

COLWALL ORCHARD GROUP ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 2017-18 (April 2017-March 2018)



1. INTRODUCTION

Another epic year, as befits our 10th Anniversary!

We have another orchard. Lugg's Mill, just across the field from Colwall Village Garden, came up for sale in February 2017. Our preliminary visit suggested it would be a great location for a new cherry orchard with the benefit of a lovely babbling brook and some fine veteran trees. At very short notice, because we did not have time to raise funds for the purchase, our kind benefactors stepped in and successfully bid at auction to secure the site. We started a flurry of grant applications and were soon able to buy the land. Another kind benefactor donated cash to get us started on the tree planting and we hope to have most of the new trees in by the end of the financial year.



Lugg's Mill before the tree planting



Planting the first new trees

Our grateful thanks to our benefactors – you know who you are!

2. COLWALL VILLAGE GARDEN

Colwall Village Garden is in good shape, as we continue to look after the trees and hedges.

A special event this year was hire of the orchard for a private wedding and in the run up to the event there was a lot of tidying up and mowing of grass so that it looked very smart indeed (if a little dry!). An added spin off was that the hay bales used for outdoor games turned out to be very species rich hay, so we've strewn it out on the mown area, hoping some of the wild flowers seeds may grow up in the orchard.

Having got the site in such good order, a band of



trustworthy volunteers kept up the mowing regime, including a path round the orchard. The 'Sunday morning in the orchard' sessions with Colwall Allotment Association have also helped tremendously in keeping on top of everything and preparing for the various events on site. We have had a lot of good feedback from visitors.

3. COLWALL ORCHARD GROUP EVENTS

We had a full calendar of events, although once again the weather transpired against holding the Blossom Picnic.

- **Dawn Chorus** – we had good turnout for the Dawn Chorus walk and breakfast
- **Lugg's Mill Open Day** – held to introduce members and villagers to our potential new orchard at Lugg's Mill
- We helped at Colwall Allotment Associations '**Bee Day**'
- We held a **Moth Night and BBQ** on the Solstice



- **Moth Breakfast** – a better option for showing moths to children and we had a good haul of both!
- **Wyche and Colwall Horticultural Show** – we had a stall and sold lots of jam, jelly and chutney.
- **Stone Fruit Conference** Helen presented a talk (largely prepared by Andy) on the history of orchards in Colwall and the work of COG.
- **Apple Day** – we had an extra special Apple Day lined up for our 10th Anniversary, but had to scale down and do as much as possible indoors due to high winds and intermittent rain
- **10th Birthday Party** – an excellent and enjoyable event at the Alehouse
- **Mistletoe Fair** – a great sale with new lines including beeswax, cling cloths and corn dolly decorations.
- **Wassail** – another great Wassail with over 500 people attending.

Overall, we put on an excellent year of events that were well supported by members, volunteers and everyone in the village.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Our environmental education sessions continue to be popular. We will have run 23 sessions this year, with regular visits from two home education groups, and many visits for apple juicing.

Topics covered this year have included bug hunts; pond and stream dipping; mammal trapping; weaving bird feeders; apple juicing; felting and mapping.



Live trapping mammals, and bones

Pond dipping

5. THREE COUNTIES TRADITIONAL ORCHARD PROJECT (TCTOP)

This year is the third and final year delivering the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project (TCTOP), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and run by the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Under this project, Colwall Orchard Group is the hub organisation for Herefordshire. Our efforts this year focused on Whitbourne where we are happy to report the formation of a new orchard group – “Whitbourne – Top Fruit!” We have done nine budding sessions there including pruning; tree planting; wildlife surveys and an Apple Day.



Overgrown young orchard in Whitbourne

Mature orchard at Breinton

We also prepared wildlife reports and management plans for orchards in Whitbourne, Breinton and Hildersley and ran several Orchard Champion training days including Emergency First Aid at Work; Wonderful Wildlife; Apple Identification and a Grafting Workshop.

6. OTHER ADVICE AND SUPPORT

We continue to work to support orchard owners in Colwall, although our volunteers have been busy in the TCTOP orchards and planting Lugg’s Mill, so we have only worked in six orchards and four gardens around the village this year.

We have also supported orchard owners in the surrounding Parishes for example in Bransford and Eastnor. Our Tree Order this year includes trees for eleven orchards, including two new orchards in Bransford and Whitbourne, as well as trees for use further afield by TCTOP and Orchard Origins.

7. IN PRAISE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS

Obviously, none of these many and varied activities would happen without our excellent, dedicated and hard-working members and volunteers. This year, COG has 10 family memberships, 73 individual members, 2 life members and 56 supporters (as well as 176 followers on our Twitter account, where we post regular updates on orchardy happenings).

Our volunteers kept working through the year this year, with 46 work parties in all. They have supported us in so many ways from behind the scenes governance and admin, through cooking preserves, organising and publicising events, to delivering our projects in work parties, training, public events etc.



A regular supply of cake keeps our volunteers happy!

8. FINANCES

Our core fund raising activities continue and our average surplus of income over expenditure continues in the region of £11,000 per annum. Our cash balance at the end of the 2017-18 FY was £56,332 against an outstanding debt for the land purchase of £44,500. The new land at Lugg's Mill has been fully paid for by grants and donations,

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Trustees met six times this year (5 formal sessions and 1 Strategy workshop), mainly considering funding, the purchase of Lugg's Mill, developing our new Strategy and organising all the COG activities. We also found time to upgrade our insurance and continue to implement our Health and Safety policy and procedures.

9. NEW VENTURES

We applied for grant aid from Great Western Railway for a historic orchard trail around the village, but sadly were not successful. We will attempt to deliver the project with other funding sources next year. However, our expertise on orchard history has seen us make a significant contribution to the Victoria County History of Colwall, due for publication in 2018.

Helen Stace,
Colwall Orchard Group

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