



Colwall Orchard Group

Restoring, promoting and celebrating traditional orchards

Newsletter – Winter 2020

Dear COG Member

As we write this the country is again in lockdown, the trees are shedding their brightly coloured foliage, and the nights are drawing in. We hope that this newsletter provides you with a bit of a lift as we start to get ready for winter.

This season is usually one of our busiest, with events like the Mistletoe Fair and the Wassail; together with physical activities like winter pruning, tree planting and hedge work. We hope to continue with some of these things although our Wassail looks very unlikely to happen. We may well run the Mistletoe Fair but just in case we don't you can now purchase our produce online via the COG shop, of which more detail below.

The newsletter also includes details of several of the highlights over the last few months to include completion of our bridge at Lugg's Mill, some bumper turnouts at our regular Friday morning work parties with lots of practical progress being made; and wonderful sessions juicing apples with the children from Colwall C of E Primary School. So, much to still celebrate, and there's further news of future activities such as the Traditional Orchards for the Future Initiative (TOFI) which will be something to look forward to next year.

Please read on for more information about all of this.

Best wishes and good health to you

From the COG Board of Directors and Trustees

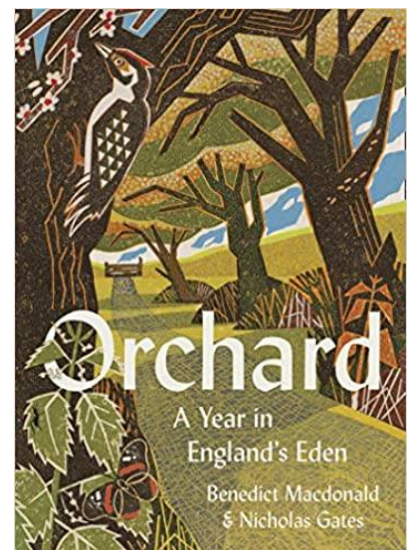
Orchard Library

Our orchard library continues to grow thanks to generous donations from our members and we now have around 40 books available. There are a wide variety of topics covered - mainly on orchard and fruit-related matters but also wider natural history subjects to include birds, botany, meadows and bumblebees.

You can see a list of the books held at <https://colwallorchardgroup.org/resources>.

If you'd like to borrow books, for which we suggest a modest 50p lending fee donation, please email members@colwallorchardgroup.org or speak to Andy.

Likewise if you have books that you'd be willing to donate please get in touch.



Apple Scab

This year whilst harvesting fruit from orchards and gardens we've had many people asking us what is the cause of the black-brown spots found on the leaves and fruit of their apple trees. This is apple scab, a fungal disease and this growing season seems to have been a particularly bad year with many trees affected.



As with many fungal diseases scab favours wet conditions so keeping grass short beneath trees, and regular pruning of trees to ensure good air flow through the crown will help. Removal and burning of scab affected leaves once they have fallen will stop the disease overwintering and re-infecting new, emerging leaves the following year. Similarly removing spent apples and disposing of them in your rubbish, rather than composting, also breaks the life cycle.

Affected apples, whilst visually blemished, can usually be safely used but storage can be a problem since any open lesions are likely to develop into secondary rots which will ruin the fruit.

Choice of fruit variety plays a big part in the incidence of scab. Some apple varieties such as Worcester Pearmain and Bramley's Seedling are susceptible to scab whilst others like Adam's Pearmain, Limelight or Charles Ross show scab resistance. This together with resistance to other diseases like canker, mildew and fireblight are all considerations when choosing your next new apple tree.

New Fencing to The Pond at Colwall Village Garden

Those of you with sharp eyesight, or who regularly visit the remote corners of the Colwall Village Garden site, will have noticed that a new fence and pedestrian gate now separates the pond from the rest of the community orchard. We've decided to fence this small area off for health and safety reasons; to stop dogs from entering the pond; and to give us better options for planting the area surrounding the pond by allowing us to separate off grazing sheep.

We've had a wildlife survey done of the pond with some very encouraging initial results so the pond is settling in, and developing well as a habitat, with minimal intervention from us.

Regular Volunteer Work Sessions

As we pull together this newsletter the country is again in a short lockdown so we are currently not holding any regular, organised work party sessions, which is a great shame.

Over the preceding few months we've had fantastic support from our volunteers and we have been attracting good turnouts consistently week upon week. The new bridge at Lugg's Mill was the centre of our activities for several regular Friday morning sessions but the bulk of that project was done by Deb and Laurence at other times.



Looking back over our records we've done a multitude of other jobs including summer fruit tree pruning, hedge work, harvesting of fruit at various locations, mowing, strimming, mulching, weeding, fence maintenance, wildflower seed collection and plug planting, footpath creation, fruit pressing and juicing, making jam and chutney, social media promotion, and even sheep wrangling (under the close direction of our graziers Kath and Clive).

Phew, we need a sit down just having remembered all of that list!

We hope to get back into regular volunteering during December when major work will include continuing with mulching of the fruit trees at Colwall Village Garden, dealing with our tree orders when the stock arrives, gapping up the orchard and hedge laying at Colwall Village Garden, and starting to gap up privately owned orchard under the Traditional Orchards for the Future Initiative (TOFI).

We are working hard to keep our regular volunteer sessions Covid-19 safe so if you wish to be

involved please get in touch via members@colwallorchardgroup.org to make sure you are on our email list and are kept aware of what's on offer.

Water Resource Management at Colwall Village Garden

This year has seen one of the driest spells on record with the very wet winter followed by long periods of drought during the important Spring growing season. Our fruit trees at Colwall Village Garden suffered and we resorted to some essential emergency watering of the two hundred and fifty trees in the community orchard. Similarly the allotment ploholders spent much time having to water their fruit and vegetable crops. All of this brought the issue of water resource management sharply into focus.

It has always been an ambition to provide a supply of water to the allotments based upon both rainwater harvesting, and the use of mains water to top-up supplies where necessary. The essential pipework for an irrigation system was installed when the allotment plots were first created some 10 years ago, but it was never connected to the mains (which were not available on the site at the time). Over the ensuing years some above ground fittings and vital below ground connections were lost, removed or became disconnected.

This summer with the drought close behind us we excavated a few sections of the system using a mini digger and made the vital connections, getting the system ready for future use. We've also purchased a second-hand 4000L water storage tank to add to our existing rainwater harvested water storage capacity.

Over the coming months we will design and build a system that will provide both water storage and distribution for the allotments and the community orchard.

If, as we expect with climate change trends, droughts become more regular and frequent, we hope to be better placed to have an affordable and sustainable water solution available.

Changes to the COG Board

In our last newsletter we reported the additions of some new members to the COG Board of Trustees. Since then Lindsay Williams has reprised his role as Chair, taking over from Andrew Spray who boldly stepped up to the plate in Lindsay's absence due to illness.

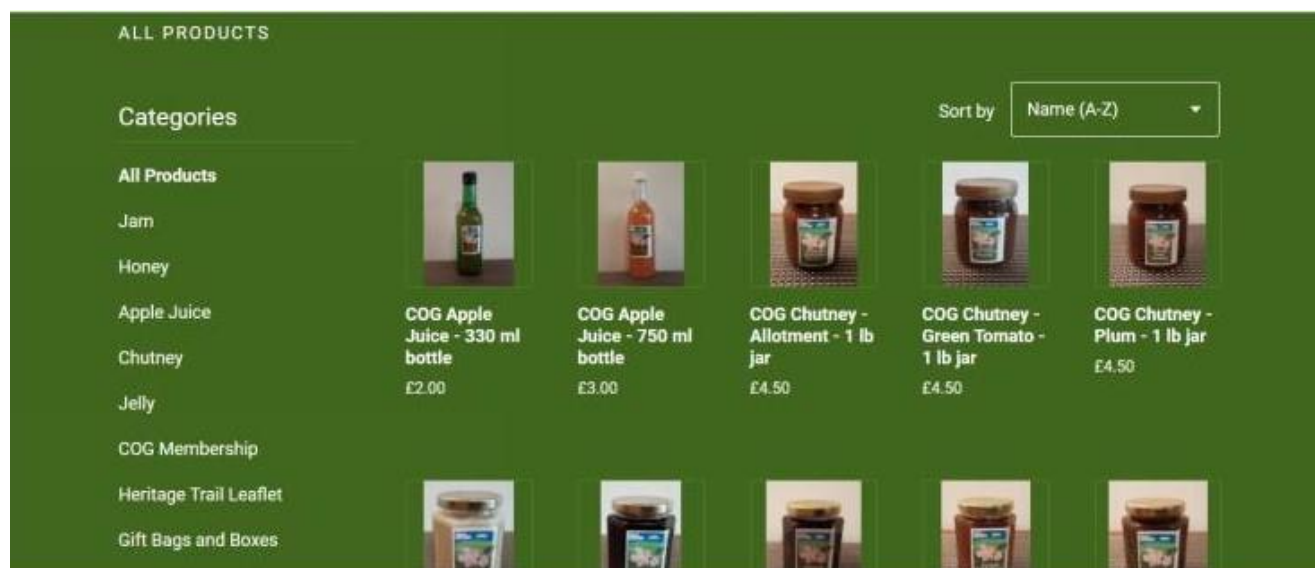
We wish to express our gratitude to Andrew for his time as Chair. Looking back over all that's happened he has presided over a lot of activities and major achievements on the ground, so his direction, input and leadership has been invaluable.

Thanks Andrew!

COG Shop

We've used the second Covid-19 lockdown in England as a time to catch up with some of our admin work to include a review and refresh of the COG Shop on the COG website.

With Christmas fast approaching you can now buy your festive goodies on-line, from the comfort and safety of you own home. Potential online purchases include apple juice, honey, jam, chutney, jelly; our Orchard Heritage trail leaflet; COG membership; Gift bags and boxes; Greeting Cards.



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.

Payments can be made via our payments intermediary PayPal, or you can pay using your own credit or debit card.

If that's whetted your festive appetite, please visit the shop for an early spot of Christmas shopping at www.colwallorchardgroup.org/shop

Traditional Orchards for the Future Initiative (TOFI) update

In our last newsletter we introduced you to TOFI – our project, in association with Malvern Hills AONB, to help private landowners to gap up and extend their own traditional orchards. Work on this is progressing well and we have had responses from nine landowners to whom we are now in the process of supplying 69 trees.

The intention is to get trees in the ground as soon as possible after they are delivered, which is likely to be during December, or January, so we'll be looking for volunteer help with that. We'll be visiting some orchards that we are already familiar with together with some brand-new locations. It should be great fun, and it's always fabulous to get new fruit trees planted to ensure that orchards continue to be part of the local landscape for years to come.

Lugg's Mill Bridge is Open!



We're delighted to report that after many dozens of hours of hard work by Laurence (pictured - foreground) and Deb (pictured - in yellow coat), but also involving input from many of our other volunteers, that the new bridge at Lugg's Mill Orchard is OPEN FOR USE.

This now allows a circular pedestrian route around Lugg's Mill orchard and provides the second of two crossing points over the stream that divides the site. You are welcome to use the bridge as part of your visit to Lugg's Mill orchard in Old Church Road, Colwall.

It has been a major piece of work for us as a voluntary organisation, and we are very grateful to everyone who kindly donated money towards the cost of materials through our online crowd-funding appeal.

We celebrated the opening of the bridge with a low key, and socially distanced ceremony, with a short vote of thanks by Lindsay, our Chair, and a presentation to Deb (project manager) of a framed photo montage to record the bridge building works.

Wanted: Lead Volunteers

We are always grateful to all of our volunteers and truly appreciate the wide range of skills and experience that come together to deliver all that is COG.

Our team of Lead Volunteers are essential to making things happen and we could do with more help. If you are prepared to lead on any of the following please get in touch with Wendy through our usual email members@colwallorchardgroup.org.

We would provide as much support, guidance and advice as you need, along with checklists and process documents. These are all voluntary roles.

A. Fund Raising Manager



We would love somebody to take a proactive approach to our fund-raising with a view to some exciting future projects. We have the ideas and we know of the opportunities. It would be tremendous if someone could focus on the role of making applications and building a programme of externally funded projects.

B. Preserves Manager

This is a role for someone to oversee the whole process of preparing our wonderful selection of jam, chutney, jelly and honey. It starts with the harvest of fruit and deciding what to make through-out the summer and autumn. Then there is the coordination of making the produce with a small team of helpers and ensuring that everyone is working to health and hygiene standards. This is followed by the correct labelling of each jar with ingredients, batch numbers and best before dates; sales (online and at events); stock control and reporting. The lead volunteer doesn't need to do everything listed here but will need to find willing helpers to assist with all of these stages of production and marketing.



C. Events Manager



We have a programme of seasonal events, and good records of what is involved in arranging each of these.

As the Events Manager, you would be responsible for planning and organising all COG events. It will involve promoting each event in a timely way, leading a team of volunteer helpers, making sure that health and safety procedures are followed and documented, keeping a record of income and expenditure, recording lessons learned and providing reports to the Board of Trustees.

While these areas of activity are being covered at the moment, we do need to free up some time. Help with just one of these work areas would allow us more time to do the others better!

On the Radio!



Our social media campaign to provide a virtual Apple Week, as opposed to a physical Apple Day, took an unexpected turn recently as BBC Hereford and Worcester radio contacted us to do a feature celebrating Apple Day (21st October).

Rising to the challenge, Wendy, did an early evening chat with Kate Justice which was live on air just after 7pm on Wednesday 21st October.

You can listen to the interview with BBC Hereford and Worcester using the Download option to be found at www.colwallorchardgroup.org/news-1. The discussion ranged around the origins of Apple Day, our themes for Apple Week and the state of this year's apple harvest.

Apple Juicing with Colwall C of E Primary School

Okay, so we had to cancel Apple Day this year, but we still thoroughly enjoyed welcoming children from Colwall C of E Primary School to Colwall Village Garden in October to do some apple juicing.

A very good time was had by all. Don't just take our word for it – we had this lovely report of one of the sessions from a teacher in the form of the illustrated note below...

From branch to glass!

On a stunning Autumnal Tuesday, the Wrens put their best feet forward and marched across the fields. They received a fabulous welcome from the Colwall Orchard volunteers, who literally walked them through the process of picking apples, cutting, scratting and squeezing until juice appeared in a bucket before the children's eyes! They were not disappointed when they drank a glass and even got to bring home a bottle of their juice, which was very much enjoyed during snack time the next day!



COG News Blog

Some of the items in this newsletter have been lifted from the news page on our website which is updated regularly with the latest stories on what we've been up to. Check this out to keep in touch <https://colwallorchardgroup.org/news-1>. Between newsletters we will send notifications to you about content on the news page from time to time.

Finishing on a High Note...



Just to finish this newsletter on a high note we thought that we'd share some of the positive comments that were made to us, in and around our virtual Apple Week which was arranged, promoted and facilitated by Wendy, Sue and Andy.

This was a great opportunity to get the COG message out to new and existing audiences, in a different way.

On our bridge building at Lugg's Mill, and our work at Colwall Village Garden:

"I just want to say well done and congratulations to your team for all your efforts in ensuring Colwall continues to be a heartwarming village and our little paradise." Sharon from Colwall.

On our apple juicing with Colwall C of E Primary School:

a) "I thought this morning worked perfectly and I wouldn't change anything. The best possible feedback was the expressions on the faces of the children. A mixture of interested, amused and delighted. Not a bored child in sight!" Peter (COG volunteer and trustee) from Colwall.

b) "Thanks so much Wendy and gang for an amazing visit on Tuesday." Caroline, teacher from Colwall C of E Primary School.

On our work generally:

"...Incidentally, I had a look at your website and was very impressed! Not just by the website itself, but with the range of activities, etc. you offer." Mary, The Big Apple Association.

As ever a BIG thank you for your continued support to restore, promote and celebrate traditional orchards in Colwall. If you would like more information about getting involved, or have any suggestions or comments, we are always pleased to hear from you.

From the [COG Board](#)

Contact information:

Email: secretary@colwallorchardgroup.org or members@colwallorchardgroup.org

Web: www.colwallorchardgroup.org

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