

ORCHARD LINK *NEWS*



The Orchard Link Annual Gathering at Yalberton, Sept. 2007

This photograph, by OL member, Colin Speakman, shows some of the very many members who came to the Gathering, at Yalberton on the Western edge of Paignton, an area of beautiful orchards with a long history of cider-making, which is threatened by development. We were guests of the residents, in particular the Save Yalberton Valley Action Group, and they entertained us right royally (See Mandy Speakman's Report, page 8). Just after we went to press in August, we received news that the **UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)** will now include **traditional orchards as a priority habitat**. Just how much protection this will give to our orchards in practice remains to be seen, but recognizing their value to wildlife is a firm step in the right direction. We also believe in their value to landscape, culture and local communities – *Editor*.

Fruits, nuts, useful plants



- Wide range of top fruit, soft fruit, nut tree and numerous other useful plants
- Seeds of over 400 species
- Books on fruits, nuts, forest gardening, tree crops
- Agroforestry News, with articles on fruits, nuts, tree and useful crops - £20 for 4 issues

Send 4 x 1st stamps for catalogue

Agroforestry Research Trust, 46 Hunters Moon, Dartington,
Totnes, TQ9 6JT

Email: mail@agroforestry.co.uk

Fax & Telephone (24 hrs): (01803) 840776

Order securely online at: www.agroforestry.co.uk

What's on?

Sunday 2nd December: **Learn to prune** - with tuition from Charles Staniland, in orchards at Berry Pomeroy, 10.30am - 4pm.

Cost: £20 to non-members, or £15 to Orchard Link members.

To book, call Charles on 01364 653169.

Saturday 8th December: **Learn hedge-steeping** and get your hedge-banks in good shape with a course run by Devon Rural Skills Trust near South Brent. Cost: £25, or £15 to DRST members. Call 01548 821156 to book and for details of many other winter rural skills courses available locally.

Saturday 12th January: **Orchard Wassail** in Stoke Gabriel's Church Orchard. Don't miss this traditional celebration of cider and apple trees complete with wassail queen, Morris men, wassailing and singing in the orchard, a midwinter barbeque, cider, apple cake and storytelling in the Hall till late. Meet outside the Scout Hut next to Church Orchard in Stoke Gabriel at 6pm. Bring a torch and wrap up warmly. Cost: Adults £2, children £1, families £5.

Sunday 13th January- **Learn to prune** - with tuition from Charles Staniland, in orchards near Totnes. See the event on 2nd December for prices and booking details.

Saturday 19th January **'So you want to plant an orchard?'** - a half-day course for planning a new, or restoring a traditional, orchard, 10.30am - 1pm at Weare Gifford, N. Devon. Cost: £5, or £4 to Orchards Live

subscribers. Call Jane Schofield on 01884 861181 for details and to book.

Sunday 27th January. **Planting and establishing a new orchard**, 10.30am - 1pm. North Devon location to be announced. £10, or £9 for Orchards Live subscribers. See the course on 19th January for booking details.

Saturday 9th February **Grafting Course** 10.30am - 1pm. Learn to bench-graft fruit trees: expert tuition from Kevin Croucher at Winkleigh, N. Devon. Cost: £10, or £9 to Orchards Live subscribers. For booking details see the course on 19th January.

Sunday 24th February **Grafting Course** 10.30am - 4pm. Learn to graft apple trees with Adam Montague at Ashton Village Hall (in the Teign Valley north of Chudleigh). By the end of the day you will be able to produce your own apple trees, so bring graft wood along if you have a favourite tree that would like to start a family! Two rootstocks are included in the price for you to take home as apple trees. More will be available to buy on the day, as will grafting knives. Please bring secateurs. Cost is £16, reduced to £12 for OL members. Contact Ben Pike on 01803 732212.

For other courses organized by Adam Montague and the Common Players, email: adam@ciderwithroadies.org

vigo

FRUIT PRESSES AND CRUSHERS



Turn surplus and windfall fruit into pure, fresh juice!

Traditional cast iron and oak presses for juice, wine & cider making.....

as well as juice steamers, pasteurisers, fruit and vegetable dryers and a wide range of pruning equipment.

Contact us for your free catalogue:

Vigo (OLK), Dunkeswell, Devon EX14 4LF

Tel: 01404 890285 (24hr)
Email: presses@vigold.com
www.vigopresses.co.uk

DEVON ORCHARD SERVICES



Planting
Renovation
Orchard reports
Management & advice

For a free estimate contact Ben Pike
Tel: 01803 732212 or email: ben@sharpham.plus.com

TREE FORMATION, STRESS & SPINDLEBUSHES

Ben Pike

One common misconception is that pruning is something that apple trees need when they are getting old and overcrowded, and thus less fruitful. This is indeed a good time to prune, but pruning trees when they are first planted is actually the most important time because you are shaping the tree for the rest of its life.

At this stage it is necessary to know what form you want the tree to take, for example, do you want the tree to become an espalier, a standard or a pyramid. To some extent, this will depend on the rootstock that the tree is grown on. So a tree grown on an M25 stock is only really suitable to grow as a standard or a half standard, although we do have one growing as an espalier at Sharpham, but that was an accident that fortunately occupies rather a large wall!

In this article, I am looking at two ways of growing apples that are usually found in commercial orchards rather than gardens. The first is the spindlebush developed in Holland as a way of growing large crops in a small space. It can best be described as a rather ungainly pyramid that is constantly supported by a tall stake. Horizontal branches originate from a central trunk, declining in length as they go up the tree so as not to shade the lower branches. It is usually grown on M9 or M26 stock and is unusual in that the branches are not seen as permanent fixtures, but rather something to be replaced

when they are worn out. This is typical in commercial fruit growing. Trees are grown hard, with branches replaced usually with a Dutch cut, when they have finished growing to their full potential.

Another system of growing apples also originates from Holland, and surprisingly it is based on causing stress to the trees. Most of us spend all our time cossetting our trees, yet this way of growing apples works on the basis that trees under stress tend to produce a lot of fruit. The trees used are called leg trees or knipboom in Dutch; they are on an M9 rootstock and are grafted higher up than is normal. They are planted shallowly with the top of the roots exposed, and like spindlebushes are supported with a central stake. The trees are also planted closer together than is normal. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and so far, crops in Holland have been much higher than in conventional orchards, up to 80 tonnes per hectare. It all goes to show that stress is good for you! If you would like to know more about this technique, there is a fascinating article by Simon Garbutt in the April 2007 issue of the RHS magazine, *The Garden*.

~~~~~

## GETTING THE JUICE FLOWING AT AVON MILL

*Trudy Turrell*

Once again Orchard Link's big wooden press was centre stage at the Avon Mill Garden Centre Autumn Festival. With crafts, local food, storytelling and the wonderful backdrop of all the plants, it is becoming an established event in the local calendar. Although we had no prior promises of apples, trolleys and basketfuls came in as a steady stream and kept our team of millers and pressers busy, especially during the afternoon when the centre was crowded. We produced a surplus of juice although we had constant sales and interest, with a crowd always gathered around the press, so each volunteer was able to take a few bottles home. Thanks to unstinting production, we raised £307, almost purely in juice sales. So a big thankyou to all our helpers and to Avon Mill for another great day: long may the festival continue!

~~~~~

ORCHARD LINK ON RADIO 4

Ben Pike

Not so long ago, a phone call from Radio 4 arrived on the Orchard Link mobile. They were making a programme about cider-making in Devon, and wondered if we could help. They had already arranged to interview Jason Mitchell, maker of the champagne-style Ashridge cider, and now wanted to make contact with the old school of cider-maker. Who better to put them in touch with than Orchard Link members Richard and George Pierce from Yealmpton?

So it was that one sunny October afternoon, we arrived at Colyton Barton Farm, home of Malcolm and Rosamund Shinner, and former home of the Pierce brothers. Richard and George were born and brought up here, and now return once a year to press the apples in preparation for making cider.

In the cellar of the old farmhouse, George was interviewed while pouring the juice into a large wooden barrel. He spoke tenderly about the old-fashioned way of making cider, and then the interviewer asked him when he had first made cider. When he was six, George replied. She then asked him when he had first drunk cider, and George told a fascinating tale of filling the coronation mugs with cider when he was five years old. The next question was when he had had his first hangover. George replied "You'm never get a hangover if you'm don't drink too much." It was a fascinating interview that carried on in this style. George also showed us the pressing house that has lain dormant since the 1930's. We fought through the brambles to see an old granite crusher, worked at one time by a carthorse, and a press that seemed to be holding up the ceiling. I was also interviewed, so hopefully Orchard Link will have a mention on national radio, albeit at 6-30 on a Sunday morning. The programme, called *On Your Farm*, is due to be aired on December 22nd, but the wonders of the internet mean that you can lie in and catch it at www.bbc.co.uk/radio4.

~~~~~

# Adam's Apples

**Quality Fruit Trees at  
competitive prices**

Apple trees from £5.50/tree

**100+Varieties**, eaters, cookers, cider

Bush and standard rootstocks

Pears, plums, gages, **BLUEBERRIES**  
other fruit bushes

Free catalogue and availability

Tel 01404 841166

Fax 01404 841196

[http:// www.talatonplants.co.uk](http://www.talatonplants.co.uk)



# THORNHAYES NURSERY



**Apple, Pear, Quince, Plum, Cherry, Medlar,  
Mulberry, Apricots, Cobnuts, Chestnuts, Walnuts,  
Figs Hedging, Ornamentals.**

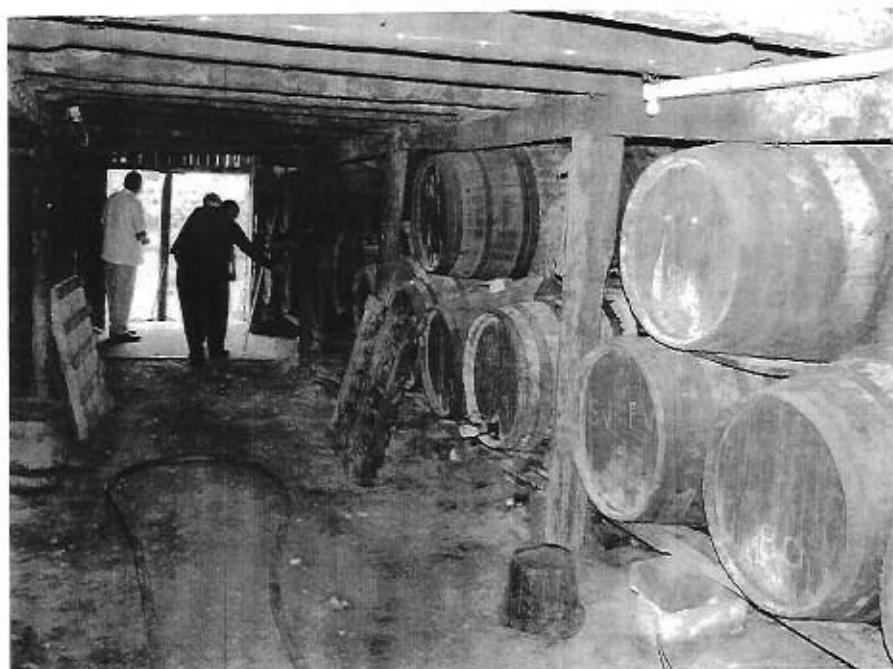
One of the largest ranges of trees available.

Over 1000 varieties grown. Expert advice from the specialists.

Catalogue online, or free from  
Thornhayes Nursery, Dulford, Cullompton, Devon EX15 2DF

**Tel 01884 266746 Fax 01884 266739**

**[www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk](http://www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk)**



*photos: Colin Speakman*

## **ORCHARD LINK ANNUAL GATHERING**

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2007**

*Mandy Speakman*

This year's annual gathering was held at Higher Yalberton, on the western fringes of Paignton, in an area of beautiful, productive orchards, where cider has been made for centuries and is still sold today. The occasion was a resounding success, made so by the warm welcome of the Yalberton people and the generous efforts of both villagers and Orchard Link members.

The event opened with coffee and home made shortbread, provided by Val and John Gillespie, and an introduction to the history of the local orchards, by Barry Jobson. Richard Hunt of Higher Yalberton Farm showed us his cider barn and large tractor-driven press, giving us a most informative talk about cider production past and present. After this, Barry Jobson took us on a tour of his orchard and Alan Wood gave us a demonstration of Green Oak Timber roof construction. Barry Jobson and Jackie Gillespie then indulged us with a tasting of their cider in another beautiful, old cider barn. We were able to see a display of work by two exceptional craftswomen, basketry by Hilary Burns, made out of locally grown willow, and Susie Gillespie's beautiful natural linen weaving, in Susie's studio.

A short drive to Stoke Gabriel Village Hall gave us an occasion to spoil ourselves with a lunch of wonderful foods cooked by Hilary Burns and her helpers: Butternut Squash Lasagne, Layered Vegetable Bake, an array of salads and equally indulgent desserts such as Blackberry and Apple Crumble and Damson Frangipane. The Yalberton people and OL members, Robin & Veronica Cross and Marion and Alan Perkins, kindly contributed apple juice and cider. It was a feast for more than 70 people. After lunch, a raffle of donated items, including a bottle of whiskey (from the residents of Lower Yalberton) and an apple tree, raised over £100.

Great thanks go to the people of Yalberton, who gave us a magnificent welcome and especially to Hilary Burns, whose efforts produced such superb food and to Val and John Gillespie, Richard Hunt, Barry Jobson and Jackie Gillespie for their hospitality. Thanks also to the craftspeople, Alan Wood, Hilary Burns and Susie Gillespie, for displaying their work. All thanks to the generosity of those who helped, from the organisation and bringing the event together by Jacquie Sarsby, to the preparation of food, the setting up of the hall and team effort in clearing up. The day was truly wonderful; we look forward to next year, though I think we can all agree it will be difficult to top the event at Yalberton!      ㊄㊄㊄㊄



## GO NUTS! PLANT A TREE IN TOTNES!

### *Planting nut trees*

Just imagine, when walking through your local park or open space, that you could pick up nuts from the trees, free and available to everyone: it's a vision held by Transition Town Totnes, a widespread community initiative that is exploring options for our lives when oil is no longer affordable. Planting nut trees seems a very sensible alternative to planting trees that are purely decorative and with this in mind, local residents in the Bridgetown area of Totnes have researched sites for chestnut, hazel and walnut trees in their open spaces.

With trees ready to plant, and help and tools from Trees For Health, the group have planned a first planting day on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December. Everyone is welcome and invited to join in, especially families. Just meet at the top play park of Bridgetown's 'chicken run', off Furze Road at 11am, finish around 1pm. There will be subsequent planting days in January and February; call Wendy Stayte on 01803 868305 for details.

### *Tree guardians needed*

To ensure the long term care of the newly planted trees, local volunteer 'tree guardians' are being sought. No tree expertise necessary, just a love of trees and a little time to check their health and maybe prune them a little. If you can help, call Wendy at the number above.

### *Why not apple trees?*

And while nut trees are being planted for community use, why not apple trees? Well, Ben Pike reminded me that Totnes already has one community orchard at the top of the town. It is approached from the steep green lane (sometimes called Windmill Hill), which starts across the main road at the top of Cistern Street, and it could certainly do with more TLC from local people. Moves are also afoot to allow public access to Castle Meadow (owned by Totnes Town Council), and to provide some allotments plus community orchards. I hope that some Orchard Link members will wish to be involved in this exciting practical project. Over the winter I'll be finding out more about it so will keep you posted. Meanwhile if you would like to be involved, do call or email me.

Trudy Turrell 01803 849270 [trudy@trudyturrell.plus.com](mailto:trudy@trudyturrell.plus.com)

~~~~~

FRUIT TREE GRAFTING

The time is approaching to take graft wood from any tree one wishes to propagate by grafting. If you have a tree or trees you wish to replicate or increase in number, I can undertake this for you at moderate cost. I am not in business commercially and only offer this service to Orchard Link members. *Further details from Mick Godfrey on 01548 821156. (Evenings best).*

~~~~~

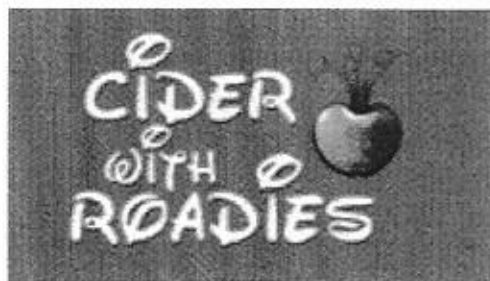
## STALLS ON A SHOESTRING

*Trudy Turrell*

Not feeling flush, Orchard Link has had to re evaluate just how we fund and organize stalls for all the events we are invited to attend. Our first autumn event, and one at which we have become a 'regular' is the Kingsbridge Show. Feeling that we couldn't justify the price of a stand this year, we approached the organizers, saying that we planned to provide an apple peel competition (which was very popular in 2006,) and to be there to answer orchard queries - as well as promoting membership and press hire. Though they must receive many requests for free pitches, Jackie Broad and her team granted ours; for which we are very thankful.

With lots of volunteer help, we ran a stall with information, apple face-painting for children and apples for sale. Well done, Dick Ensor, who worked so hard to sell all that he brought, then gave us half the proceeds! And thanks to Jackie Stephens who brought lots of interesting varieties too. Particular thanks to Mick Godfrey, who was on the stall most of the day and to Peter and Catherine Cowper, who gave their afternoon and donated a wonderful spiral apple peeler to us. We met loads of friends and contacts, old and new, and booked a couple of hirings and a membership, raising £69 into the bargain. The peeling competition was won by David Broadgate, (who was last year's champion), with an amazing 98 1/4 inches of unbroken peel. The prize of a bottle of apple bubbly was kindly donated by Realdrink of Stoke Gabriel. And the cost of setting it all up? A princely £3 for Bramleys to peel!

~~~~~



Cider with Roadies tell us about their activities:

Over the last 17 years the Common Players have taken new experiences though the media of drama, education and interactive performances, into people's communities to engage, stimulate and help create new community relationships and events.

Cider with Roadies is the latest of these projects, funded with grants from Leader+ and Heritage Lottery amongst others, conceived with the aim to rekindle local interest and enthusiasm for apples, orchards and different apple uses.

This aim was to be achieved through three elements working together to create the overall project: firstly, the event of juicing apples over an afternoon, in a community space, culminating in a performance of a specially-written piece called *The Big Squeeze*: the story of Pip, the apple, and her meeting with Mr Badfinger, the fruit expert.

Secondly, our Apple Educator, Heather Fallows offers one of three art-based days to a Key Stage 2 class in local primary schools. The children have the chance to taste locally sourced apples and compare them to supermarket ones flown into the country, and they produce art-work, poetry and prose to be collected into a book at the end of the project.

The third element to the project is that of the Apple Animateur, Adam Montague. He tours with the apple press, ensuring all can become involved in the juicing process and fostering new relationships and contacts for use in the wider role of the Animateur: to bring together local apple growers and producers with local businesses to explore opportunities for working together. He also gives an informative talk on how to begin to identify apples during the afternoon, as well as being on hand to answer questions on all things 'appley'.

So, at the beginning of September, off we went armed with our unique touring apple press, a well-rehearsed show and the promise of community apples for pressing. The weather was immensely generous, this being an entirely outside event and this encouraged all ages to come along and juice their apples. People were very interested in the overall project and its aims, and regaled us with stories from childhood, local traditions and tales and shared family secrets for brewing the best cider. We learned of successes and failures with pruning, growing and grafting apples, and Adam was able to give much valuable advice and will be going back to communities and run courses on topics such as orchard management.

Twenty-four communities ranging from Farmers Markets and a Heritage Museum to community orchards and local schools, all partook of the juicing and then the performance, during which the audience became "windfalls" along with Pip.

We have been thrilled and inspired by the diversity of people we have met, all sharing an interest in the most British of fruits, the apple. The project, **Cider with Roadies**, continues during 2008, with the Apple Animateur working on an interactive apple website and investigating ways of making our traditional orchards economically viable, to help preserve this valuable habitat, part of our rural heritage. Two new pieces of drama are also being written for performance in schools and at community feasts during the autumn.

If you have seen the event, or would like to know more please keep in touch via our website www.ciderwithroadies.org

We are looking at working in partnership with one Mid Devon couple who have two acres of land, all organic, and who are keen to plant an orchard. With Adam's expertise and their enthusiasm we plan to record each stage of the process for inclusion in an exhibition which will tour with the press during the autumn of 2008.

"With the pressures of life this squeeze was a great way to spend an afternoon." Quote from audience member in Ilington, Devon 07.

"Excellent all round. Activities, set and music superb. Information talk was well received too. People asked if we could make this an annual event." Land Heritage, Hittisleigh, Devon

~~~~~

## Exeter Heritage Orchard

*Crispin Adams has a project which will interest anyone who cares about our Devon heritage of apple varieties:*

**Good news from Exeter**, where an idea for an orchard celebrating Exeter heritage, is taking shape. The idea developed after looking for some trees for my own garden. Those on offer at the nearest garden centre were rather disappointing, but thankfully the local nursery was on-hand with an inspiring catalogue. I rapidly gathered quite a list of varieties, originating from the Exeter vicinity, with a fascinating history of plant collectors and nurserymen...

So first on my list are "Lucombe's Pine" and "Lucombe Seedling". These originate from the Lucombe and Pince nursery once located in the St. Thomas district of Exeter. This was founded by William Lucombe in 1720 and run by Pince (a relation), in late Victorian times. The glasshouses and grounds were once regarded as one of Exeter's finest sights, drawing in many visitors. Famed for the Lucombe Oak, an evergreen hybrid of Turkey and Cork Oak, they were also noted for having a fine fruit collection including expertly trained peaches and nectarines. The business was finally sold in 1890 and converted into a pleasure ground by the Council in 1912. A long avenue of mature wisteria remains a characteristic feature to this day.

Exeter was also home to another leading family of plant collectors and nurserymen, the Veitches. Their story starts with John Veitch, a Scot, who became a Landscaper at Killerton House, just outside Exeter. With the support of the local dignitary, he set up a nursery at Budlake, around 1800, and was soon supplying trees all over the country. His son, James, expanded the business, opening seed shops and buying additional land at Mount Radford in Exeter. His son, James Jnr, expanded yet further in 1853 with The Royal Exotic Nursery in Chelsea, and his son, Harry, went on to be knighted for his work in establishing The Chelsea Flower Show.

Meanwhile, the Exeter business was run by another descendent, Peter, who was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour in 1917. The Veitches eventually ran out of heirs and the business was wound up in the late 1960s. There are three apple varieties I'm aware of from the Exeter nurseries: "Veitch's Perfection", "Hollow Core" and "Queens". Also connected to this story are varieties rediscovered in the 1950s on the Killerton Estate: "Killerton Sharp", "Killerton Sweet" and "Wellington".

Unfortunately I don't have such interesting historical context for the majority of varieties on my list. This includes: "Plum Vite", "Royal Wilding (Cadbury)", "Sweet Coppin", "White Alphington", "Star of Devon", "Rev'd McCormick", "Upton Pyne" and "Cornish Pine" - so I'm keen to hear from anyone who can elaborate. I'm hoping that this rich historical background will drive interest in the project and ensure its long-term success. The Council have put forward a community site, near the arena, and we hope to get the first trees in this winter (depending on availability). I will also be looking for volunteers and sponsors to aid its upkeep.

~~~~~

STANDARD APPLE TREES
OLD DEVON & SOMERSET VARIETIES

*Dessert, culinary & cider trees
delivered throughout the South West.
Also maiden one year old trees.*

CIDER APPLE TREES
Corkscrew Lane, Woolston
Nr. North Cadbury, Somerset
01963 441101

ORCHARD LINK: FOOD HEROES

Orchard link has been designated one of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's **River Cottage Food Heroes** this year. The 2008 River Cottage Diary shows, for October, a full-page colour picture of our wooden press manned by OL member Dick Ensor, together with an explanation of Orchard Link's activities. (Diary available now in book shops).

[EDITOR'S NOTE: see also the article, 'Fight to save Britain's Orchards', pp. 12- 14 in NFU Countryside Magazine, October 2007, which is about Orchard Link's work to save Devon Orchards.]

Much Marcle Trip: Would any OL members be interested in going to 'the Big Apple' weekend in and around the village of Much Marcle in Herefordshire, next October? The orchard people there would be very pleased to welcome us if we wanted to organize it, staying at B & Bs and going to all the perry-making and cider-making events, orchards, talks and displays etc. Tell me if you are: jsarsby@btinternet.com

Or write to me at 22 Leechwell St. Totnes, TQ9 5SX.

**Contact Orchard Link at:
ORCHARD LINK, P.O. BOX 109,
TOTNES, TQ9 5XR.**

Or ring 07792 664710

Don't forget to visit our web-site at:

www.orchardlink.org.uk

You can e-mail us there or at

info@orchardlink.org.uk

To hire a press or mill,

Ring Peter Cowper on 01548 531297

If you would like to write something for the Newsletter, tell the editor:

Jacquie Sarsby, tel 01803 866870, email: jsarsby@btinternet.com

The views expressed in this Newsletter are the views of the individual authors and their contributions are their copyright.