

# Central Core Network Bulletin

Issue 2

Spring 2002

*Promoting the revival of orchards and local  
fruit varieties in Central Scotland*

## Great Interest Shown in New Network

Welcome to our second Newsletter.

The Central Core Network is now up and running and so far there has been a great deal of interest shown. Enquiries have come from far and wide and have been very diverse. There's interest in setting up community and school orchards, as well as integrating the heritage varieties of fruit trees into plantings of native trees.

It is a NETWORK first and foremost, though, and as we are all busy in our own spheres, the strength of such a network should be seen in the coming months. All members can play an equally important role—lots of small nuggets of information will ultimately add up to a lot of information! As the Network matures most members will find that there will be some way they can be a working part of it, even if that means just making leaflets and information available in their neighbourhood, or pointing out the Network's existence to local schools, community councils, etc.

So -

- Do you want to plant a new school orchard, or find out how to enhance the few fruit trees already in the school grounds?
- Don't know where to start in planning a village or community orchard?
- Need advice on how to save an old, unmanaged, orchard or how to go about planting a new one?
- Want to find out about the types of fruit trees in your garden?

Someone in the Network is sure to be able to help or know where you can find out more information—just ask!

Our next task is to obtain funding for the variety of projects we already have lined up:

- A new survey form to distribute throughout Central Scotland to find out where the traditional orchards are and where the newly-planted orchards are situated. This will also help in locating the rarer varieties of 'heritage' fruit so that we have a clearer picture of what we have in this part of Scotland.

- An Information Pack to help those interested in setting up community or school orchards, advice about planting and maintenance of new orchards and how to save relict ones—and ideas for events so that we can widen the circle of those people who are already celebrating orchards in their diversity. From this we can plan portable displays, posters, postcards, etc.

If you would like to be part of any of this, or suggest ways to fund the projects, just let us know: everyone is welcome to play a part in the Network.

## EVENTS IN 2002

### WHAT EVENTS

#### ARE YOU PLANNING?

Please let us know so that we can publicise them for you

**FIFE: Saturday, 12 October**

Apple Day at Craigencaht, Fife

Will include a cookery demonstration, events for children and a tour of the Farm Ecology Centre

#### OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Backyard Biodiversity Day:**

**Midsummer Weekend**

Your opportunity to celebrate wildlife in your own garden, or to join in a local event—further details from:

[www.biodiversityday.org](http://www.biodiversityday.org) or e-mail

[virginia@purchon.net](mailto:virginia@purchon.net)

**Scottish Biodiversity Week:**

**31 August to 8 September**

Each Local Biodiversity Action Plan area will be holding a variety of events—contact your local Biodiversity Co-ordinator for details,

or check out the website:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/biodiversity)

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## Resurgence in Community Orchards

Throughout Central Scotland there is a marked renewal of interest in setting up community orchards. In fact, in Clackmannanshire such a project has inspired a Local Biodiversity Action Plan to be written to include 'orchards' - something fairly common in England, but as far as I know, unknown elsewhere in Scotland.

We desperately need more places to relax and play in—and we also need shared activities to enable people of different age groups and backgrounds to come together. In city, town or village, the community orchard offers the equivalent of the wood in the countryside that a century or so ago would have been a communal asset to the village. Nowadays such an orchard can become a focal point for the whole area—and it does not have to be planted on totally communal ground: there are many opportunities for school orchards or hospital orchards, or even plantings alongside canals or rivers, or on industrial estates—as long as there is some public access and local people are invited to play their part in sharing knowledge and skills.

### What Constitutes a Community Orchard?

Community orchards should be open and accessible at all times. They may be owned or leased for or by the community (or held by agreement) by a community group, community council or by a local authority or voluntary body. The local council can also designate orchards as Local Nature Reserves. As well as enjoying the place, local people can share the harvest or profit from its sale, and take responsibility for any work in the orchard.

Moreover, because the prime purpose of a commu-

nity orchard is not the production of fruit, there are many opportunities to think creatively about what these orchards can and should be like.

### Establishing a Community Orchard

#### *Conserving Old Orchards*—

priority must go to saving traditional orchards as we are losing these so quickly. They can be looked upon as living museums, often featuring local—and now rare—varieties of fruit and being an important aspect of the landscape. They

will support a rich and diverse variety of wildlife, especially if the grassland underneath the trees is properly managed and the hedges or old walls surrounding the orchard maintained.

*Creating New Orchards*—although they will take a long time to become as rich in biodiversity as an established orchard, the local community can become fully involved in choosing the right kind of fruit trees, planting and maintaining them and learning how to 'add value' to the area, perhaps by including

bee hives, planting spring bulbs and native hedging around the plot and establishing a wildflower meadow beneath the trees.

**Celebrate!** Above all, orchards can be very special places, so make any excuse to celebrate what you've got—from inventing a Blossom Day in May, a Midsummer Orchard Festival to enjoy the wildlife, an Apple Day in October to celebrate the harvest and a Winter Work Day in late winter or early spring to prune the trees. And what about introducing a 'wassailing'\* event at New Year to pass on myths and legends about apples and orchards to young and old alike?



*\*waess hael—Saxon for good health*

**Further information**—Common Ground's 'Community Orchards' leaflet is an excellent introduction. Contact the organisation direct at their new address: Gold Hill House, 21 High Street, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 8JE for a reading list or current publications order form. Or send a large s.a.e. to the Central Core Network for a selection of articles on the subject [a contribution towards photocopying costs would be much appreciated].

## 'Alexander' and 'Emperor Alexander'

One of the Network's first members, Miss Halkett of Kirkcaldy, has been researching the history of her apple tree.

The variety 'Alexander' was in fact re-named 'Emperor Alexander' in memory of Emperor Alexander 1 by growers around Riga on the Baltic who sent fruit every year to the Russian Court.

In "The Directory of Apple Cultivars" by Martin Crawford, it is described as "a hardy tree which bears large round-conical fruit with yellow skin and russet dots, prone to cracking. Its flesh is creamy and aromatic. Comes near true from seed".

In "The Book of Apples" by Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, the fruit is described as "large and beautiful

with a rosy red flush. Primarily culinary, it cooks to a juicy, lemon puree which is sweet and pleasant. Also eaten fresh, quite sweet and slightly scented with soft, juicy flesh.



"Known in the Ukraine in the 1700s; introduced to England in 1805 by nurseryman James Lee of Hammersmith, London. Sent in 1817 to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and now widely grown throughout North America. Also grown in France and Sweden, it was favoured by the Victorians as an exhibition variety and grown as large espaliers.

Do any other Network members have this variety in their garden? Let us know if you do so that we can add the details to our Central Scotland Survey!

And many thanks to Miss Halkett for sharing this information with us—a Russian apple growing in Kirkcaldy!

## CONTACTS

The Royal Horticultural Society's website gives free access to "The Plantfinder", together with a list of Award of Garden Merit plants. Check out further details on: [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk) or contact them direct at RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey. GU23 6QB. **Fruit ID Service**—ask for details before sending any examples.

**Brogdale Horticultural Trust**, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8XZ. Tel. 01795 535462. Home of the National Fruit Collection. **Fruit ID Service**—ask for details before sending any examples.

The main supplier for Scottish varieties of apples is John Butterworth. Contact him at Butterworth's Organic Nursery, Garden Cottage, Auchinleck Estate, Cumnock, Ayrshire, KA18 2LR (tel. 01290 551088); web page—[www.webage.co.uk/apples/](http://www.webage.co.uk/apples/)

**Information on School Orchards**—contact either Margaret Miller at Gartmore Primary School, Gartmore, by Stirling; e-mail: [maggie.miller@virgin.net](mailto:maggie.miller@virgin.net), tel. 01877 382 343, or Ann Lolley (see later entry).

**Interested in setting up a Community Orchard?** Check out the national details by contacting Common Ground on [www.commonground.org.uk](http://www.commonground.org.uk) (address on page 2)

For local advice contact either Ann Lolley on [annlolley@hotmail.com](mailto:annlolley@hotmail.com), or tel. 01334 657490, or Catherine Lloyd (address overleaf): [cathlloyd@ukf.net](mailto:cathlloyd@ukf.net).

**Advice regarding management of orchards:** in Fife and Kinross a FWAG Landwise Orchard Management Guide may be available—contact Shirley Macgowan on 01334 656546 or [fife.kinross@fwag.org.uk](mailto:fife.kinross@fwag.org.uk) for further details.

Or throughout Scotland—contact Patrick Bowden-Smith (see article below). As he runs an orchard management business he will quote for any work he proposes

*Please mention "The Central Core Newsletter" when you contact anyone.*



*Apple and orchard information available for the first time last year at the NTS Hill of Tarvit Plant Sale, Fife*

## Planting a New Orchard

Patrick Bowden-Smith farms in the East Neuk of Fife. He writes especially for us as his introduction to planting a new orchard:

"An orchard, I believe should be more than a collection of fruit trees. It can be part of a landscape, produce valuable timber, be a haven for wildlife, as well as producing colour and variety to what is often an uninteresting area: not to mention the fruit.

A new orchard planted in the eastern corner of Fife hopes to cover all this and more at minimum cost for maximum benefit. The main advantage of the location is a south-facing aspect, good drainage and a friable loamy soil.

The site has a new wood on one side, a new double hedge on the west and north-east and a building on the north providing shelter. Additional shelter is provided by a new cotoneaster hedge on the north park side which in time will provide an evergreen landscape screen.

The original idea was to provide a purely domestic orchard but this was soon changed to incorporate the whole site as a landscape in its own right with the view from the building as a focal point. With this in mind, the trees have been planted with an avenue leading down to two principal evergreen oaks and a standard rowan in the wood behind. Each successive row of fruit trees is planted at a slightly more oblique angle to each other to

provide an impression of distance.

For colour in each corner of the field, groups of *Viburnum Tinus* and *Rosa Rogosa* have been planted together with a ton of mixed daffodil and snow-

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*Patrick provides an Orchard Management and Design Service, together with supplying quality root stock. Always happy to show people around and to talk through their ideas, he can be contacted at Seaforth, Elie, Fife, or tel. 01333 330541; e-mail: [CBowdenSmith@aol.com](mailto:CBowdenSmith@aol.com)*

drop bulbs to form a carpet down the avenue and a sunrise effect leading to each row of trees.

Additionally, cobnuts and crab apples have been planted together with an area of wild raspberries and a thornless bramble trained along the fence—truly a great variety of fruit, both ornamental and functional.

The fruit trees have been selected for their hardiness—traditional varieties and fruit bearing qualities. Root stock is vigorous so the trees should obtain a traditional pruned canopy within the area reaching about 15 ft. in height.

The main problems have been wind

blow and deer damage, together with an infestation of dock virus. The wind problem will lessen as the hedges grow, although there be problems in the future in heavy fruiting years—but then this will benefit wildlife if left on the ground over winter. A possible solution would be to erect temporary wind netting to allow the hedge to grow tall.

Roe deer and hares initially damaged the trees soon after planting due to the heavy snowfall coming over the top of the guards which meant they could get at the branches. This year we have put a 4ft. ring of rabbit wire around each tree and have had no further problems.

The dock virus has been reduced by cutting and spraying all the docks in the immediate vicinity and the trees have begun to develop a resistance. In time, wonderful burr veneer coloured timber will be produced by wrapping chains of various metals around the trunks as the trees grow. These will be loosened every few years so they mark the butt and the corroding metal stains the trunk to produce a high grade coloured wood: a long time project but worth the effort!

Finance was available from the Countryside Premium Scheme for the hedging and a 'Countryside Award' prize money paid for the fruit trees and planting. A Forestry Commission grant may be available if timber is the main object and the fruit a by-product, but this has yet to be tested. A proportion of fruit trees can be planted as part of a hardwood mix in a wood with Forestry Commission approval."

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### KEEP IN TOUCH!

Please join the Network so that we can spread the word throughout Central Scotland and link in with the many other initiatives throughout the UK.

Send a cheque (payable to "Central Core Network")  
to the address above

1 year's membership    £5.00  
3 years' membership    £15.00

## BOOK REVIEW "Apples in Scotland"

John Butterworth's new book is subtitled "a practical guide to choosing and growing our favourite fruit" but it offers a lot more than just that. This is a long-awaited book full of advice from an impassioned expert on all things to do with apples and orchards!

Fred Last, the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society's President, who has written the Foreword extols the fact that the significance of apple trees should not be undervalued. He says there are an estimated 140,000 apple trees (an equivalent of 140 hectares) within Edinburgh City alone. He commends John in his efforts to re-awaken our awareness of local apple varieties that have passed the test of time in the often inhospitable environments of different parts of Scotland.

John's book takes into consideration the challenges of growing fruit in Scotland. He discusses adaptations to climate, spring frost, wind, rainfall and soil.

The main part of the book, however, is an inventory of good varieties currently being grown in Scotland. The lists make fascinating reading but just makes you want to know what each of the varieties looks like and how they taste. This is in part answered by a good selection of photographs in the centre of the book, but I think the outcome of reading this book will be the need to search out further books and to learn even more.

John very helpfully lists his "Top Ten" varieties grown in Scotland and follows up with a useful Appendix of "Selected References" which most readers will be crying out for by now if they have read the book as eagerly as I did! John's list of "Useful Contacts" will also provide guidance.

So—this is an essential book to add to your shelves, but be prepared for it not to be the last. John, I'm sure, will write a further book in due course: we'll all encourage him to do so! But in the meantime, "Apples in Scotland" should become one of the most thumbed books in your collection.

Contact John Butterworth direct for details on how to obtain the book  
(his details are on page 3 of this newsletter).

£6.50, published by Langford Press—ISBN 1-904078-00-1.

*When wintering birds gathered*

*Under an apple tree*

*To feed on fallen fruit -*

*Visiting fieldfare mixed*

*With blackbird, missel thrush,*

*Chaffinch, hedge-sparrow, robin,*

*Blue-tit, drawn down to earth*

*For a dole of sustenance*

*Disdained while berries clung,*

*Worm and snail stirred.*

*Bullfinch, long missed, flew in,*

*Before buds could swell.*

*Wren, rare goldcrest braved*

*Marauding magpie, gull.*

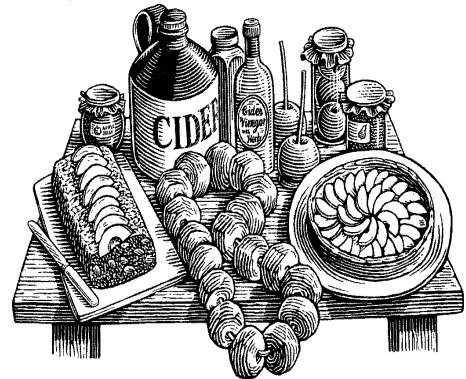
*Hard weather mingled them all,*

*Hunger, but starved not one*

*Nor left one killed in battle*

Extract from "Late", by Michael Hamburger,  
published by Anvil Press Poetry, 1997.

A postcard of this, and other poems,  
is available from Common Ground's  
Community Orchard Project.



*Nine varieties of British apple are available in our supermarkets - yet over 6,000 varieties actually exist. Help promote the sale of local fruit by asking the Manager of your shop to stock more British varieties.*