devon or Cornwall at that time. I asked people for sightings, and Jane Schofield and Ben Pike have found some for me. Jane is the Secretary of 'Orchards Live' in North Devon, and she has been writing about mistletoe too: she reports that it grows on a crab apple in mid-Devon and at Parke near Bovey Tracey. Ben Pike (of Orchard Link) knows of a Bramley tree in Totnes where it grows, and told me about the Lustleigh orchard where mistletoe abounds. I went to see this and it is an amazing infestation, perhaps a bit too amazing for the trees, as some of them looked as though they were dying. Mistletoe can be pruned back and will quickly grow again if not too much is taken; perhaps the villagers will rein in its exuberance a little. It was also growing on some tall trees at the top of the hill above the orchard, and I wondered if the plant had been originally implanted in the orchard, or had come some other way, perhaps via the action of birds.

Coming down the M5, one can see mistletoe thriving in orchards and on tall trees all the way from Worcestershire, through lowland Gloucestershire to Somerset. The last sight of it seems to be about Cricket St Thomas, and then, as one enters Devon, there is a band of oak trees and no more mistletoe visible. Mistletoe isn't partial to oak. Stanley Yapp, the Herefordshire mistletoe-grower I mentioned last time, says that among apple trees, it seems to do particularly well on Newton Wonder. I went to see him in September, when the mistletoe berries were still green: they would turn white with the frost. He showed me some mistletoe growing among the plums on his Marjory's Seedlings, but on the plum trees, the mistletoe seemed to have rather few berries, and to look larger and floppy like the male plant. It was thriving on a hawthorn in the hedge too, but it was almost certainly killing another hawthorn. The hawthorn is very full of its own berries, this year, and maybe the combination of abundant fruit and mistletoe together had stressed it too much. It grows on 17 different kinds of trees up there. There was no mistletoe growing on Stanley's damson trees or his damascenes, and none on his perry pear trees either, but lots on his apples. It is always a privilege to go to Stanley's farm, which is like a 75 acre museum of trees, a British Heritage Site of orchards!

Jane gave me a very interesting article on surveys of mistletoe by Jonathan Briggs (*Plant Life*,

December 1999) which suggested that mistletoe was growing more widely in the south and south-east of England in the late 1990s than it had been in the 1970s, and also in Scotland and Ireland. It does not like dense woodland, preferring the more open, spaced planting of orchards, gardens and parks. I also went to a very interesting talk on 'Birds in Orchards' given by Dr. Janet Kear at an Orchard Live spring supper, and she suggested that Blackcaps may be responsible for the wider distribution of mistletoe in the south in recent years: they are now commonly over-wintering and nesting in the south, and they are great eaters of the mistletoe berry's sticky white flesh, wiping the seed on to the bark of trees. She also said, 'Mistletoe doesn't grow on high ground,' which gave me pause for thought. It certainly grows abundantly down in the Teme Valley and the Severn Vale, but doesn't seem to flourish in the neighbouring Cotswold hills. Could it be that the great, cold, high, often treeless landmass of Dartmoor acts as a barrier to mistletoe growing in West Devon and Cornwall? The sightings in Devon are mostly on the East side of the moor in the lee of the West wind. It could be that the salty winds do not suit it; that is the traditional view, but salty winds blow on to the orchards of the Lower Severn. We really need an experiment. We need some orchard-growers in the West of the county to try and tuck some berries under the bark of their apple trees this winter. Mistletoe can take its time to get going, but maybe in 2 or 3 years, growers could report back: a leisurely experiment! About 30 cattle broke into my (ungrazed) baby orchard last year, bruising the bark on all my trees so, with rather too little botanical knowledge, but in the spirit of enquiry, I wiped mistletoe into their wounds. So far, nothing, except canker, of course, but I wait.

Jacqueline Sarsby

Contact Orchard link at:-

**ORCHARD LINK, PO BOX 109,
TOTNES, TQ9 5XR.**

Or call – 07792 664710.

Don't forget to visit our website at:
www.orchardlink.org.uk

You can email us there or at one of the following:

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