



HOLCOMBE COMMUNITY ORCHARD CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016



It has been a quiet year for the orchard, which is now in a state of maintenance as we continue to wait for the trees to mature. The crop this year was heavier but still small. Apple Day gave us a chance to sample seven or eight of the varieties which cropped well. Unfortunately it looks as though one of the trees (a plum) has died and two others (one pear and one dwarf apple) are not in a good condition so we shall be replacing at least one of those and possibly all three.

Briefly, activities during the year have included:

1. Maintenance of the surrounding borders and clearing around the trees; pruning the trees (thanks to John Ryder) and regular mowing by Andy and Dave which has kept the orchard looking well-tended throughout the year.
2. Fighting a losing battle with creeping buttercup. We may have to reconcile ourselves to a meadow which turns out to be whatever nature dictates.
3. Local bee-keeper, Steve Barnes, continuing to manage three beehives. The bees seem to have settled in well and have increased their yield this year by about 20lbs. This year's honey still has a flavour of chestnut but slightly milder than last year so we suspect the bees have found an additional source of nectar. As last year we had a share of the honey available to sell and raise some money for orchard funds.
4. Two presentations about the Orchard were given to the Dawlish Women's Guild and Dawlish Young Wives both of which made donations to the Orchard funds.
5. As in the previous year we acquired another piece of outdoor art from the TRAIL sculptures in Teignmouth – this time a mural sponsored by Waitrose reflecting the mass of plastic which invades our oceans and shores. There is also a new fibre-glass image of Merlin looking down over the orchard. Thanks to Mike Nance for donating that
6. Unfortunately our third planned 'Wassail' in January had to be cancelled owing to adverse weather conditions.
7. But we celebrated our third Apple Day in late September attended by 40-50 people. This was the first time that we were able to demonstrate live pressing of apples – many thanks to Anna Leatherdale for bringing her pressing equipment and a supply of apples. A big thankyou also to Waitrose who kindly provided us with bread and cheese to complement a range of apple produce – jellies, chutneys, juice, cake.

Once again, a really big thankyou to everyone who has helped in one way or another ever since the Orchard's inception and I am looking forward to further developments in the coming year.

Neil Howell
Chairman Holcombe Community Orchard
December 2016