

Leader+ Orchard Network meeting London, November 2006

This first network meeting was very well attended. The minutes are available in PDF format on the Sustain website.

www.sustainweb.org/pdf/27_11_06_orchard.pdf

There were requests for another meeting in the summer 2007 and we will keep you informed of a date and venue. We are hoping to combine it with a site visit, so if you know of good places to visit that would also be convenient for attendees from around the country, do let Ida Fabrizio know.

Leader+ Orchard Co-operation Project

Newsletter

Welcome

We are pleased to bring you this first Newsletter for the Leader+ Orchard Co-operation Project. We have included write-ups from orchard projects in the participating Leader+ groups as well as information from interesting projects in Welsh Leader+ areas.

The Leader+ Orchard Co-operation Project started in Autumn 2006 and will culminate with publication of a Good Practice Guide in December 2007. The project involves six Leader+ areas: Herefordshire Rivers, Teignbridge, Cumbria Fells & Dales, Mid-Kent, Somerset Levels & Moors and North West Devon. At the local level Leader+ groups have developed local priorities for action to maintain traditional orchards as part of the local landscape and economy, to be enjoyed by local people for many years to come. On a national level, projects are networked for mutual support and exchange of knowledge and experiences.

The Good Practice Guide will be an orchard project management guide to inform and inspire future projects and will be based on case studies and research carried out during the project period.

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A group of small-scale orchard owners, Somerset Orchard Link, are researching new products and markets for their collective crop of cider apples.

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Orchard Photo sharing

www.flickr.com/groups/orchards



This is a useful way we can share our orchard pictures, so everyone can see what is happening around the country. We have created a group on the photo-sharing website Flickr, called Orchards UK. Please feel free to post photos of your orchards and projects, with full descriptions. You can either join Flickr yourself (sign up and post your photos onto your own page and then link them to the Orchards UK page, or send Ida the pictures by email. Ida Fabrizio, Orchard Project Officer, Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, email: ida@sustainweb.org

Mid Kent Downs



Maypole dancing, during blossom time. Photo, Lynstead Orchard Project, Kent

"Orchards have stories to tell!"

Pippa Palmar,

Orchards For Everyone project officer

Deep in the Mid Kent Downs, the traditional orchards stand majestic but with a challenging future.

The Mid Kent Downs Orchards Project 'Orchards for Everyone' seeks to address this and build a sustainable future for these important orchards which are such a vital and much-loved feature of this part of Kent. Traditional orchards close to Sheldwich, Selling, Milstead and Stockbury village centres have been identified for restoration. Discussions are taking place with parish representatives, members of the local communities and landowners.

A recent whistle-stop tour of educational projects lured Dr Stuart Burgess, Rural Advocate for England, into the Mid Kent Downs on a fact-finding mission to view this innovative educational project in our traditional half-derelict cherry orchard at New House Farm, Sheldwich. This was his initial rendezvous to learn about 'Orchards for Everyone' and how the local community will benefit. Local people are participating in training events learning 'old and new' skills in orchard management and restoration. Laptops and camcorders have been purchased for school children to increase their computer and technology skills using the orchard as a working example for their video project, 'From Bud to Beaker', whilst other members in the parishes will engage in fruit mapping.

Further through the Mid Kent Downs in Milstead lies another traditional cherry orchard not far from the first commercial orchard planted by Richard Harris, King Henry VIII's head fruiter. This orchard has many

tales to unleash to the villagers of Milstead. Does the giant 60-year-old Victoria cherry tree which yielded nearly half a ton of cherries in the bad season of 1938 still stand? Did it feed the occupants of the air raid shelter sited in the middle of the orchard during those dark days of the Second World War? Discovering the tree's heritage will become part of the Orchards project and all will be

revealed when a recently discovered cine film taken in the early 20th Century is adapted for viewing on a CD.

Stockbury is home to the Church Lane cherry orchard, which is characterised by tall, spreading, wide-spaced trees, with sheep grazing beneath forlorn limbs succumbing to disease. Yet this orchard is embedded in local history. For example, 53 years ago, it was privy to romance when a young local man, whilst chasing away the birds from devouring the cherries courted the love of his life. Over half a century later, the couple are still local residents.

These trees still stand at least '*threescore years and ten*' and will soon be '*hung with bloom along the bough... wearing white for Eastertide*'.
A.E Houseman.

With the help and support of the Heritage Lottery fund, Leader+ and sustainable development funding, the parishes have started to restore these traditional orchards. They are starting by securing the site with new chestnut fencing made from coppiced woodland within the Kent Downs.

For more details, please contact:
Pippa Palmar, tel: 01303 815170
email: pippa.palmar@kentdowns.org.uk

Cumbria Fells and Dales

Cumbria Fells & Dales Leader+ has supported projects for local apples and the locally renowned Lyth Valley Damsons. The programme is due to finish in summer 2007, but they are hoping to extend the work until the end of this year to include the fruit season.

Damson Development Project

This project was established to examine the long-term viability of the Westmorland damson industry. Two main areas of damson growing in Cumbria are The Lyth Valley and Witherslack and production is small-scale and widespread. The project is in association with the Westmorland Damson Association and is looking at the potential to promote the growth and sale of damsons and damson products as a sustainable local industry. Project officer Karen Bentley has been researching the current situation by talking to producers, growers and retailers and has found that there is great demand for damsons both locally and nationally. She is currently appealing to all the local growers who are not currently members of the WDA to join. She has found that there are many producers increasing production and new damson products regularly entering the market. The current annual crop is around 20 tonnes and the project is looking to increase this in the next few years.

Some of the problems that affect supply have been the variable yield of damsons and difficulty with harvesting because orchard owners lack time, and labour and insurance for hired pickers is expensive. The project is looking at how to tackle these issues by investigating the feasibility of the WDA hiring and insuring a team of pickers to work on several orchards during harvest time. A percentage of the sale price of the damsons would go back to the growers. There is also research into assessing the feasibility of a Damson Resource Centre, which could house a cold store unit, a production unit, a damson de-stoner (as currently some producers are sending their damsons abroad for de-stoning), a tree nursery, retail outlet and an archive unit.

The WDA will be holding a Damson Orchard Management workshop on 3rd March at Low Sizergh Farm, which will be a practical outdoor planting session, and looking at issues such as grazing, pruning and picking. The project is hoping that more sessions like this will encourage to bring currently abandoned

Damson in Blossom in Cumbria. Photo, Fells and Dales Leader+

Damson Day 21st April 2007
Lyth Valley, Cumbria

www.lythdamsons.org.uk/damsonday.asp

orchards back into production. Karen says, "To increase production even further, more trees need to be planted, and the knowledge held by many older members of the community should be passed on to future generations before it is lost." In addition to continuing support to private orchard owners, she is keen to raise money to plant school and community orchards.

There is much potential for the Westmorland damson industry and now in its tenth year, the WDA has started this project and would like to move forward to ensure its future for generations to come.

For more information, contact: kcbentley@tiscali.co.uk. For the Fells & Dales Damson Trail leaflet, see: www.fellsanddales.org.uk/images/pdfs-full/damson.pdf

Orchard link Cumbria

There are 200 local apple varieties in Cumbria, grown in small orchards throughout the county. Orchard Link Cumbria is helping to co-ordinate apple events to promote this apple heritage. They have funded a community apple press which has been taken to shows and raised interest for people to set up their own groups and help put apple producers in touch with each other and local markets.



They will soon plant a local collection of apple cordons in an organic market garden, on the National Trust's Sizergh's Estate near Kendal involving the organisation Growing Well, which works with and trains people who have long-term mental health problems. They are also replanting a traditional orchard with local varieties of apples, pears and damsons using these planting sessions as training opportunities for Growing Well trainees. The project held a pruning workshop at Acorn Bank in November which participants said that they found very useful. This will be followed by another in March, along with a grafting workshop.

For more information, contact Karen Bentley, email: kcbentley@tiscali.co.uk or Dick Palmer, email: dick.palmer@tiscali.co.uk. For a copy of the Fells & Dales Apple leaflet, see: www.fellsanddales.org.uk/images/pdfs-full/apple.pdf

Winter/Spring 2007

Herefordshire Rivers Orchards Community Evaluation project

"There are more orchards in Herefordshire than in any other county in the UK. Over three thousand orchards contribute to their landscape and the local economy".

Herefordshire Rivers

This is a two-year project which started in 2006 and is being developed by the Bulmer Foundation on behalf of the Herefordshire Orchard Topic Group. It is investigating the triple bottom line value of orchards in Herefordshire using new accounting methodologies to bring environmental, social and economic effects into the equation. In the process, they are talking to local people and to national policy-makers. The project is working to investigate the environmental, social and economic value of six orchards of different types, sites and methods of management, and to use this information to construct a broad financial picture of each orchard.

David Marshall who is undertaking the project recently gave a talk in Herefordshire and produced a progress report on what has been achieved so far.

As a first step, the project has funded a digitisation of the Millennium Map for orchards across the county, which has provided an invaluable record of all the existing orchards in Herefordshire.

They have already completed work on the first orchard, which is outside Prior's Frome near Dormington, an organically managed four-hectare orchard in commercial production of cider apples. The project looked at detailed financial data, results of surveys by experts on the natural environment, and information from a workshop held with 30 local people at the local pub to explore how the orchard affects local community life. All this information contributed to the 'triple bottom line' accounts of the orchard. The project was also assisted by the involvement of the environment charity Forum for the Future and experts at Natural England.

Headline results from the evaluation of this first orchard are as follows:

Biodiversity is rich: Even though no very rare species were found, the biodiversity is surprisingly good considering it is managed land. Experts have identified 32 different plants and grasses, five types of bat, 20 mosses and liverworts, 30 species of lichens and 11 varieties of apple tree in this four-hectare orchard.

High value to the community: The existence of the orchard as a natural haven is very important to the local community, and was ranked as being nearly as important as the profit to the farmer from apple sales and grazing of sheep. This was despite the orchard not being particularly visible from the road or village and there being no footpaths through it, which in the view of the neighbours would give it more value.

The 'triple bottom line' financial evaluation: Findings suggest that the value of the orchard, taking into account its role in the environment, local economy and community is some three times higher than currently reflected in the farmer's profit from apple contracts and government grants.

They will be now working to compare these findings with the other orchards - each of which has a different profile.

If you are interested in finding out more about the project please contact David Marshall, email: damage@btinternet.com





Herefordshire Rivers

The Woolhope Dome Landscape Conservation Project

The Woolhope Dome covers an area of over 5,000 hectares of mixed farming and woodland to the south-east of Hereford and takes in eleven small parishes in rural Herefordshire. With a distinctive geology of Wenlock and Woolhope limestone, the area supports a rich mosaic of ancient woodlands, species-rich hedgerows, wildflower meadows, traditional orchards, streams, and a wealth of wildlife. The importance of protecting this unique landscape is at the heart of the Woolhope Dome Project, which has been supported by Herefordshire Rivers Leader+ through two phases. During this time the area has been recognised as a biodiversity enhancement area, one of only fourteen in the West Midlands.

Traditional orchards are a key habitat feature in the 'Dome' landscape; the area features over 100 hectares of old fruit orchards, many of which support the rare Noble Chafer beetle. As in many areas across the country, orchards on the Dome are under threat from neglect, development, falling markets and agricultural intensification.

Typically, smallholders now own most of the orchards. Many of these owners need new skills and advice to look after these precious assets. The project has been working closely with small orchard owners to encourage their continued management and maintenance; workshops have been run on small-scale apple juicing, cider production and fruit tree pruning. These have been well received and there is an enthusiastic group keen to re-stock, manage and produce from their orchards.



Traditional Orchard, Woolhope Dome. Photo, Chris Stubbs

To support local enterprise the project established a local farmers' market in 2006. This has helped support a number of local producers with products ranging from local rare breed meats, organic vegetables, honey, cakes, preserves, and numerous craft items. It has also provided a valuable outlet for orchard owners to sell their apples, juice and mistletoe to the local community. In the future the project would like to fund a community juicer, provide small grants for re-planting old varieties, continue the workshops to re-skill the local community in orchard management/production techniques and ensure orchards remain a prominent feature in the landscape for generations to come.

The Woolhope Dome project is a partnership between local people, Natural England, the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Forestry Commission, and Herefordshire Nature Trust. Funding has also been given from Herefordshire Rivers Leader+ in association with the EU and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

For more information on the project, please contact Chris Stubbs, tel: 01432 356872 or Cathy Meredith, tel: 01432 87003 3872
email: c.stubbs@herefordshirewt.co.uk



*Woolhope Dome Orchard Management Workshop
Photo, Chris Stubbs*

Teignbridge



Right, Jonathan Rodney-Jones Left Adam Montague with Pomona the apple press October 2006.
Photo Common Players

Adam Montague in Devon, working the press.
Photo, Common Players

Common Player's "Cider With Roadies"

This is an inter-area project between Teignbridge and Black Hill Downs Leader+, who are helping to fund the community theatre group Common Players in a three-year project. They are running a series of performances to develop interest, in and awareness, of local apples. The project will also include research into local varieties, and art workshops with local schools.

In autumn 2006, Common Players presented a pilot tour of their mobile apple press. Created by sculptor Jon Rodney-Jones, the press (affectionately dubbed 'Pomona') is a unique trailer that weighs, washes, crushes and presses apples into juice. Accompanied by live local music, twelve small communities in Devon have welcomed a day of 'pressing' activity in farmers' markets, orchards and village squares. Apples were brought along and were pressed into juice which was sold - the profits benefiting local causes.

In addition, ten primary schools spent half a day with Community Artist Mary Richards, creating sculptures and pictures inspired by local apple varieties which were then exhibited on the day of the 'Apple Press' visit.

Common Players report that had a very positive response from the local community and the local musicians gained extra work by being seen at the events

Plans for 2007 include creating an original outdoor theatre performance (with Arts Council support) to accompany the use of the apple press and encourage awareness of local apple varieties. Common Players will also be engaging an Apple Animator to organise and lead events in rural communities (with support from Heritage Lottery).

For more information contact Anthony Richards
email: pulp@ciderwithroadies.org

Details of Cider with Roadies events can be found at:
www.ciderwithroadies.org

The Common Players website is at:
www.common-players.org.uk



Somerset Level and Moors

Somerset Orchard Link

Somerset Orchard Link is a group of small-scale orchard owners in Somerset. Set up in 2003, the aim of the group is to find new markets for their collective crop of cider apples, to replace the traditional catch-all market offered by the major cider-makers in the past.

Members gathered on 18th January 2007 to talk about what has been happening within the group during 2006. The early part of the year was busy with research and training which included a marketing training for members. Later in the year, Somerset Orchard Link trialled single-variety ciders and cider apple juices. The results of a public tasting session on the cider apple juices are proving very promising.

A research phase also featured a technical feasibility study and market research to investigate the potential popularity of dried apples. The market

research showed that customers are keen to have for more information about the nutritional value, so samples were sent to a laboratory to assess the nutritional value of dried cider apples.

The key activity in the early part of 2007 is to form a legal structure through which Somerset Orchard Link can produce and market its products. As a Rural Enterprise Gateway group this is being managed through the English Food and Farming Partnership. Somerset Orchard Link currently has 43 members and is soon looking to become self sufficient.

For more information, contact
Elaine Spencer-White, email: elaine@foodlinks.org.uk
website: www.levelsbest.co.uk

Leader + in Wales

Glasu Leader+, Powys

Perllanau Powys Orchards in Powys

Glasu, the Leader+ programme for Powys has been running a project to promote the regeneration and sustainability of orchards and adding value to their produce.

Expert husband and wife team, Tony and Liz Gentil, were appointed to the role of 'Orchard Doctors' with Leader+ funding. They have spent 18 months getting to know the top-fruit trees in Powys. Their visits took them from the ornamental walled garden orchard at Powys Castle; to a commercial orchards grown for award-winning single-variety apple juice and cider; to the remnants of old farm orchards that would have produced cider for the workers; to new owners of smallholdings with plans to plant just a few trees.

They have recently completed a survey of 30 sites, giving management advice to the owners. More growers across the county have benefited from training days, pruning courses, apple identification and orchard management information sheets. These sheets are available now to download as pdf files from the Glasu website, at: www.glasu.org.uk.

The steering group for the project has included private orchard owners, representatives from the Marcher Apple Network and the Biodiversity Officers for Powys County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. Other activities undertaken for the Perllanau Powys ('Orchards in Powys') Project have included: open days; production of a poster of traditional varieties; a project to add value to local fruit through drying apple rings; and assessment of the economic potential of local orchard fruit. The project is currently investigating the likely demand from local fruit and vegetable box delivery schemes, school tuck shops and independent greengrocers and the capacity of growers in Powys to meet any demand identified.



*Orchard Doctors Tony and Liz Gentil October 2006.
Photo Glasu Leader+*

Plans for 2007 also include 'meet the apple growers' events and advanced pruning training for professional tree surgeons.

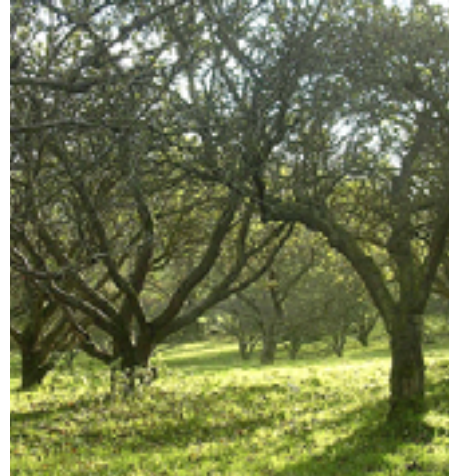
For more information on the Perllanau Powys Project, please contact the project officer at Glasu, Sally Shiels, on: 01982 552224 or email: sally.shiels@powys.gov.uk



Cadwyn Clwyd



Simon Farr, planting an orchard
Photo Cadwyn Clwyd Leader+



North East Eales Traditional Orchard
Photo Cadwyn Clwyd Leader+

North East Wales Orchard Initiative

www.welshorchardfruits.co.uk

The North East Wales Orchard Initiative, funded through the Cadwyn Clwyd Leader+ programme, is aiming to revive a fruit-growing culture that once saw thousands of trees cultivated in the region. It has launched its own website (see below). The website aims to raise the public profile of local fruits unique to the area that are grown by local people, and to promote local produce. Please see the website to find out more about the initiative. It has information on where to buy local variety fruit and fruit trees, food and recipe ideas, events and lots of growing tips. The website also has a Kids Zone developed in partnership with schools in the area and hosts information about the North East Wales Fruit Growers Group.

The Leader+ funding phase of the project ended in December 2006. Below is a review of the work undertaken, reported by Andrew Redfern of Cadwyn Clwyd.

North East Wales Orchard Initiative Review

The phase of the North East Wales Orchard Initiative funded through Leader+ came to an end in December 2006. Over the last three years, the initiative worked towards the conservation of the area's indigenous fruit through survey work; the setting up of safe orchard sites, and investigating opportunities for the marketing of North East Wales orchard products. In this work, the Growers Group played an important role in achieving the initiative's key aims by offering support and a voice for growers and other interested parties concerned with the conservation and growing of our local fruit varieties.

Outcome

The initiative revealed that there are many unique varieties of fruit trees and shrubs native to North East Wales. These varieties are part of our social and environmental heritage, as well as a potential economic resource for the area. Fruit from the North East Wales Fruit Growers Group has a significant contribution to make toward sustainable development in the area, providing social, economic and environmental benefits.

But the unique varieties, which have unique character and great potential benefits, are disappearing. To counter this, the North East Wales Orchard Initiative worked towards bringing these varieties back from critically endangered status to being an integral part of our culture once more. The initiative worked to provide economic, social and environmental benefits in a sustainable manner.

Initiative achievements

The achievements of the initiative against targets can be seen in the table below. More detailed information about the outcomes will be available in the end-of-project report.

Task	Aim	Actual
Number of sites surveyed	30	34
Number of sites created	4	4
Number of varieties propagated	30	36
Number of trees propagated	100	416
Number of outlets identified	8	8
Number of new products identified	6	8
Number of businesses supported	8	5
Number of indigenous varieties identified	10	12

Future development of the initiative

Although the first phase of the initiative has come to an end, Cadwyn Clwyd is keen to support opportunities to develop this initiative further, following recommendations in the forthcoming end-of-project report.

For more information, contact Andrew Redfern, tel: 01824 705 802, email: andrew.redfern@cadwynclwyd.co.uk
See the website at: www.welshorchardfruits.co.uk

Leader+ Co-ordination Project
contact: Ida Fabrizio
ida@sustainweb.org

Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming
94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF
tel: 020 7837 1228 fax: 020 7837 1141



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