



# Colwall Orchard Group

Restoring, promoting and celebrating traditional orchards

## Newsletter – Spring 2021

### Dear COG Member

Spring is in the air and we are delighted to see the first buds emerging on the fruit trees at our two community orchards. We've even seen a bit of early blossom on a Metherly Plum! It is great to see the spring flowers too. At Lugg's Mill the native daffodils planted 2 years ago are just beginning to bunch up and flower beautifully and at Colwall Village Garden the crocus by the children's orchard have flowered, the daffodils are out and the cowslips show great promise, and may even be flowering by the time you read this! There are also the early signs of yellow rattle, the indicator that demonstrates that our meadow is establishing to plan. It is early days but if the yellow rattle can do its work and reduce the strength of the grass sward the meadow has every chance of flourishing and adding to ecological diversity of our orchards – something which inspires us. 😊



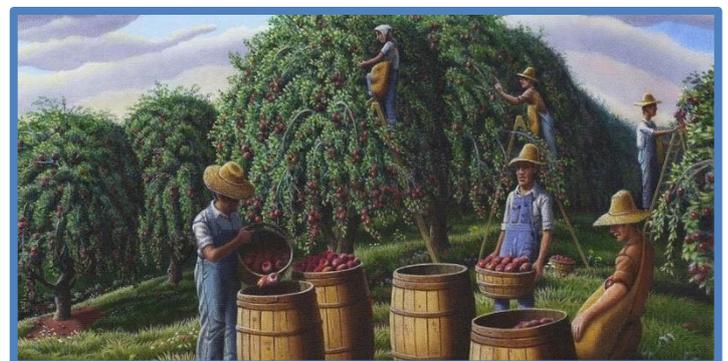
We are also always pleased to see people enjoying our sites and during the past 12 months, with lockdown and fewer holidays and trips away, we've seen more visitors than ever walking through the young orchards. More on that in the piece about Lugg's Mill below.

The two big disappointments over the winter months were not to be able to hold our annual Wassail and to be restricted on our regular volunteer group activities 😞 😞. On the latter we truly hope to get together again soon with as much cake to share as we are able! We also hope that Wassail will return again next year and in the meantime that we can hold a summer picnic and other social events. Something to look forward to soon!

**Wendy Thompson, COG Trustee and Newsletter Editor**  
**On behalf of the COG Board of Directors and Trustees**

### Apples and People

'Apples and People' is a website based upon a newly commissioned map of the apple world. It traces a network of stories about the apple from the ancient world to the present day, 'Apples and People' highlights just how significant the fruit is to people, and how vital people have been in selecting the rich variety of apples that are enjoyed around the world today. These stories will be released throughout 2021 and



2022 on key dates in the apple's own calendar. This is recommended for orchard and apple lovers! See our [News page](#) or visit the website here <https://applesandpeople.org.uk/> for more information.

# Formative Pruning of Young Apple Trees

By Andy Ball

To many the thought of trying to prune their young apple trees brings on feelings of concern, confusion and self-doubt. As with many things apple-related we tend to refer to the Marcher Apple Network (MAN) as an impartial and knowledgeable source of reference. A recent edition of their regular periodical – Apples and Pears – had an excellent article on the pruning of their own collection of young apple trees.

For general apple tree pruning MAN prune for health and to create a good main branch structure. Those are two very commendable principles.

With regard to health the greatest risk to apple trees is from fungal canker which is evident as round or oval areas of dead, sunken bark, often at the site of a previous wound. Creating a good main branch framework helps produce a tree of the desirable open goblet shape and if done correctly provides strong limbs that can support the weight of heavy fruit crops.



Traditionally apple and pear trees were pruned in winter when labour was more readily available. There's been a general shift recently towards pruning apple trees in summer. This has several advantages including there being less fungal particles around and pruning wounds also heal faster. Summer pruning is less likely to encourage vigorous growth and tends to facilitate fruit formation. The downsides of summer pruning are that you'll most likely remove developing fruit and the shape of the tree is less evident since it will be in full leaf. You may also be busy doing other things in the garden, or Covid-19 allowing, be away on holiday!

MAN's approach to pruning is quite simple. Working from the base of the tree upwards they remove any unwanted shoots growing from the rootstock or from the stem. They then deal with the three 'D's' cutting out Dead, Diseased or Disorderly (crossing) branches. For amenity purposes they remove any nuisance low branches that would be readily eaten by browsing animals or that would get in the way of any mowing activities.

Once a young tree reaches about 2.5m MAN recommends cutting back the main central leader to around 2m which will then encourage side shoots to form. This pruning is repeated every 3-4 years which should allow selection of between five and eight main structural branches to develop. Ideally these should be like spokes of a wheel, evenly spaced around the main stem, but since we are talking about a living entity the theory doesn't always square with the practice! Any crowded or unwanted branches are removed.

In subsequent years the thickening side shoots from these main branches are thinned out, maybe a quarter a year. The aim is to create an even, balanced structure usually with an open centre to the tree and with branches that don't overshadow one another.

Does this all still sound very complicated? There's an excellent book available that gives comprehensive guidance – *How To Prune An Apple Tree – A guide for real people with imperfect trees* – Chloe Ward – 2014. A snip (please excuse the very poor pruning pun) at round £4.00.

## Partnership with the Downs Light Railway Trust

We are delighted to be working with the DLRT, and the Downs school community, to re-establish a



traditional orchard that's located in the school grounds. We'll be planting new trees and pruning existing ones and also holding an autumn orchard-themed event to harvest fruit from the orchard, transport it using the railway to a pop-up fruit juicing and bottling plant, before using the railway to deliver bottles of fruit juice to a pop-up sales venue! A perfect mini re-enactment of Colwall's orchard history! The Downs Light Railway Trust have applied to the Aviva Community Fund to support this project, and they are seeking match funding. You can support the project 'Establishing New Roots for Educating Young People' on the funding page [DownsLightRailwayTrustFunding](#)

## Regular Volunteer Work Sessions

Our regular Friday morning volunteer sessions have been curtailed during the winter months due to Covid Lockdown. We say curtailed rather than stopped completely because we have managed to continue to do essential tasks by working alone, in pairs and occasionally in groups of 3. This has allowed us to plant, trim, and lay hedges (more detail below), mulch the orchard trees and to continue with our tree planting programme across Colwall (more detail below).

Fingers are crossed that we will be able to resume regular volunteer sessions after Easter but we await Government announcements to weigh up whether this is ok. We will be writing to all of our regular volunteers soon, including those that have recently signed up to start whenever conditions allow. We will share plans for Spring and Summer volunteer activities and also a new Volunteer Charter and registration form which the Winter months have given us time to complete. These will be more specific about our commitment to volunteers and the responsibilities that volunteers have for their own wellbeing. An example of this is a reminder to make sure you have a Tetanus booster vaccination if you haven't in the last 10 years.

We look forward to seeing everyone again soon – **and maybe we can even share coffee and cake again!** Ah the small things that make a difference!

If you have never volunteered with COG and wish to, please get in touch via [members@colwallorchardgroup.org](mailto:members@colwallorchardgroup.org) and we will add you to our email list and keep you informed of what's on offer.



## 40 yards of fun

Report by our Roving Volunteer, Martin Blamire

On your recent walks around the orchard you may have noticed, tucked away in the coldest corner of the site, that something is happening.

Working in socially-distanced pairs, members of COG have spent time learning and practicing the ancient art of hedge-laying. Using only traditional hand tools - billhook, axe and saw - we trimmed, pleached and carefully laid down the existing blackthorn and silver birch bushes, planted some five years ago, to create a dense hedge. This was reinforced by sturdy hazel stakes driven into the ground and the whole laid hedge was held together and straightened by long, supple hazel binders which we twisted to try to give an attractive finish.



Although it may look as if we have committed gross vandalism, I am reliably informed that green shoots will soon start appearing from the base of the hedge as the hedge renews itself and thickens. Please watch that space!

We are not experts by any means, but we are getting a huge amount of pleasure, outdoor exercise and satisfaction from this task. Add mindfulness, too, since if your attention wanders there's a high chance of slicing right through the trunk of the piece to be laid – I should know!

We will not be laying any more hedge this year, as the optimum season is almost past. We hope to involve more members next winter, so please get in touch by emailing [members@colwallorchardgroup.org](mailto:members@colwallorchardgroup.org) if you are interested.

## Identification of apple, pear and cherry varieties using DNA

The world-renowned research organisation NIAB-EMR (National Institute for Agricultural Botany – East Malling Research), are offering DNA analysis to identify fruit trees at £27.60 plus VAT per sample for Apples, Pears and Cherries.

To identify your fruit trees you will need to download and complete a 'Sample Bag Request Form' and email [peter\\_laws@msn.com](mailto:peter_laws@msn.com) before 25th June 2021. Samples can be sent to the laboratories in Kent between 17<sup>th</sup> May and 30th June and fresh leaves need to be posted first class immediately after collecting. Results are expected by the end of 2021. More details of the timetable and process here: <https://www.fruitid.com/#help>.

If you would like Colwall Orchard Group to submit your samples for you, please contact us through the usual address [members@colwallorchardgroup.org](mailto:members@colwallorchardgroup.org).

## Colwall Orchard Group AGM postponed

Our Annual General meeting has traditionally taken place at the end of March but last year due to Covid19 restrictions we postponed it until June and held it by email voting. This year we are hoping that we can hold a meeting in person and to do this it will again take place in June or July. More information will be circulated once we can confirm the date.

# 100 New fruit trees in Colwall (The old Newbridge pear tree)

Report by Wendy Thompson

We have been busy planting trees over the winter months and can tot up to over 100 new trees in Colwall! 69 of these were planted with funding from the Malvern Hills AONB to support COG's Traditional Orchards for the Future Initiative. Amongst these we sourced and planted the rare and local Stoneyway or Stonyway Pear which is recorded in the Gloucestershire Pomona Series as originating at Stony Way near The Winnings in Colwall. The house named Stony Way still exists on the Walwyn Road on the opposite side of the road from The Winnings. The pear was first noticed in 1866 and described in 1886 so it has a bit of local heritage. We planted 3 Stoneyways in Stamps Orchard near the public footpath and near to the very old Newbridge pear (also called White Moorcroft) which is in the distance behind Rachel in the photo.



We also planted a further 24 trees in our community orchards at Colwall Village Garden and Lugg's Mill. These were mainly to gap up trees that had been damaged by sheep or drought and were either dead or struggling very badly. The majority of these trees were funded by a grant from the Tree Council.



We were pleased to be joined by local children (from left to right Maisie, Rowan, Tristan and Freddie) to help us with some planting. A big thanks to them all for doing this.

So those of you who are following the maths will be asking what about the other 6 trees? Well we planted all of these in private gardens in Colwall and this was funded by the owners. In addition, we supplied precisely a further 100 trees to COG members and friends in Colwall and beyond. So in fact we have directly supported the planting of a further 200 fruit trees! A nice contribution towards the mitigation of global warming. May they all thrive and bring pleasure over many years to come.

# Community Orchard Surveys of Flora and Fauna

Report by Andy Ball, COG Trustee and Manager of Colwall Village Garden

We are planning two surveys, at both Colwall Village Garden and Lugg's Mill, later this year with the help of Ledbury Naturalists Field Club (Ledbury Nats). This is something that Ledbury Nats like to do at different locations each year and to have their input, enthusiasm and expertise will be very beneficial to COG. Their membership includes local experts in many areas of natural history.

Janet Parry and Hilary Ward from Ledbury Nats recently walked round Colwall Village Garden and Lugg's Mill with us. It was an interesting visit and served to remind us of the variety of habitats that our two sites offer - not only orchards but hedgerows, meadows, a pond and a tree-lined stream.

The information provided by the Ledbury Nats survey will help us by providing a good solid indication on how well we are doing to make our sites good species-rich habitats. It will also provide a useful benchmarking tool from which we can measure change (hopefully improvement!) to the habitats we manage. This will be particularly helpful to support an application for the upcoming Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) which is being introduced by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) over the next few years.



Ledbury Nats are likely to carry out monthly site visits between March and October in order to gain an insight into the presence of species over a large chunk of the year. They will produce a written report providing detail of what they find during their field surveys including lists of species of flowering plants; grasses, sedges and rushes; fungi and non-flowering plants; trees and shrubs; birds; invertebrates and vertebrates.

We very much look forward to welcoming their members to our sites, and to work with them over the coming months.

## Membership renewal

Our membership year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March and so reminders to renew will be sent to you soon. If you have already paid for 2021/22, or you are a Life Member, we will avoid sending this to you and we thank you for your continued support.

# Lugg's Mill Orchard – a 'must-visit' destination in Colwall

Report by Lindsay Williams, COG Trustee and Manager of Lugg's Mill Orchard

Being outside in the wonderful British countryside is a great way to exercise, relax and enjoy nature. This has never been more important than during these unsettled times. Colwall Orchard Group's orchard at Lugg's Mill has been a very popular destination over the past year and for good reason. It has three entrances: one on the public footpath from Mill Lane, another on the new path through Brookmead but we will enter through the kissing gate on Old Church Road. As we enter, we immediately see the interpretation panel with the friendly greeting "Welcome" and "Explore, relax and enjoy the orchard". The panel provides some history of the mill which stood on this site, describes the orchard, the wildflower meadow and the environmental importance of this small but important site.

Continuing into the site on our left we see some of the last remaining evidence of the corn mill, the overflow for the old mill pond. Unfortunately, there is nothing left of the mill or pond. As we walk along the track the stream on our right follows the rules for all brooks and babbles quietly in the background. The stream is forever changing: sometimes a raging torrent full of energy and power; at other times a gentle trickle lazily meandering along its bed. Its size belies its environmental importance; it is regularly patrolled by an otter and visitors occasionally see the vivid splash of blue as a kingfisher flashes past. The ash and alder trees tower over the stream, many show evidence of coppicing, highlighting their importance as fuel in days gone by.



On our left, a new planting of hazel, currently small insignificant saplings which over the years will form a productive coppice supplying bean poles, stakes and bindings. The orchard trees on this side of the stream are all cherry trees, young and dormant at present, but changing through the seasons with beautiful blossom and a promise of abundant fruit that will be quickly eaten by hungry birds.



We can now cross the stream on a sturdy bridge allowing us to continue our circular walk up a gentle incline into the apple orchard. These young trees will one day produce a crop of many different apple varieties. Here we can fully appreciate the view back across the stream: the Malvern Hills seem to curve around us with both Worcestershire and Herefordshire Beacons defining the skyline. To the west, Colwall St James Church stands in the quintessential English landscape which slowly rises to Oyster Hill. For those wishing to linger there is a wooden bench and log seats.

This side of the stream has another surprise: a wildflower meadow, constantly changing. Yellow lesser celandine flowers are currently appearing with an early promise of spring. If we look closely tiny yellow rattle seedlings are emerging. By June, the meadow will be a riot of colour.

This lovely orchard is packed full of life, ever changing. When you visit, do take the time to absorb the beauty of this small precious part of Herefordshire.

## Cider Vinegar is back!

We are pleased to have made a new batch of cider vinegar, having run out of stock at the Mistletoe Fair in December. This is for sale at £3 for a 330ml bottle and can either be purchased via the COG online shop [www.colwallorchardgroup.org/shop](http://www.colwallorchardgroup.org/shop) or by email to [members@colwallorchardgroup.org](mailto:members@colwallorchardgroup.org) and we will send details for you to pay by bank transfer.



We also continue to sell large bottles of Apple Juice (750ml) at the reduced price of 6 bottles for £15. This offer will run until Easter. Other products in stock include Medlar Jelly, Damson Jam and Green Tomato Chutney.

If you live in the Parish of Colwall, and the value of your order is £15.00 or over, we can arrange delivery to your home. For orders below this value, we can arrange for you to collect from us.

And finally, if you can return your used COG produce jars and bottles, we can use them again. Please clean them first and then place them in the crate/box by the door to the Apple Packing Shed at Colwall Village Garden in Old Church Road.

## COG Board – Who we are and what we do

### By Wendy Thompson

As COG Secretary, I often get asked “who are the COG Board of Trustees and what do they do?” As a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, COG appoints a number of Trustees (and also Company Directors) who form the COG Board. Each Trustee appointment is confirmed by member vote, usually at an AGM. The Trustees ensure that COG operates legally and in a way that delivers our charitable objectives. All Trustees have shared responsibility for this.

The Trustees take on specific roles eg Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and responsibilities (eg Site and Building Managers, Data Protection Manager, Health and Safety Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, Events Coordinator, and Produce Managers) as well as leads for things like promotion and communication, fund raising, education and training, orchard advice and environmental policy.

The COG Board of Trustees are listed on the governance page of our website. We have started to add more information about the individuals and their COG roles which you will find on the ‘About us’ webpage <https://colwallorchardgroup.org/about-us-trustees>.

We have also started to add the minutes from our Board meetings to the COG website, to offer more transparency about the decision-making process. You’ll find these on the Governance page. If you’d like more information or to discuss anything about COG, please get in touch. And if you would like to become more involved in the decision making or to help to run any of the COG activities, we would always be delighted to have a chat.

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## From the [COG Board](#)

### Contact information:

Email: [secretary@colwallorchardgroup.org](mailto:secretary@colwallorchardgroup.org) or [members@colwallorchardgroup.org](mailto:members@colwallorchardgroup.org)

Web: [www.colwallorchardgroup.org](http://www.colwallorchardgroup.org)

Social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)