



## WOLDS END ORCHARD

### Annual Report 2023

Projects, events, workshops, harvesting and Saturday morning work-parties continued throughout 2023. We would like to thank each and every one who has stayed involved with the orchard, for their time, good humour and hard work.

WEO's membership of Gloucestershire Orchard Trust provided free **tree pruning workshops** during the summer for younger fruit trees and winter sessions for the veteran trees. We are most grateful to the Trust and Martin Hayes for their support and advice throughout the year. In addition, a **scything workshop** was organised and well attended, and a grant from Caring for Cotswolds/Cotswold National Landscape was applied for and awarded in 2023 to cover part of the cost aerial pruning of the tall, ancient trees, is being paid this year following the recent completion of the work.

**Tree identification** work continued with five samples sent for DNA testing along with the collating of electronic records and development of a tree database. Visual identification sessions were undertaken during a visit from the Orchard specialist of the People Trust for Endangered Species (PTES). Results of the DNA tests are awaited and the plan is to undertake another dozen DNA tests in 2024, using funding from part of a £1,000 grant awarded in 2023 (for payment in 2024 upon completion of activities) by the Finnis Scott Foundation.

**The apple harvest** in autumn 2023 was less bountiful than 2022 - this was a trend throughout the UK and likely due to late frosts in April affecting blossom and pollination. Orcharders picked fruit in September and 24 dozen bottles of Wolds End Orchard Apple Juice were produced and are on sale to raise funds for orchard maintenance.

**The Wildflower Bank** supported by Cotswold National Landscape and the Glorious Grasslands Team delivered a magnificent display of Yellow Rattle flowers thanks to the preparation and seeding in 2022. A number of other species of wild flower have also been introduced - some of which were unfortunately also tasty pickings for the orchard's rabbit population.

2023 also saw the arrival of **honey bees** courtesy of Society Member, Andy Parker. Two hives have been set up in the far corner of the site behind a deadwood hedge with another to follow. A portion of each sale of honey from these hives goes towards upkeep of the Orchard.

**Events** during the year included the annual **Wassail** in January, supported by the Magnificent Campden Wassailers and The Sealed Knot Muscateers was attended by around 80 people. In March **local Brownies came to plant** our small tree orchard. **Blossom Weekend** in April was wet but popular; and for the second year in succession the orchard opened for **Campden Open Gardens** in June, focussing on summer wildflower treasures. We partnered with the **Court Barn Museum** on their **Great Escape Art Fund project** to welcome over 100 primary school children into the orchard over three visits, to learn about biodiversity and the importance of nature. The **Orchard Art Group** continued on the last Friday afternoons of the month and a community art project resulted in a magnificent new logo for the orchard, complete with apples and pears drawn, painted and collaged. New signage was designed for events and made up by Men in Sheds, helping to minimise the use of plastic in the orchard. Over 180 people enjoyed **Apple Day** in October which was expanded and hosted in conjunction with neighbour Jecca's House – and renamed **AppleFest**. Activities included the popular Apple Identification table led by Steve Oram from PTES; food and drink stalls; live music and the Shakespeare Mummers' amusing Apple Play.

The number of hours' work began to be logged during the year and from September to the end of December over 300 hours were recorded. Our thanks to everyone who has helped, from those undertaking the administration to those who climbed ladders, weeded, pruned, planted, wielded brush cutters or greeted visitors to the open days and events.

**Grants and donations** underpin all our projects in the orchard. We wish to thank all those individuals and organisations who have been supportive of our work including the **Cotswold Warden team** who kindly provided and installed a new gate between the orchard and Jecca's House.

During the year **Orchard Sub-Committee** members Donna Evans and Chris Leese resigned due to workloads and other commitments. We would like to formally thank them for their expertise and hard work during the last three years. The team was boosted during the year by co-opting Steven Law and Owen O'Connell. The Sub-Committee undertakes not only work in the orchard with other Orchardees, but also administration, record keeping, fundraising, publicity and organisation of workshops and events. We are very keen to encourage one or two more people to join the Sub-Committee in order to continue the excellent work and achievements made to date.

If there is one message we would like Members to take away from this year's report is that we still need enthusiastic volunteers to help keep the orchard maintained, safe and open for the community.

**We look forward to continuing our work and to welcoming as many of you as possible to join us at the 2024 events or helping out during the year.**

**Julianne Davis.**

**Chair**

**Wolds End Orchard Sub-Committee**

Geoff Carr; John Ellis; Steven Law; Mike Newman; Owen O'Connell; Susie Tombs; Geoffrey White.

9 April 2024