



your Orchard

Issue no. 18
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A periodical newsletter for all those interested in
the work of the Bridport Community Orchard Group

A perfect wassailing day



photo by Tricia Hawkins

Sunday 18th January was cold and very bright. A blazing fire, delicious hot cider provided by West Milton Cider and apple juice - also hot - pressed from the Community Orchard's apples warmed and cheered us.

Wassail is associated with the Old Twelfth Night, the 17th January. Andy Jefferies, once again Master of Ceremonies, explained the origins of the festival which, contrary to what you might think you know, began in Bridport - of course - after a journeying and seeking that would put the 'Lord of the Rings' to shame. Some 150 wassailers came together to ward off any evil spirits with the loud banging of pots and pans. There were also tambourines, drums and even Tibetan trumpets - a lot of the fun of Wassail is seeing what participants bring along to make a noise. We toasted the trees with cider and bread, led by a charming wassailing Queen, to encourage their good health and fruitfulness. We sang to them too accompanied by Monkton Wyld Morris group, who also danced for us.

The word wassail comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'waes haeil' meaning 'be healthy'. To those who came along on Sunday, especially West Milton Cider and Monkton Wyld, and all of the Community Orchard's supporters we say: **"waes haeil!"**.

Susan Readman

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Chair's report 2014

This has been a busy year in Bridport and for the Orchard Group:

In **January** – we held the sixth Wassailing ceremony, and **Wyld Morris** danced and played for us. At the fifth AGM in the Town Hall the committee were all re-elected.

In **May** we held our second spring festival, this year as **Hedgehog Day**, in partnership with other groups, chiefly the Dorset Small Mammal Society. We were also pleased to join the first **Rope Fair** held on the Millennium Green.

In **June** we were at the **Bath and West Show** and at **Bridport Food Fair**. Yoga classes were held by **Alice Chutter** in the Orchard over the summer on Sunday mornings.

In **August**, as in 2013, an open afternoon was held on the community allotment, which attracted about 80 people, with delicious refreshments made from our own produce. This coincided with the Arts Centre dance workshops in the Orchard so there were many small children present.

As usual, we were at the **Melplash Show**, in the Town Council marquee, and recruited new members.

We also welcomed about 16 students from **Weymouth College** and their leaders for the National Citizenship Scheme (NCS). They spent 2-3 days with us and worked very hard in a heat wave.

In **September** the Youth Centre hosted some of us for an evening juicing apples with our equipment, which they enjoyed, and we hope will be repeated.

In **October** our seventh **Apple Day** was run jointly with the Town Council. This is our main event and fund raiser of the year. The new attraction this year was an archaeological dig, kindly led by **Robert Lancaster**, which produced a good pile of artefacts and was enjoyed by children of all ages. The entertainment was provided by the **Bucky Don'ts** (ukuleles), **Wyld Morris**, **Mitch Norman**, **David Squirrell** and friends and **Martin Maudsley** (story telling). **West Milton** and **Dorset Nectar Cider** added to the cheer. Regular stallholders included **Groves Nurseries** and **Elwell Fruit Farm**, offering advice as well as sales;

Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT); **Transition Town** with their apple game; **STIR** magazine and **Communities Living Sustainably** (CLS). As well as selling our own preserves and chutneys, **Martin Ray's** donated pickled onions made a good profit. Attractive and useful wooden boxes, labels, bird hides etc. made and sold by **Daryl Chambers** raised £100 which he generously donated to BCOG. We were again fortunate to have the **Walditch Women's Institute** running the café in Church House and **Jude Hopkins** and team serving ploughman's lunches in the Orchard. Both made a big contribution to the profits of the day and provided welcome refreshments to everybody. The team of apple juicers worked very hard all day to produce fresh juice.

Rounding off our year, early in **December** we enjoyed the town **Christmas Cheer** event, and then had a social gathering of volunteers in the Ropemakers where more than 30 of us had a good evening.

The **community allotment** flourishes, expertly led by **Jenn Baker**, and meets every week through the spring/summer/autumn, and monthly through the winter.

The **fruit trees** have been meticulously cared for by the Tree Team, with **Christine Preston** now team leader. She joined the committee earlier in the year, bringing relevant skills, knowledge and experience

The **hedges** grow well and the long one, planted early in 2009, will be laid over the weekend of February 7/8. This is thanks to a generous grant from **Palmers Brewery Fund**, which will pay for the materials and tools needed.

The **grass management** to increase biodiversity is proving successful, and for the wild areas, cutting, scything and raking is carried out to enable yellow rattle to establish. This encourages wild flowers to flourish with less competition from the vigorous grasses. For the other main grass areas we work closely with the Town Surveyor, **Daryl Chambers**, to plan and carry out the routine mowing. Several **scything sessions** were held this year at St Mary's Field, one of these being an early morning start with a dozen or so people enjoying sunshine and refreshments. Leakers' croissants proved very popular.

The **pond** and the **bees** are well established and successful.

Jubilee Green attracts less public attention but is becoming established. A small group of **Park Road residents** now support the work there. The Town Council plan to take out the roots of a laurel hedge cut last year when the machinery needed is available and the ground is workable. We will then plant a hedge of native trees; the whips for this are at present heeled into a bed in the main Orchard.

Here again we held two well attended early morning scything sessions, clearing the way for more yellow rattle seed to encourage more diverse wild flower growth.

At both sites much of the maintenance and management work is undertaken on our **monthly working mornings** on the Sunday after the Farmers' Market (usually the second in the month) when we welcome a loyal band of **volunteers**. Many of the group are also often in the Orchard, up at Jubilee Green and on the allotment at other times and in all weathers.

Behind the scenes, others are working hard on their laptops; especially our treasurer, Facebook photographer and contributor: **David Hawkins**; our website editor: **Susannah Madigan** and our designer, photographer and newsletter editor: **Tricia Hawkins**.

Thanks

As in past years, we have been most generously supported by many local individuals, groups, and businesses and it is my pleasure to thank them publicly. Chiefly we thank the staff of **Bridport Town Council**, our partners in this joint project. **Daryl Chambers** and his team work very hard in the Orchard, including cutting the grass. Apple Day would be impossible without them.

Many others contribute to Apple Day too: **Groves Nurseries** (who also generously continue to sponsor our newsletter); **Elwell Fruit Farm**; **St Mary's Church** - for the use of Church House; the **local press** and the **Tourist Information Centre** for publicity; **The George** for hosting our committee meetings; **Ford Farms** for cheese and **Leakers** for bread.

Committee changes

Three long standing members of the team stood down during the year and I should like to record our thanks to them for the huge contribution they have made to the Orchard and to us all. All three were among the

younger members of the team and, being in full time employment, were finding they had less time to devote to committee involvement than they would have liked.

Andy Jefferies was a founder member in September 2008, and he and his family are much missed. He was the main architect of digging and then, later, lining the pond. He led on working days, and was a wonderful MC on Apple Day and at Wassailing. His expert knowledge on conservation was invaluable and, happily, he will be with us again for the hedging workshops in February.

Sheila Hawkins became our first secretary in 2009, and later leader of the Tree Team. She was an accurate and conscientious producer of minutes, records and reports; but also spent many hours nurturing, pruning and training the trees in the Orchard and at Jubilee Green. She took some beautiful photographs, especially close ups of dragonflies, and other small creatures.

Louise Finnis also joined in 2009, and has been a spirited presence at many events, putting up the banner, and dispensing hot cider, and honey. Her professional expertise has helped in guiding our policies, including for ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable people in the Orchard. But loss also means new opportunities for new people in the team, with a healthy injection of new ideas, experience and skills. We are always seeking new members and welcome all.

Finally, to all the people who have contributed to the Orchard this year, especially to the hard working committee for their enthusiasm, commitment, time, hard work and abilities, all other regular and occasional volunteers, members, supporters and the public: thank you.

In conclusion

The committee welcomes any ideas for the improvement, use and management of the Orchard. We are especially pleased to hear from anyone who would like to use the Orchard for an appropriate event. Please get in touch with us either directly or via our excellent website: www.bridportcommunityorchard.org.uk or send an article to Tricia Hawkins for the newsletter.

We are always keen to recruit and welcome new members; we work hard, enjoy the Orchard, and each other's company and make friends, so do come and join us.

Jill Lloyd - Chair BCOG

Treasurer's report for 2014

We obtained one grant in 2014: **Palmers Brewery Fund for £844.91** Palmers have supported us and we have spent monies during the year for:

£270.00 - two scythes

£191.49 - materials for allotment bed edging

£79.94 - equipment for hedge laying.

There is a residue of **£303.48** to use from this grant, primarily for the hedge laying project which is currently planned for the weekend of 7th and 8th of February.

We also raised other receipts for BCOG funds, our three events being:

Wassailing in January - **£177.94** as donations; **Apple Day** - **£653.20** - net surplus for BCOG. **Allotment Day** - **£128.69** - £124.08 for refreshments, £23.61 for plants less

£19.00 for expenses. **Christmas Cheer** - **£26.00** - from the stall we held for the sale of chutneys at the Christmas late opening evening. We also received donations:

Bridport & District Gardening Club - **£50.00**. **AGM** - **£11.10**.

Melplash Show - **£24.57**. **Alice Chutter** (Yoga in the Orchard) - **£100.00**. **Hire of juicing equipment** - **£10**.

The community allotment group flourishes and we have been able to improve the beds with the boarding purchased from the Palmers grant. Regular members have grown many kinds of vegetables, fruit and plants. The excess produce is used to make chutney and jams which are sold on the allotment events - £128.69 mentioned above for the allotment day and other plant sales of £39.76 plus members' contributions of £84.33.

Restricted funds including three grants which had small residues left from earlier years were fully utilised in 2014: **£44.63** for the **Allotment Day** monies (**Potato Day in 2013**), **£31.45** from the **Lions** for **tree care at Jubilee Green** and **£29.42** from the **Bridport Environment Group** for **bee friendly plants**.

Our main use of restricted funds during the year was the grant from the Palmers Brewery Fund - the allotment boarding referred above

and the purchase of two new scythes which are very helpful for our group who scythe the long grass in the Orchard and at Jubilee Green. The juicing equipment has again proved to be very successful in producing fresh apple juice for Apple Day and fresh pasteurised apple juice ready for the Christmas Cheer, Wassailing events and the AGM. There are minimal costs involved, (we just need many volunteers to wash and cut apples ready for crushing, juicing and bottling for pasteurisation). We have now decided to spend **£15.00** per session for food and drinks at juicing sessions and the early morning scything sessions at both the Orchard and Jubilee Green - to encourage and fortify the volunteers. The **surplus of BCOG funds** at the end of the year amounts to **£1068.05** and this meets our aim to raise sufficient funds to cover our operating costs. We decide on our annual budget for operating costs of materials/equipment, publicity, website, tree care and event organisation including participation in community events such as the Melplash show, Christmas Cheer and the AGM. Costs outside the planned budget are discussed at committee meetings and recorded in the minutes. The larger items in 2014 were: **£95.00** for **information leaflets**, **£45.47** additional **website software**, **£42.00 allotment rental** and **£75.58** for an additional annual renewal of the **web hosting** package (we have had £65.99 returned in January 2015).

We thank C W Groves and Son again for their continued sponsorship of our regular newsletter, at £99.00 this year. We now produce just two issues of our newsletter each year before the AGM and before Apple Day, both for publicity and information.

The **surplus of BCOG funds** (unrestricted funds) amounts to **£1,068.05** with **£48.23 held as petty cash** in the allotment funds and the total of the surplus of the grants (restricted funds) is **£303.48**. These equal the balance of the bank accounts and petty cash at **£1,371.53**.

David Hawkins - Treasurer, BCOG

Apple Day October 2014

Has it really been seven years since our first Apple Day? Well, yes, and how it has grown, to become a much anticipated event in Bridport's calendar, joining the Hat Festival and Bridport Food Festival as one of the many local key annual celebrations. Indeed, some visitors, especially those from outside Dorset and from as far afield as Wales, have said that they time their holidays in the area to ensure they don't miss this "must attend" day!



The BCOG stall at last year's event

Over the seven years from its first tentative beginnings the event has gone from strength to strength, gathering support from many diverse groups and organisations, including local food and drink producers in the area, and evolving into today's exciting celebration.

The theme of celebrating apples - eating, growing and identifying - remains at the 'core' of the day, with our 'on the spot' pressed apple juice being a star turn, popular with all ages.

Here's to the next seven years and beyond!

Paul Arthur

Come and join us and learn about this traditional craft

Hedge laying

**Saturday February 7th &
Sunday February 8th from 10am**

Tools, tuition, gloves and refreshments will be provided.

Thanks to a generous grant from Palmers Brewery Fund, which has paid for tools and materials, we are able to undertake this work, which involves laying the long hedge planted in January 2009 between the allotments and the Orchard.

All the materials, hedging stakes and binders, are grown and harvested locally in the Marshwood Vale on the Prime Coppice woodland project which is restoring the semi ancient oak and hazel coppice.

All cutting is done by hand and the timber is brought out using horses.

This eliminates the impact of tractors and machines in the wood whilst also helping to resource and maintain the traditional craft of coppicing which is great for our local community and biodiversity.

More information on their website: <http://www.primecoppice.com>

Come for as much as you wish/are able. Please send your name and contact details to the Chair (see front page).

Your Space

We welcome your comments, letters, articles or any orchard-related items for inclusion in our next issue.

Please send anything you have – no matter how long or short – to the editor:

tricia.hawkins@hotmail.co.uk

It's your Orchard!



**Bridport
Community
Orchard
Group**

supported by:



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**Dates for
your diary:**

**Working days
every month on the
second Sunday (after the
Saturday Farmers' Market)
10am till 1pm.**

**Blossom day
Sunday May 16th
11am till 3pm**

**National
Allotment Week
Thursday 6th August
3pm**

**Apple Day
Saturday October 17th
11am till 3pm.**



www.bridportcommunityorchard.org.uk

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