

Cornwall Orchard Network Gathering NOTES - Spring 2025

Saturday 3rd May 2025 - Peter Lanyon Building, Tremough Campus, Penryn

Attendees: Sally Pyner (Kehelland Trust), Michelle Lawson (Resilient Orchards Cornwall & Redruth Orchards volunteer), Simon Trehane (Mylor Community Orchard), Charlotte Goodship (Redruth Orchard Project & orchard enthusiast), Jo Stramik (Orchard owner & Rosewarne tutor), Melissa Ralph (Cormac and volunteer at Helston Incredible Edible), Meike Weiser (Forest for Cornwall & orchard enthusiast), Danny Trear (East End Park Community Orchard, Redruth Town Council), Adam Carveth (National Trust - Glendurgan, Trellisisk & Trerice), James Shipway (Cornwall Heritage Trust), Sophie Auster (Mount Hawke orchard), Jana Gabarova (Gwenap orchard), Spencer Rabey (Nourish Kernow), Alasdair Garnett (Tremough Orchard & Lanner Community Garden), Charlotte Barry (Camel CSA & CSA network) Richard Vials (Trenoweth Community Orchard/Redruth Orchards Project) William Arnold (Some Interesting Apples, Penarvon), Abishek Dixit (Penryn Campus - former gardener now PHD), Richard Argall (New County Hall Orchard), Pauline Penna (Trenoweth Community Orchard), Aneta Staciwa (Wendron orchard owner), Joanna Scalomoda (orchard enthusiast)

Dates for your diary Attendees were invited to attend the university bioblitz after our lunch which many attendees did and caught site of key orchard indicator species Apple Tree Lace Bug.

Weds 11th June 2025 Hays Cider Farm Orchard, Surveying Wildlife including invertebrates **7th Sept 2025** Apple id & picnic 10:30 – 2pm, Duchy orchard at Waitrose; **Sat 9th May 2026** Date of next network meeting Offers to host please? Especially East Cornwall.

Introduction from Sally Pyner. This year has proven to be more challenging with tricky weather events which, in turn, led to significant reduction in yield across many orchards in Cornwall and beyond. Last year's gathering focused on supporting wildlife within orchards. Last year (2024) proved to be a devastating harvest. This year, coming out of discussions we had in 2024, we are focussing on **how we might be able to prepare ourselves better for extreme climatic events/unknown environmental changes and ensure we can sustain our orchard spaces into the future as valuable sources of food as well as supporting wildlife.**

Talk from William Arnold from 'Some Interesting Apples' project.

UPDATES FROM ORCHARD SITES/ORGS

Al Garnett (Tremough campus Gardener but also initiated Lanner Community Garden) The Community Garden is an orchard and foody garden with varieties from an orchard in Mabe which still need ID (idea for a gathering to taste and ID in the autumn?) **Challenge** – Recruiting and retaining volunteers and managing challenging behaviour in some young people who don't perhaps fully understand the importance of the gardens. This comes with community. **Abishek Dixit (Falmouth University Post-Grad Student)** Used to be a biodiversity officer on the campus in Falmouth. Learned a lot from Al around wildlife. His PhD is on the future of trees in Cornish Hedges. Looking at this from a climate resilience perspective – roots breaking through the hedgerow and potentially destroying the hedge – the balance between nature and heritage. **Challenge** - Would like to educate more people on apples – people asked him what an apple tastes like and he tries to just encourage people to pick one and try it – which is harder than you'd think when people are quite detached from where food comes from. **Aneta Staciwa (has new orchard of 30 trees)** Aneta's orchard is only 18 months old and has a mix of apples, nuts and other fruits. **Challenge** – Rabbits! **Joanna Scalomoda** Here with Aneta. She is a medical administrator and has agricultural masters, so familiar with orchards but doesn't have one at present. **Charlotte Barry (Wadebridge, co-founder of Camel CSA in 2008)** At Camel CSA they were growing enough veg and fruit for 60-70 veg boxes a week. Now they have moved onto an ex organic farm (was Gaia Trust). On a very high NW slope. They planted an orchard of 40 trees with funding from Forest for Cornwall. As the site was exposed they used very vigorous rootstocks on the higher reaches and saved the dwarfing rootstocks for the more sheltered lower areas. Chosen varieties to provide a long season of different apples for eating and cooking and good storage. They have an Apple Day. **Challenges** – **Climate change and how will varieties respond.** They have chosen a mix of Cornish and non-Cornish varieties. Deer damage and human / dog walker damage to meadow areas – how can they keep certain areas protected (ground nesting birds as an example). How much access, how and where to? Not wanting disrespect and damage. **Pauline Penna – Volunteer at Trenoweth Community Orchard Redruth and Fungi expert.** Trenoweth Community Orchard is 1/3 acre with 30 trees in North Redruth. Volunteers are increasing and Richard and Michelle are up-skilling the volunteer workforce there in terms of tree management and biodiversity and managing the site for other plants, fungi and insects. **Challenge** – watering.

There will be a shed with rainwater harvesting on. **Richard Vials – Gardener, Orchard facilitator for ROC's Redruth Orchards Project & continues to volunteer.** Richard works at Trefusis and Trenoweth. Likes Forest Garden style gardening and helping people to recognise that a forest garden is a good choice for healthy soil, sequestering carbon and feeding people. **Challenge** – Communication to get people involved and to tell people about the gardens. **Richard Argall – Voluntary Tree Warden for New County Hall orchard trees.** The trees are all Agenda21 2010 trees. Richard likes to promote edibles in Truro and is passionate about appropriate trees in public places. New County Hall has 40-50 trees. The site is sheltered and has a good crop but some varieties such as Cornish Aromatic have canker very badly. Blossom this year is promising. Dog walkers use the site casually and passers-by have reacted well to the orchard. No longer has much deer damage – they had a bad episode where many trees appeared to be ring-barked, but they recovered. May not have been deep enough damage. Beyond the reaches of 'casual vandalism' as it is right at the bottom of the site. **Challenge** – can cankerous trees be kept as 'dead wood standing' or is this bad practice? **Danny Teare – Redruth Town Council** Has been involved with ROC planting a new community orchard at East End Park in Redruth this year, works in the amenities team. On the start of his apple journey. **Jana Gaborova - Had small holding in Slovakia** with fruit and nuts, now in Penzance working in a community garden - grafting etc. and wants to continue. Has started her own orchard with 50 trees and a love of nature. **Challenge** – Slugs and other pests like deer – and what are the costs of protection from pests. **James Shipway – Cornwall Heritage Trust** Manages 16 sites across Cornwall from ½ acre up to many hectares. Just had funding from Forest for Cornwall to be managed as a community space. They run Allantide events and activities which can be a challenge for apples at that time (End October). **Challenge** – Time – a lot of sites with new sites coming. There are lots of plans but not sure of the logistics of how to manage that. **Sophie Auster – Acquired land at Mount Hawke** 3 acres, had a grant for 2 acres from Forest for Cornwall for a lot of trees. Having heard other's plans is wondering how she'll get all the trees in. **Challenge** – a lot of aspects of developing this land are challenging and Sophie has a sense of responsibility for the land – it is right in the middle of the village and wants to be respectful to residents, involve volunteers but not be inundated with dog walkers. She wants to fence to allow some grazing. **William Arnold (Some Interesting Apples)** See talk. **Challenge** – Time. There is not enough but there is so much he'd like to do. If anyone comes across an absolutely fantastic wayside seedling apple or an incredibly healthy tree, please take the what3words and let him know. Please don't send masses of info in if the discoveries aren't particularly noteworthy (ref. the challenge of time above!). **Spence Rabey – Nourish Kernow CIC formed in 2023** Community for physical and mental well-being. Provide boxes of veg from June and have 3 orchards so far – one acre moving to a 3 acre site and one near the centre of Camelford. The first orchard got 'deered'. **Challenge** – capacity, **volunteering vs wages**. Commerciality and veg 'shares' The surgery in Camelford is not Primary Care network so this means less 'prescribing' for their services; therefore less funding. Working on healthier foods, doing school visits etc. **Adam Carveth – Head Gardener based at National Trust, Trelissick** but managing Glendurgan, North Helford and Trerice as well. Has managed a 280 acre eco farm – agroforestry mountain forest garden of 'unusual edibles'. Likes **unconventional edibles and is now developing the 'Fruit Garden for Cornwall'** at the walled garden at Trelissick. There will be heritage fruit but also looking forward to more climate resilient fruits and things that will be successful in 50 years time – e.g. Chinese Date Plums. **Challenge** – replenishing soils. Has been a history of weedkilling around trees in National Trust, but alongside that comes robbing soil of nutrients. Creating a new mowing regime with robotic mowers to ensure nutrients are put back in around fruiting trees. Rebuilding robust soils. **Meike Weiser (Forest for Cornwall)** F4C is Defra managed and Meike is a tree officer and now helping people to establish and maintain orchards and orchard trees. She has had 2 years with the woodland trust previously. Meike supported **50 orchard projects last season**. **Challenge** – **What are we going to do with all the apples?? What are people's plans? And how will the trees be formatively pruned and managed. What happens beyond orchard creation.** Pest control – do we look at sacrificial plantings? Beneficial planting? Protection? Meike also supports people to have funded pruning workshops. Gillyflower farm has 4000 trees on privately funded commercial orchard – Cornish/ Commercial/ Almonds/ Apricots – it is in Lostwithiel. She recommends people book a visit to go there and talk to Tess. The trees there are mulched and not staked – they have to just get on with it! The Cornish varieties are doing the best. Forest for Cornwall is in the final year of funding now – anyone wanting funding for trees, guards, workshops etc. must wait until JUNE then apply. **Melissa Ralph – Cormac and Volunteer for Climate Action Helston and Incredible Edibles Helston Making Space for Nature funded projects.** Melissa has supported planting projects from Newlyn to Saltash and everywhere in between. The focus is on 'friends of' groups and the sense of ownership of sites – not to create and then leave it 'for' anyone but get people involved so that the site continues to grow. The dog walkers are the eyes of the spaces – observing changes and recording and communicating any issues. Melissa has been responsible for supporting 45000 volunteer hours including orchard areas, 170 groups. Planting and involving schools and residents to engage locals. Knowledge of plants and trees as

assets. Planting mosaics of new habitats and 'retrofitting' greenspaces. She has undergone and given Forest Gardening Training – been to Trefusis. Has just planted first forest garden hedge in Hayle – improving nitrogen, minerals and communications (micorrhizae). Focussing on re-branding Cormac especially with gardening and sustainability – social housing, Cornwall housing and planting edibles to support these spaces and the people that use them. **Challenge – Toxins and bioavailability of these in crops such as apples and other fruits. Cornwall has a lot of contaminated land – what risk does this bring to health?** **Joe Stramik – Teaching at Rosewarne.** Has orchard of his own. 10 years ago was working for Eden in the Mediterranean biome. Is doing pruning and improving the orchards at Rosewarne. Would like to offer up the orchards for training opportunities ½ day to 1 day workshops. **Challenge** - Feels there is a big gap in domesticated tree care and people with knowledge of pruning fruit. **Andrew Ormerod – Plant Breeding & Economic Botanist of plants of value at Eden.** Andrew met James Evans & Mary Martin doing varied practical work. There are lots of similarities of Cornish varieties to those of Devon. Andrew has worked across 8 sites with differing methods of propagation – grafted on own roots orchard to agroforestry sites – looking at performance in relation to seasons and seasonal impacts (phenology). A lot of work done pre-lockdown and pre-grants so not funded and not his own land. Did lots of mulching, deer guards, chipping and talking to farmers about how indispensable fruit trees are. Trying to educate about their value. Andrew compares the adaptability of orchard trees and getting people to take the management of these trees seriously. He favours participatory learning and research. **Challenge** – would like funding to centralise recording and trials, looking underneath the physical differences and genetics. **Simon Trehane – Mylor Bridge Playing Field Committee** Simon is working with a committee looking into the development of ½ acre of unused land in Mylor and has great enthusiasm for planting an orchard, which is not shared by all members of the committee. He is working with Tom Kemp for advice and Forest for Cornwall for funding. He has a background in smallholding and has sought practical help and experience through the network. **Challenges** – different points of view. Some people believe that enthusiasm for the orchard will wain and needs to convince people that with the right support it will be ok. Dog walkers also a challenge – where will footpaths be? What sort of access? Anti-social behaviour and how to limit this. Tree guards not sure if to use or not – 1.2m high weldmesh, vs. leave the trees to their own devices. **Also with all this tree planting – where are all those 2nd hand guards going? Can we pool these for re-use?** **Charlotte Goodship** – Does not have own orchard – worked in Gloucestershire on community orchards, recently appointed as community engagement officer at Trefusis, East End & Treloweth Community Orchards, Redruth as part of CLUP funded project led by Resilient Orchards Cornwall. **Challenge** – enthusiasm that does not result in action – people appearing dedicated and interested in a project then nothing happens. Charlotte is particularly keen to challenge perceptions about the people – nature connection. **Michelle Lawson (Resilient Orchards Cornwall)** R.O.C. provides orchard management services to orchard owners/organisations. Also work to empower communities to look after local community orchards. Encouraging management approaches that are sustainable & orchards which are resilient to a changing climate. Empower communities to guide decision making/design/choices for community orchards. Experimentation e.g. different types/variety of fruit. Challenges – financial sustainability of the CIC, mainly volunteer led but receive combination of grant funded & private income from services. **Seeking members as we convert to a large membership CIC to help guide what we do.** Follow Cooperative principles & values. **Sally Pyner (Kehelland Trust)** Kehelland is first and foremost about supporting young people and adults with disabilities within the wonderful 16 acre site they work from. This often means that horticulture can be compromised to some extent. There are many situations where it hits a perfect balance and, overall, we manage to keep this so that there is immense pride in the work the trainees and learners do and they can see positive results. **Challenges** – Unpredictable harvests. Our juice income from sales of bottled, pasteurised juice was down by over £3000 this year due to the terrible harvest caused by a blossom period destroyed by wet, windy Easterlies. **Also another challenge** is to produce good apple trees for sale. Whilst we run grafting workshops, we do not produce or have enough time to meticulously manage an apple tree stock, but we desperately want to and there is a shortage of tree suppliers in Cornwall.

SUMMARY OF SHARED CHALLENGES – The start of a discussion which we could have done with loads more time for!

Public Access – Challenge or opportunity? There is uncertainty about whether unlimited public access to spaces is a good thing if they don't fully understand and respect the work that is going on on the land. Melissa's point that the dog walkers are our eyes/ our observers. How can we integrate this into other spaces? For Melissa's line of work there is no choice, but this has worked in their favour most of the time.

Some ideas for positive interaction: Trust & building relationships – finding sites wherever possible where the audience is already invested in the land; **Resident-led orchards** (e.g. initiation, design and ongoing care); **Litter picking and keeping**

the areas well kept to encourage others to respect and do the same; **Interpretation** that explains the use of the land and its importance, good signage; **Sense of ownership** and belonging and building this with events. ; Tehidy Country Park Orchard – inviting the public to enjoy the space has led to a lot of apples going home with people. This is really positive in terms of people feeling a sense of ownership – but left the Tehidy orchard volunteers without a decent crop to press on their ‘thank you’ day. Balance! Signage is important!

- William cited Annie Lourde’s book ‘Neighbouring Orchard’ that covers community behaviours quite well. He also talked about **the relatively small cost of small apple trees and how resilient they actually are**. Should we leave them more to their own devices? Can we just replace as we need to until it is no longer an issue?

- Abs mentioned marshland as a good habitat to prevent unwanted trespass, but also **the deliberate creation of pathways (mowing desire lines for example) that encourage particular transit through a piece of land**. Allowing brambles and other harder to walk through vegetation to prevent digression from pathways. Also encourages insect life.

- **Volunteers bring enthusiasm, skills & knowledge all of which can really benefit an orchard whereas if behind closed gates or privately owned it’s very hard to ensure you have a team.** - Need to value volunteers and their knowledge.

Tree Guards or not? Alternatives? Melissa has used short term small guards which are removed in time. Also made guards out of chestnut paling. - Gillyflower Farm are not guarding or staking trees – worth a visit to see. Redruth orchards also have many trees not guarded and are doing fine, more vulnerable trees are guarded, but recommend wider guards to ensure rubbing is prevented, or remove when 3 years old. Large mulching circle also helps to protect the tree, when no tree guard, provides a visual separation.

- Andrew spoke about **scotch broom as well as gorse and brambles offering decent protection for trees** – so long as brambles are not allowed to grow up into the crown. This also offers soil stability and protection. - Jana mentioned that in Slovakia it was noted that tree attack by animals such as deer could be because of mineral deficiencies corrected by eating the bark. There has been some success putting salt licks up for deer to access which reduces their desire to attack the trees. - Charlotte’s issue is more with antler rubbing against trees which requires more physical barriers.

- Sally suggested looking at extruded windbreak mesh – we ordered this from ultimate-one [1m Plastic Windbreak Mesh | Green Wind Protection Fencing | 25m roll](#) this is good for rabbit protection and useful for permanent vents at the base of tunnels as it can be strimmed against. - Deer won’t jump what they can’t see the other side of, so good Cornish Hedges with healthy trees work well. - Joe was saying about not removing lower branches of trees that have been subject to deer attack as they will just move further up the tree. - Laying trees on top of hedges might be useful – short term loss for long term gain?

Traditional Orchards vs Forest Gardens Are we planting apples in the wrong landscapes? Is the grid pattern natural? Should they be in their natural habitat of woodland edge? This would support a more forest garden approach to planting and growing. Richard pointed out that it is difficult to mechanise a forest garden to our own ends of mass production. - Traditional orchard’s rare habitat is dependent on that very spacing, e.g. large spacing between fruit trees alongside meadow. Isn’t there room for different types of orchard? Different situations and needs call for different types of orchards. Productivity is also important.

- How can we get premium products from unconventional systems – part of the work at National Trust Trelissick’s new fruit garden, but also work being done in forest gardens and in different orchard management practices like more flora in between trees, use of ramial woodchip and management of vegetation such as mowed clippings. - - Charlotte – raking up grass clippings then creating ‘donut’ around apple trees and rows in between rows of trees to ensure nutrients can return to the soil. - Melissa – scything as means to get more nutrient dense clippings that break down more easily and provide more habitats for insects, especially ground beetles that can be beneficial against some of the more troubling-to-our fruit invertebrates such as slugs and woodlice. *Where does biodiversity end and irresponsible disease management begin?? Finding the balance between productivity, health and longevity.*

- There followed a talk by **Andrew Ormerod about his studies into Phenology** (slides attached and Andrew will send on some notes to accompany these slides (thank you Andrew))

- Then a visit to the **Penryn University campus Tremough orchard, led by head gardener AI, and catching up with the bioblitz and the discovery of the apple tree lace bug there. What a nice finale!**