



Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project

2018 Evaluation Report





TCTOP perspectives

At People's Trust for Endangered Species we recognise the critical importance of projects that raise public awareness of traditional orchards. When they are lost, we don't only lose a beautiful landscape feature, we also lose biodiversity and cultural heritage. Only by bringing people back to these places can we secure their future and that of the wildlife they support. The Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project has been about just that - connecting people and orchards.

Steve Oram, Orchard Biodiversity Officer PTES, Secretary of the UK Orchard Network.

TCTOP has helped to make a real difference for my teenage son, who has created an orchard slideshow for the project website as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. He has complex needs and the photographing of an old orchard has been hard at times but he feels a real sense of achievement. It is great to see him find the courage to push himself, which he doesn't do in many areas of life, and to see the pleasure he has got from the orchard.

Mother of student.

TCTOP has been an ongoing success story for us, enabling us to provide lots of opportunities for vulnerable people and for the local community. Since getting involved the orchard has been transformed and, more importantly, used! We have had repeat school visits, have a regular wildlife watching group each week, who keep a tally of all the birds and wildlife they see, and have used the orchard for art sessions for the people that we support and as a quiet 'safe space'. The apples have been picked and used for juice and in the depths of winter the last of them were gathered and fed to our elderly pig, so little is wasted. These orchard landscapes were once painted by the artist Brian Hatton and we are helping to preserve this wonderful part of our heritage.

**Julie Milsom,
Hereford Community Farm, Breinton.**

One of the great threats to old orchards is a lack of skills and understanding, TCTOP has successfully upskilled a good number of orchard custodians in an attempt to address this. One of the key activities has been the writing and publishing of several orchard books and guides, a fantastic legacy for the project and one that inputs to the national knowledge set.

Wade Muggleton, Marcher Apple Network

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1.0

Introduction

In 2014 the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project (TCTOP) was delighted to be granted £332,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards the delivery of a three year project to restore, celebrate and improve traditional orchards.

The Three Counties (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire) still have one third of the U.K's remaining traditional orchards and local and national organisations were concerned about the rapid loss of this distinctive landscape feature. Traditional orchards not only have huge wildlife value but have played a key role in shaping the communities of these rural counties. Up to 90% of traditional orchards had already been lost in some areas, orchard skills were being lost as owners turned to contractors to maintain them, if at all, and owners and local communities were becoming disconnected from their orchard heritage.

The Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project focused on the idea that orchards need people to survive; not only to carry out practical work but also to champion them. We wanted to enable people to delight in their local orchards, to become their best ambassadors in the face of increasing pressures from developers and farmers and to encourage their care when neglected. We aimed to help people develop orchard skills, encourage people to take responsibility for looking after them, and to help people to get into orchards and enjoy them, making sure that the customs, traditions and history of the orchards are celebrated. We wanted to nurture a passion that could turn into action.

Four years on the project has been hugely

successful. Orchards are special places and there is great delight to be had in working and relaxing in them, marking the seasons with the heady smell of blossom and the drone of bees or with the sight and smell of ripe fruit on branches. People needed little encouragement to join in with the project and the orchard 'buzz' has grown. Orchard groups across the area have been re-energised, recruiting new volunteers through the project, and have developed good working relationships with each other, sharing skills and ideas. Orchard owners have received advice and training and our amazing volunteers have helped to restore and plant traditional orchards in each county, finding and grafting some of our rarest local varieties whilst doing so. The future of traditional orchards across the Three Counties still looks uncertain but where the project has been active there has been real progress.

This evaluation report provides information about how we carried out the project and the outcomes of our work. Much more information is available on our project legacy website www.tctop.org.uk where we have brought together some of the books, recipes, historical research, maps, photographs and films which were part of the project. It will also show you how much we all enjoyed being part of TCTOP.

It has been a privilege to be at the heart of this project, working with so many enthusiastic volunteers and skilled orchardists, and it leaves behind a legacy of people who are passionate about orchards and who will continue to champion them across the Three Counties.

James Bissett
TCTOP Board Chairman



Executive Summary

Traditional orchards are an integral and much loved part of the Three Counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. These orchards have widely spaced, full sized trees and the open spaces between them support species rich grassland which is usually grazed. The low intensity management and the longevity of the trees makes them very special for nature and often very beautiful. The importance of these traditional orchards includes not only their huge biodiversity value and heritage varieties but also the specialist knowledge and skills required to manage this habitat. It also encompasses the role of orchards in bringing people together to work in the orchards, use the produce and in ceremony and celebration. They are an iconic part of the Three Counties identity.

The People's Trust for Endangered Species estimates that 90% of traditional orchard habitat in the UK has been lost since 1950. Over one third of the remaining traditional orchards are found in the Three Counties, but they are fast disappearing. This report provides an evaluation of the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project (TCTOP) which worked in seven key orchard areas across the three counties to address this. Unusually it set out to work with many orchards in private ownership, recognising that this is where most of the remaining traditional orchard are. It aimed to raise awareness about the rapid loss of traditional orchards in the landscape by involving local people in practical orchard work, orchard skills training and learning about their importance to wildlife and to people – past and present. It also encouraged the use of orchards, and their fruit, for enjoyment.

The project had three main Heritage Lottery objectives:

1. To help people learn about traditional orchard heritage
 2. To conserve our orchard heritage for present and future generations
 3. To help a wide range of people to take an active part in their orchard heritage
-

It aimed to meet these objectives by helping people in our project areas to :

- **Restore traditional orchards** : carrying out practical work in 25 orchards in key orchard areas where traditional orchards were at risk of being lost, learning whilst working, with help from our project mentors from county orchard groups
 - **Understand them better** : providing training about orchard ecology, management and fruit varieties, supporting research into orchard history and heritage, and encouraging networking and sharing of expertise
 - **Improve them** : carrying out surveys of fruit varieties, replacing trees, encouraging owners to consider wildlife benefits, providing orchard skills training
 - **Enjoy them** : supporting and delivering orchard events and celebrations
-



The TCTOP project action plan identified 41 actions to achieve this. The main aim of the project activity was the practical restoration of 25 orchards, with courses, events and skills training held in them – providing hands on experience whilst improving and enjoying the orchards. Other actions were intended to support voluntary work by purchasing equipment for volunteer use and providing training in first aid and event management and to equip people with the skills to research orchard history. An overarching aim with all actions was capturing ‘hearts and minds,’ recognising the need to help people engage with their orchard heritage in order to recruit them as traditional orchard ambassadors.

These activities were supported by a Project Officer and delivered by local orchard specialists from across the Three Counties, providing opportunities to build and develop links both between the many project partners and with communities in our project areas. It was based on a very successful model established by Colwall Orchard Group, whose focus on engaging with the local community has resulted in the restoration of over 30 orchards locally, helping to preserve the village’s strong traditional orchard heritage. The project aspired to encourage this model on a broader scale – linking communities with orchards and orchard activities - and, although creating new orchard groups in each of the project areas proved difficult, the emphasis on connecting people with orchards remained at the heart of the project.

Overall the project has been extremely successful. It has met and often exceeded its targets and delivered positive outcomes in many areas, improving the condition of the orchards themselves and our knowledge of, and ability to manage, our traditional orchard heritage. The wide range of activities provided a rich mix of opportunities and volunteers and participants were very satisfied with their experience. It has managed to engage over 900 people in diverse projects, ranging from pruning skills to historical research, and the feedback shows that it has provided very positive experiences for the many people involved. Forty volunteers became Orchard Champions, identified as one of the most successful parts of the project.

Those involved in the project delivery identified a range of ways in which TCTOP provided benefits for themselves and their organisations. They highlighted opportunities for recruiting new members, for reflecting on their own practice, opportunities to expand their range of activities and building new partnerships. Initial unease for some turned to appreciation of the outcomes as the project developed and their confidence in it grew.

There have been some challenges but also many unanticipated and unexpected benefits and, with HLF support, the project partners have been flexible and positive in taking advantage of these, replacing ideas which were not working well when needed, usually to great effect.

The table below shows how successfully the project delivered its project actions across the four project areas

	Actions partly delivered as planned	Actions delivered as planned	Actions amended/ added and then delivered	Actions/targets exceeded
Restore		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mistletoe training orchard intro sessions demonstration traditional orchard first aid training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conserving local varieties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mentoring and training in orchards
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oral histories dev't of local groups work with parish councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCTOP website project film apple juice training days e-bulletins and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> digital storytelling historic environment training archaeological surveys historic walk and talks smart phone apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> county orchard websites fruit ID fruit DNA testing wildlife training exhibitions traditional orchard courses interpretive boards
Improve		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management plans wildlife surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> professional advice to non-project orchards replacement planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fruit surveys
Enjoy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support for setting up orchard groups 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> orchard events National stone fruit conference

All those involved offered suggestions about learning for future projects, headlines for which included not underestimating the length of time needed to establish trust and good working relationships with communities, not trying to deliver too much in a project, building in good PR and marketing and the need for flexibility to achieve outcomes.

Partners and volunteers expressed a strong appetite for future traditional orchard activities. County and local orchard groups are looking at how they can fill the gap left by TCTOP and are actively planning new projects. Other partners are planning a project based on the Orchard warden pilot; part of the suite of projects carried out at the end of

the project. Orchard champions are continuing their own network of support for orchard enthusiasts and three fledgling orchard groups are building their memberships.

The project was both ambitious and innovative in its approach and, four years on, the project energy has not dimmed. Those involved are still enthusiastic about it and keen to make sure that our orchard heritage is not lost to future generations.

The evidence presented in the following sections explains how the four aims were achieved, how the outcomes often exceeded the original project plans and the strong legacy which has been left.

3.0
Our
achievements

34
orchards
restored

8
orchard
books
produced

500
new
trees
planted

3
mother
orchards
planted

2
new orchard
courses developed

300+
people
received training

6
interpretive
panels
installed

1
archaeological
dig
no
treasure
found!

National
Plum
Day
Launched

A demonstration
orchard planted

'LOST'
varieties
found

Tree
warden
training pack
produced

40
Orchard
Champions
trained

1
community
film

1
National
conference
held

Lots of
tea and
cake
enjoyed!



4.0

Working together

Roles and responsibilities

The Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project covered seven key orchard areas and involved a large number of people. In order to communicate clearly and avoid confusion the roles and responsibilities of all those involved were agreed and clearly set out from the outset. The project structure and management was kept deliberately simple, with the Project Officer linking and co-ordinating all areas of the project. This clarity of roles helped to make the project run smoothly and all those concerned reported very positively about working relationships.

A **Project Board** of eight members was established, providing orchard expertise and representing the project skills hubs, orchard owners and project volunteers. This board met quarterly to approve major changes and to oversee general progress. Its role was largely ‘hands off’ but members acted as a critical friend, were proactive in providing advice and suggestions for delivery, were a point of contact for feedback from those they represented and provided valuable support and encouragement for the project manager and officer.

The **Project Manager** had overall responsibility for all project processes and acted as the first point of contact for the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Board. He also took responsibility for compiling and submitting claims to HLF. The delivery of the project was delegated to the Project Officer.

The **Project Officer** planned and managed the project activities. She liaised with the three County/local skills ‘Hubs’ and with other orchard experts to deliver practical work, surveys and training in orchard skills. She also planned and managed contracts to deliver the

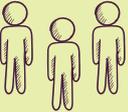
history and cultural elements of the project, recruited orchard owners and volunteers and monitored and evaluated both the work carried out and the experience of mentors and volunteers. She also carried out PR and communications work, including a monthly newsletter, social media and talks and events. The delivery of orchard training and mentoring of volunteers in the project orchards was channelled through three existing orchard groups – one per county – whose expertise and local knowledge was invaluable.

The Skills Hubs were paid for the work they did; a Service Level Agreement (SLA) agreed at the start of the project with each Hub provided a costed plan of activities, with Skills Hubs responding to requests from the Project Officer and suggesting activities of their own. They also provided ‘outreach’ to communities in the areas in which they were working, often recruiting new orchards to the project as they developed relationships within these local communities.

Orchard (and other) experts were occasionally needed to deliver training outside the scope of the Skills Hubs, e.g. scything, mistletoe workshops. These experts were recruited by the Project Officer or by the Skills Hubs.

Volunteers played an increasingly important role as the project developed, many moving from being passive recipients of training to becoming involved in the broader work of the project, helping with events, P.R, website work and practical orchard work. Involving volunteers from an early stage and capturing their ideas as the project developed ensured that they felt part of the project and valued. Volunteers were co-ordinated by the project officer.

 **5.0**
Our
volunteers


900+
people

Took part in **167** training days
 including **83** orchard work days
585 of them came more than once

40 became orchard champions 


 contributed **1,500 days** equivalent to five full time working years

55% were men
45% were women

Our youngest volunteers were **Seven** years old, our oldest were **Seventy+**

This is what they did

- Digital story telling
- History training courses
- History walks and talks
- Mistletoe training days
- Orchard work days
- Grafting
- Film making
- Apple juice training
- First Aid courses
- Scything courses
- Bee keeping
- Foraging courses
- Exhibitions
- Wassails

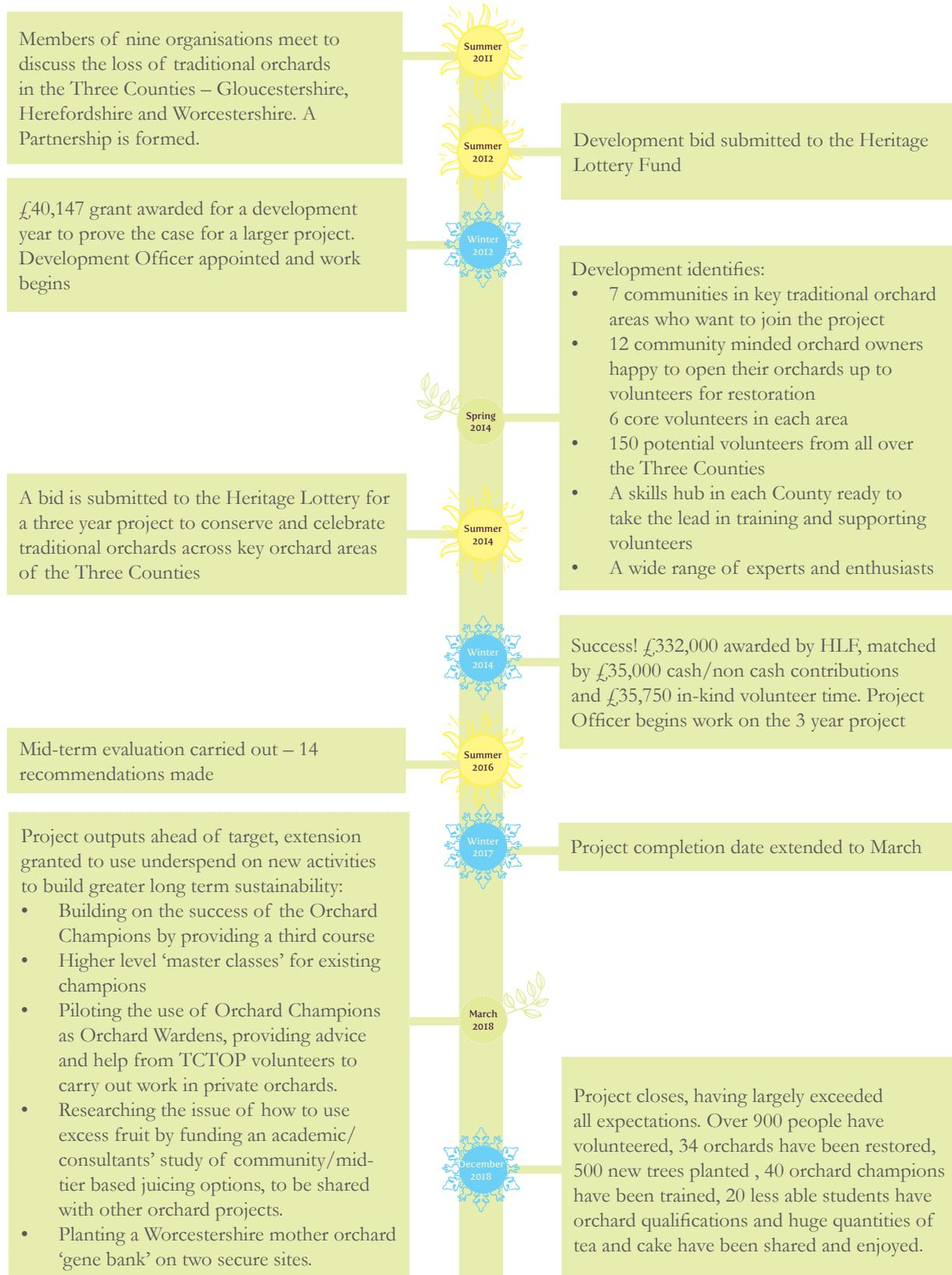



 And they helped with the project launch and finale, researched orchard history and manned stalls at shows and fetes.


700+ people came to our Orchard events

- A National stone fruit conference
- Buzz ! Schools insect day
- Wyre Forest Cherry walk
- Apple day celebrations
- Music days
- Perry pear day
- Open orchards

6.0 Time line





About this evaluation

Throughout the project we have collected and analysed information about our work, following our project evaluation plan, so that we could understand the impact we have made, both to orchards and to people. In order to do this we wove opportunities for evaluation and reflection into all our project activities, collecting data about the orchards and project participants and inviting feedback, both formally and informally. Our aim was to use this ‘formative’ evaluation to make changes where needed and to respond to unexpected problems and opportunities as they arose.

At the project half-way point we carried out a mid-term evaluation, providing us with an overview of our achievements so far and identifying areas for reflection and change.

Our final evaluation aimed to build on this work and to find out whether the project has achieved its aims, to investigate to what extent it has met its outcomes and to determine what longer term changes may occur as a result of the project. We also wanted to demonstrate the project’s success so that we can communicate its impact to others, celebrate with everyone involved and reassure our funders that it has been a worthwhile investment.

In order to do this the final evaluation aims to:

- Tell the story behind the results
 - Reflect the views of as many people as possible, so that every voice counts
 - Provide a summary of our results – both qualitative and quantitative
 - Make sure that we detail ‘lessons learnt’ which are useful for us and for others
 - Present our findings in an accessible way, so that everyone involved in the project can understand them
-

Our final evaluation is a ‘self-evaluation’. This was a decision, supported by the HLF, to use the considerable evaluation expertise of the project team and volunteers. In addition to helping with the capturing of information throughout the project, participants have been involved in shaping the evaluation questions and the report. This meant that we were open to all that they wanted to explore and to say. In order to make sure that there was no bias and that people felt able to answer questions freely, questionnaires and on-line survey data were received and processed by a researcher unconnected to the project, who also helped with telephone and face-to-face interviews. No project is perfect but an on-going dialogue with everyone involved with TCTOP meant that most problems were addressed along the way and usually resolved so, rather than revisiting difficulties, we have concentrated on the difference the project has made. The Project Officer prepared the ‘story’ text, using this information, and the draft document was then peer reviewed by Project Officers from two similar traditional orchard grant funded projects.

The final report was then assembled with the help of an experienced graphic designer who specialises in the presentation of project information for the third sector, making it accessible to a wide range of audiences.

We have included quotations from many people; these are not attributed to individuals in order to maintain confidentiality, and do not represent the opinion of those who assembled the evaluation. They are intended to illustrate the range of responses received and to bring the project to life for those who read the report.

In addition to this evaluation report we have also made a project film, using footage shot by a number of TCTOP partners, which shows some of the activities we undertook and the fun we had in taking part, and we have built a ‘legacy’ website, so that people can access TCTOP information long after the project closes. www.tctop.org.uk

7.1

Reviewing the project



Evaluation has been built into the project at every stage and used to shape and improve our project activities. We monitored attendance and gathered feedback throughout and used this information to help plan workshops, training and activities, record engagement and assess our progress. It was discussed at the quarterly board meetings, where members representing orchard trainers and mentors, volunteers, orchard owners and experts acted as a ‘critical friend’ in making suggestions for improvement and at our ‘skills hubs’ meetings.

Our monitoring included :

- Feedback sheets completed after every workshop and training event, allowing us to record the number, age, gender and experience of the participants and to gauge the increase in learning and skills.
- Recording informal comments made by telephone and email.
- Regular one to one meetings with our ‘skills hubs’ to share both success and problems with the delivery of events and training.
- Conversations with County Orchard Groups
- Informal feedback at events and in response to social media.

Mid-term evaluation

In August 2016 a mid-term evaluation was carried out by the project officer and by volunteers. It aimed to highlight what had worked well, identify what had not worked well and to identify unanticipated outcomes and opportunities. It was based on both qualitative and quantitative information and included 85 responses to an on-line

anonymous survey together with face to face interviews and discussion with a wide range of stakeholders. The good ‘return’ rate was largely due to enthusiastic chasing by the project officer and sending out surveys via the popular project newsletters.

The mid-term evaluation suggested that the project had achieved a great deal but that some changes needed to be made in order to fully achieve the project aims, to respond to needs and opportunities not identified in the original bid and to build in greater project sustainability. A number of recommendations were made as a result of the evaluation and, although most of the project remained unaltered, these recommended changes were agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Changes agreed at mid-term:

- Communication about the project should be given higher priority, and used especially to target those supporting the project (e.g. requesting newsletters) but not yet actively involved
- Survey work should be on-going, instead of before starting work in orchards, to allow for seasonal restrictions to gathering data on e.g. fruit varieties and wildlife
- A flexible approach should be taken to planned history and heritage work due to the lack of local expertise
- Recruiting and supporting Orchard Champions should replace our aim of trying to develop groups in the project focus areas
- Hubs should be better supported to train their volunteers as mentors and teachers for TCTOP volunteers

7.2

Evaluation methodology – quantitative

We followed an evaluation plan written at the start of the project for the collection of data. Feedback forms were provided at every event or activity, asking for general information about the participants and inviting feedback – good or bad! It did prove difficult to get participants to provide details about ethnicity and age. Where training was involved participants were asked to ‘score’ their skills or knowledge, both before and after the training, to discover whether the sessions had been useful. At the end of the project a random sample of these participants was planned to follow this through. We were, however, unable to re-contact all our previous volunteers for this evaluation due to newly introduced County Council GDPR notifications which reduced our mailing lists considerably!

During the project, however we received feedback from volunteers at:

167 events or training sessions

We received end of project feedback from:

- 32 Orchard champions (80% of Orchard Champions)
- 18 Project orchard owners (a 50% sample of owners across the three counties)
- 3 Skills Hubs - 100%
- 7 Board members - 100%
- The Project Manager and Project Officer

7.3

Evaluation methodology – qualitative

One of the most rewarding aspects of the project has been the way in which participants felt involved and able to give feedback. Continuous conversation about the project was encouraged and comments and ideas from volunteers, experts and partners have been acknowledged and recorded throughout the project. Many of these comments have informed the actions taken in the project, for example the development of new resources and the delivery of new training.

‘Now that we know how to use the orchard tools could you arrange for us to learn how to look after them?’

(A tool sharpening course was organised)

‘The Orchard Champion training is great but it’s difficult for people to give up two days on one weekend. We suggest that you spread the sessions or maybe condense the introduction into one longer day instead.’

(The introductory course was amended as suggested)

Orchard volunteers

8.0

Traditional orchard restoration

Our project action plan set a target of restoring 25 traditional orchards. These were in seven key orchard areas across the Three Counties – Evesham & Pershore, Rochdale & Tenbury and Alfrick in Worcestershire, Whitbourne, Breinton and Hildersley in Herefordshire and Longney, Kilcott & Gorsley in Gloucestershire. These areas were identified in the development year as having enough remaining traditional orchards to provide a cohesive area for wildlife, allowing the project to make a real impact locally in terms of conserving and connecting biodiversity. Details about the orchards are provided on the TCTOP website.

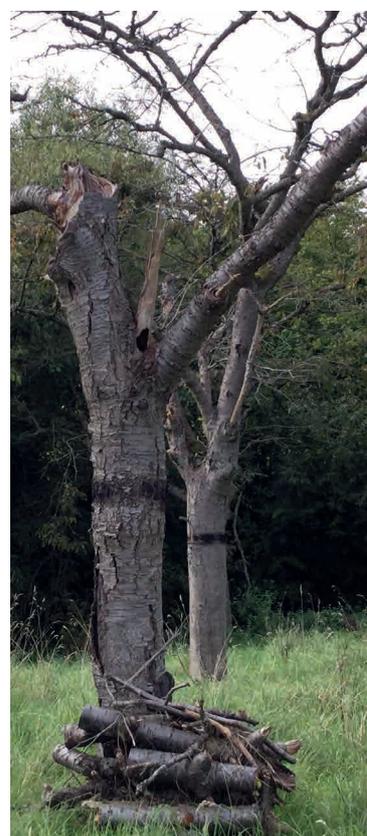
The orchards were all at least 40 years old and in many cases much older, making them of very high wildlife value. Most were privately owned and all were in danger of being lost through neglect, with owners who were unable to look after them, mainly due to age, illness or inexperience. Although some owners approached the project voluntarily most spent time considering whether they wanted work to be carried out and building trust was a key part of the project. The orchards varied in size from .5 acre to 9 acres and in the varieties they contained – mainly plum, damson, apple, cider apples and perry pears.

Each orchard was visited by orchard experts who surveyed them for condition, fruit varieties, wildlife value, historic interest and ease of working. A management plan was then drawn up and work agreed with the owner. For the purposes of the project we defined restoration as getting the orchards into a condition where they could be easily managed in the future by their owners, ensuring as a minimum that the trees were safe and stable. Most orchards received at least two full day visits with a mentor guiding the work of between four and sixteen volunteers to carry out clearance, pruning, mistletoe removal and orchard floor improvements and boundary work. Many of the orchards also received new trees of local varieties, grafted and grown for TCTOP by volunteers and a local nursery or obtained as part of a grant scheme from Natural England or the People's Trust for Endangered Species. 500 new trees were planted out by project volunteers. A few orchard owners opted to carry out the work themselves with TCTOP providing expertise and guidance.

We recognised that there would often need to be a compromise reached between the 'ideal' restoration and improvements suggested by project experts and the wishes of the owner. Some farmers were unhappy to have brush piles or dead wood, for example, which, despite their wildlife value, might cause problems by damaging an animal's coat or reducing grazing areas.

500
new trees
were planted
by the project

Each owner
received labels
for new trees
and a bespoke
handbook





Many owners had entered into orchard grazing agreements which limited the timing of work and the improvements volunteers could carry out. Only one owner refused to compromise (over mistletoe clearance) and this orchard was not worked in. Three orchards did not join the project because they wanted to graze horses and could not guarantee tree protection. 34 orchards were restored by the project, far exceeding our target of 25, and management advice was provided for 37 other orchard owners in our project areas.

All the work and materials needed to restore orchards were provided for free, although orchard owners were encouraged to donate towards the costs or to give materials, provide refreshments for volunteers and, in particular, to join in with the work and training. Most owners were generous with their involvement and extremely hospitable to volunteers, often providing the ‘vendage’ experience by providing lunch and cake for the workers.

At the end of the project each owner received labels for new trees and a bespoke handbook containing both information about their orchard and general orchard advice. Postal questionnaires were sent out to each owner to find out what impact the project had had on both the orchards and their owners.

34
orchards
were
restored

37
Management
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owners in our
project areas.

8.1

Impact on the orchards

The orchards which became part of the project were all in need of considerable improvement and volunteers worked hard to clear, scythe, prune and improve orchard habitats under expert guidance, which was much appreciated by all the orchard owners. All reported that the orchards were much more manageable as a result .

We had 9 acres of neglected but wonderful orchards, we now understand their biodiversity value and are managing them for wildlife and for the future!

Tenbury orchard owner

The orchard was non-managed but reasonably productive. It is now fully managed with new planting, pruned, and producing excellent fruit yields which we are using for juice and cider.

Longney orchard owner

The whole area was overgrown with high brambles – you couldn't see the trees. Now it looks like an orchard, new trees have been planted, most of the brambles have gone and we have a wildlife area. We feel able to manage the orchard and it is once again part of the town's heritage, having originally been planted as an orchard for the mill on the entrance road into town.

Pershore orchard owner



“The support, training and advice has been outstanding”

8.2

Impact on the orchard owners

Without exception the orchard owners reported that being part of the project had been a positive experience for them and that they now felt more confident about looking after their orchards. Whilst some were initially wary of letting strangers in to work in their orchards many had enjoyed sharing their orchards with the volunteers and the opportunity to be with like-minded enthusiasts who appreciated these special places. We don't expect all owners to be able to manage their orchards themselves in the future, many owners are old or young, busy or inexperienced, but they now know where to get advice if needed and have links to volunteers.

'The orchard has been revived and it has become a way of contributing to the wider local community; we have enjoyed making donations of mistletoe and fruit to the new village shop.'

Alfrick orchard owner

'The support, training and advice has been outstanding. We are more confident about what we need to do and we have a dinner party conversation stopper – Noble Chafer beetles in our trees, so we feel like wildlife guardians as well as orchard owners! The delight we feel in enjoying the blossom and watching the fruit grow is quite wonderful.'

Chadbury orchard owner

'I have loved meeting the amazing volunteers. I would love you to come around for more cups of tea and to talk orchards. What once felt like a chore now feels manageable and the orchard feels like something good instead of a burden- it's a weight off my mind.'

Tenbury orchard owner



8.3

Impact on Skills Hubs and mentors

Working with TCTOP volunteers in the project orchards has provided opportunities for orchard groups to both develop their own skills and to pass on their skills and expertise to others. This is a key outcome in terms of ensuring the ongoing sustainability and legacy of this project. Of the three Skills Hubs two had experience of practical restoration with volunteers, whilst one had not – the impact on this Hub has been great and has completely altered the focus of the organisation. Those Hubs already with experience of working in orchards with volunteers valued the opportunity to fine-tune teaching and mentoring skills and to encourage their own volunteers to gain confidence by mentoring others. In addition the wide range of orchards worked in has provided new challenges for Hubs experts and broadened their experience of working with different varieties.

The opportunity to earn money has also been important. All the Hubs operate with very little funding and the project has allowed them to develop a range of paid services which should make them more sustainable as organisations in the long term. The ability to ‘earn’ both within and outside TCTOP was identified as making a real difference to the viability of groups.

Relationships with volunteers and with orchard owners were also highlighted as important, Hubs reported that they had recruited people onto committees and volunteer task groups as a result of the project and made new connections with land owners.

Volunteers valued the opportunity to fine-tune teaching and mentoring skills

Hubs reported that they had recruited people onto committees and volunteer task groups

‘The benefits have been considerable. We have two new committee members from TCTOP volunteers, we have improved our ability to earn money from our orchard skills, been supported to set up two initiatives to use orchard fruit, written several books and leaflets and shared ideas about how to best use our resources with other TCTOP partners. Now we have used what we have learnt from TCTOP to write a 5 year plan for ourselves, building on the project’s successes and will be setting up a legacy project.’

‘We took over as a Hub when the Worcestershire group involved had to withdraw due to the unexpected illness of its experts. It has possibly been more work than we expected but the benefits have been greater than expected too. I still fear for the future of traditional orchards in the county but the project has done a good job in making more people ‘orchard aware’ and in helping us ‘experts’ to work together.’

County Hubs

8.4

Restoration – Added value

8.41

Replacement trees

The original application to the Heritage Lottery Fund did not include the planting of trees but it quickly became clear that without new planting to replace lost trees the future of many of our project orchards was compromised. We were fortunate in being able to access a small grant from Natural England and to obtain trees as part of an orchard re-planting offer from the People’s Trust for Endangered Species. This, together with some grafting of ‘lost’ varieties by volunteers, allowed us to plant out 500 new trees into project orchards. We planted the equivalent of 10 acres of new orchard habitat. We also provided tree guards using monies re-allocated (with HLF) permission from elsewhere in the project. Highly visible guards were used not only to protect trees but also to alert local people to the new planting – an added benefit. Despite a difficult summer following planting for some young trees the vast majority are thriving and will ensure that many of our old project orchards have a future.

I am so thrilled with our replacement trees – local varieties and something I feel really proud about. I have told so many people about them and the stories and history attached to them. It’s given the orchard a future and me a real interest in orchard history.’

Gorsley orchard owner

**We planted the
equivalent of 10 acres
of new orchard habitat**

8.42

DNA testing

The availability of DNA testing for fruit varieties has been a very recent phenomenon and one which the project has embraced. This has allowed us to verify old varieties, some of which are very rare or were believed ‘lost’ and to ensure that we have a clear record of our Three Counties fruit heritage. Fifty fruit trees were DNA tested. With tree diseases becoming ever more prevalent, and with the in-breeding of commercial varieties causing variety to be reduced, the need to preserve tried and tested heritage varieties is recognised as paramount. An added bonus for the project has been the way in which local groups and orchard groups further afield have collaborated to share information, reinforcing the growing orchard network which the project has helped to develop.

‘A batch of DNA samples sent to Brogdale for testing showed a match between a Welsh variety – the Welsh Gin – and a tree in Worcestershire, rumoured to be the last Jennet perry pear. It was amicably decided that, since we had roads and farms named after the tree in its locality, it could be claimed by the English. Fourteen new trees have been grafted and generously given to us, so we will be returning them to the places named after it. What a great end to a bit of orchard detective work!’ The Welsh Perry & Cider Society ran single variety trials on the Jennet pear and we are reliably informed that it produces a wonderful elderflower tasting perry. ‘

Project officer

**Fifty fruit trees were
DNA tested**

Understanding traditional orchards

Helping people to understand traditional orchards is vital in encouraging people to restore and protect them. Traditional orchards are an iconic part of the Three Counties landscape but for most people involved in the project the orchards went largely un-noticed, as did their disappearance. There was little understanding of their extraordinary wildlife value or of the rapid rate of loss and the lack of protection for existing orchards.

The early stages of the project concentrated on getting this message across to as many people as possible and providing them with positive experiences which could help them become part of the reversal of this decline in the key orchard areas. A distinctive brand was developed – our TCTOP fruit logo – which helped people recognise our events and publicity and to feel part of a larger group of people working to tackle the problem. Bright t-shirts and banners also helped to engender a sense of identity.

Our courses were mainly one day training sessions and were informal, friendly and ‘hands-on’, aimed largely at people with little orchard experience. Since the project area was so large we took care to make sure that courses were held in a variety of venues across the Three Counties. They were publicised on social media, in local newspapers and parish magazines, on the TCTOP website and through county and community orchard groups.

A distinctive brand was developed

We ran

- 1 x oral history course
- 2 x digital story telling courses
- 7 Historic training courses – archives, maps etc.
- 5 x orchard history walks and talks
- 9 x fruit ID courses
- 6 mistletoe training days
- 9 x wildlife training days
- 6 x orchard intro days
- 72 x mentored orchard work days
- 3 x apple juice training days
- 3 x Orchard Champions courses – 15 days training
- 2 x less able student orchards courses – 9 days training
- 7 special event days
- 6 x first aid training courses

In response to requests from our volunteers we added:

- 2 x scything courses
- 1 x tool sharpening course
- 2 x wassail (orchard event) training
- 1 x foraging course
- 1 x bee keeping course

We also produced and supported:

- 1 x National conference
- 3 x improvements to county orchard websites
- 3 x new local wassails
- 1 x Community film
- 6 x orchard noticeboards
- 8 x orchard books and guides
- 1 x demonstration orchard at the Three Counties Showground
- Registration of a National Plum Day – August 11th
- Cross county nursery tours and orchard visits
- Talks for W.I's, gardening clubs, bee keeping clubs, parish councils, schools, orchard groups, wildlife groups and churches
- Radio interviews for BBC Hereford and Worcester and for the local talking newspaper for the blind
- Numerous stalls at fetes and agricultural shows

9.1

Impact on orchards

As people began to understand the importance of traditional orchards they became more aware of their decline and disappearance. Some of the people involved with the project began to actively look at ways of protecting vulnerable orchards – not just the project orchards but also traditional orchards in their own locality. This included providing information about orchards to local tree wardens and promoting their inclusion in neighbourhood plans, as well as making objections to planning applications involving their removal and sharing success stories where orchards had been saved elsewhere.

Volunteers reported being able to provide skills and expertise to orchard owners in their own locality, helping to practically restore orchards both in and outside the project area.

I've been talking to someone about protecting a traditional orchard, neglected and now up for sale. There is a lot of local goodwill to keep it as a wildlife-rich orchard but they fear that it will go the way of many others – for development. I suggested they speak to their parish tree warden (if they have one), chat to the TPO officer and also add the details of the orchard to the People's Trust for Endangered Species website and to County HER records. And above all, get it into a Neighbourhood Plan if there is time.'

Orchard Champion, Herefordshire



Volunteers reported being able to provide skills and expertise to orchard owners

9.2

Impact on volunteers

The range of courses and events available to volunteers has meant that there has been something for everyone to take part in and enjoy, whatever their interest or ability. Our on-going evaluation of the courses showed that the average volunteer began courses with a score of 1.75 and finished with a score of 3 (where 1 was a 'complete beginner' and 4 was 'confident and competent'), showing a good improvement in their skills and understanding. Few people scored themselves at 4, perhaps out of modesty! For many this has provided the impetus to carry on with orchard work after taking part. This was particularly true of the Orchard Champions volunteers, all of whom were able to demonstrate that they had used their learning to carry out an impressive range of orchard related activities both within and beyond TCTOP. Many reported that it had helped them meet people in their community.

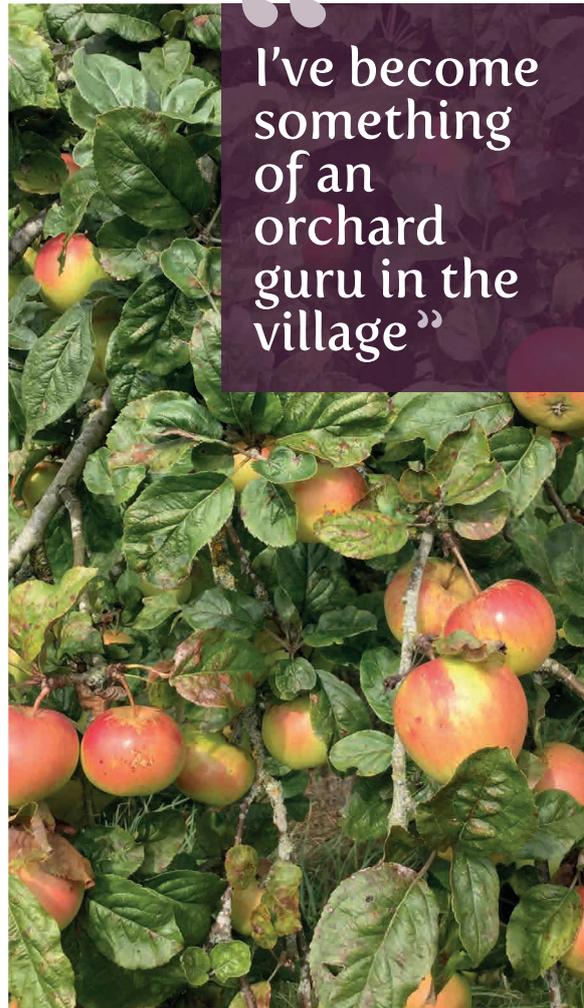
'I've learnt not just about orchards but also how to care for them, how they grow and how to maintain them. I've used this knowledge in the project, at home and in my job.'

'I've become something of an orchard guru in the village and it's helped me to get to know people. And apart from the benefits of making new friends and acquaintances it means that the door is open to talk orchards with people I didn't really know before.'

'As a National Trust volunteer I help maintain orchards at several properties. I plan to continue with this and I am encouraging others there to do orchard training too!'

The average volunteer began courses with a score of 1.75 and finished with a score of 3

“
I've become something of an orchard guru in the village”



9.2

Impact on Orchard experts and Skills Hubs

One of the most rewarding aspects of this part of the project was the sharing of information between existing orchard experts and our project Skills Hubs. Before the project there had been little communication between individual experts or county groups and each county group had a particular specialist area of expertise – perry pears in Gloucestershire, warden pears and plums in Worcestershire, apples and cider in Herefordshire. As the project progressed they took opportunities to attend each other's events and training and to share their specialist knowledge. All the Hubs reported that this access to orchard information has been very important, as has the building of relationships which resulted. Improvements to county websites has also played an important role in helping the Skills Hubs disseminate a wide range of useful information to owners and volunteers.

I have to say I think the whole project has been fantastic. The outcomes have been really tangible for our group and actually more than any of us expected. I think that not only have the volunteers learnt a lot but also the orchard 'experts', and it's been a great opportunity to learn from each other in so many ways. Well done everybody!
Orchard expert



“It's been a great opportunity to learn from each other in so many ways.”

9.4

Understanding – Added value

9.41

Orchard Champions

One of the aims of the project was to develop an accredited traditional orchard training course. In common with other orchard projects U.K wide, we found this very difficult to do despite having several excellent horticulture and agricultural colleges in the Three Counties area. These colleges reported that it was not economically viable to develop a small bespoke course. Our solution was to partner with Garden Organic (formerly Henry Doubleday) to develop a programme modelled on their award winning Master Composter training. Orchard enthusiasts were offered 5 days of free training by TCTOP experts, providing a thorough grounding in traditional orchard skills and knowledge, together with training on community activity by Garden Organic, in return for a pledge to carry out 30 hours of outreach work related to traditional orchards. A Garden Organic certificate was awarded to successful course participants and a prize was given for 30 hours of recorded voluntary work. Garden Organic provided access to their volunteer website to collect robust volunteering data and encouraged volunteers to become part of their wider organic network.

The idea behind the Orchard Champion programme was to use the multiplier effect – investing intensively in a small group of participants who then reach out to the wider community, so that the outcome is many more people benefitting from the investment. Our expectations have been dramatically exceeded. 40 orchard champions have carried out over 2000 hours of work – from writing articles to manning stalls at fetes, giving talks, pruning orchards, providing advice and much more. They have also become an informal network of their own, sharing knowledge, asking for advice and offering assistance to orchard owners.

40
orchard
champions
have carried
out over
2000
hours of work

‘What next? I aim to look at the potential for a community orchard in the centre of the village where there is a traditional orchard currently in need of some restoration. I hope to learn more about the social histories of orchards especially those remaining in our parish. And I hope to continue to help others in parishes whose traditional orchards are under threat from development or neglect.’

Orchard Champion



As the project developed we realised that many of the Champions were fulfilling the role initially envisaged with the 'Colwall model' by going out into their local community and acting as orchard ambassadors. Some were forming or supporting orchard groups. The decision was taken, with HLF approval, to provide more Orchard Champions training instead of trying to set up local groups in our project areas, since this was achieving similar and very impressive results across the Three Counties, albeit not always where we had envisaged .

This has been one of the great successes of the project and should mean that there are 40 orchard ambassadors in the Three Counties continuing to champion traditional orchards long after the project closes. Orchard Champions reported great satisfaction with the course and the project.

40 orchard ambassadors are continuing to champion traditional orchards after the project closes

I was thinking back to nearly two years ago when I joined the Orchard Champion course. An unskilled retiree, learning about the UK again after 30 years overseas. Since doing the course I am now on the board of my local orchard group, I have played a secret role at a Wassail and helped run the apple juice production and other volunteer stuff. On our own piece of this hallowed land I have planted over 60 fruit trees and bushes so I guess we have a traditional (if young) orchard. Most are on vigorous root stock. I have had lots of fun and met some great people. I'm part of my local community. I can even sharpen my own tools and have not yet cut myself either! So I must send you a very big thank you. It has been a blast.'

Orchard Champion



A new orchard has been planted on the care farm site since taking part in the project.



9.42 Training for less able students

One of our project aims was to develop an orchard course for less able students, to allow them to learn and use orchard skills and make a meaningful contribution to the project. We were aware that many less able students were already engaged in horticultural activities, without difficulty, and that orchard work could be good for their development and wellbeing, as well as benefitting TCTOP.

We were unable to find a suitable orchard skills course at this level so were fortunate in engaging with an orchard enthusiast and specialist in educational development at a local care farm, with a passion for reconnecting people to the land and their food. She was able to develop a portfolio based ABC orchard skills course and arrange verification. 20 students received their certificate and took part in the project, providing them with a qualification and practical experience and providing TCTOP with orchard volunteers for orchard work. A new orchard has been planted on the care farm site since taking part in the project. TCTOP also has strong links with two other care farms who have worked with us to embrace the use of their orchards for attendees with a range of needs – from dementia in the elderly to teenagers excluded from school - and we hope that the course can also be used by them in the future.

20

students received
their certificate

‘Our students were already successfully engaged with horticultural projects so it seemed only natural that they would enjoy learning about orchards too. We were able to design a course that suited them and their abilities and they were really enthusiastic about taking part, making a very positive contribution to the project. They were also proud to produce an apple themed lunch for the presentation of certificates by the Project Officer! One of the great spin-offs has been the planting of new orchard trees at our teaching centre. ‘

‘We have a wide range of people using the care farm and the orchard has become central to many of our activities – from doing practical work to just providing a space ‘to be’. For most they will simply enjoy this wonderful place but for some a chance to get a qualification will be really important and encourage them to aim high.’

Care farm managers

Our Orchard Champions

We have

40

orchard champions



19

men

21

women

Aged between

25

-

75+



They are school teachers, historical archivists, farmers, conservation workers, shop owners, gardeners, IT consultants, care workers, students, artists, community workers, home makers, and the (very!) active retired.

When they started of them only knew 'a little' about traditional orchards



They logged over **2,000 hours** of volunteering over three years

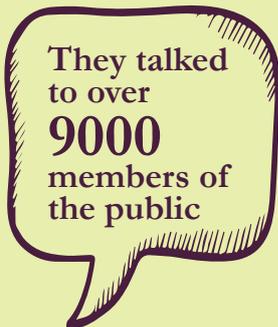


Each volunteer gave an average of **61 hours**

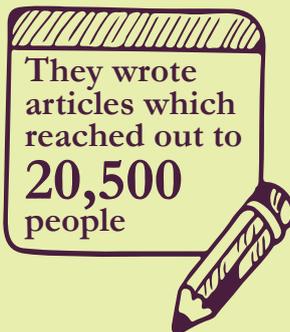


Our champion of orchard champions gave **265 hours**

They talked to over **9000** members of the public



They wrote articles which reached out to **20,500** people



And they reported that they had made friends, got exercise, felt part of a special network and felt confident about orchards !

They

- ✓ Manned stalls at fetes and shows
- ✓ Set up orchard enterprises
- ✓ Did historical research
- ✓ Supported orchard celebrations
- ✓ Set up new orchard groups
- ✓ Gave advice to orchard owners
- ✓ Carried out surveys
- ✓ Made cider, juice and perry
- ✓ Supported community orchards



Orchard Champions Tim Andrews

Inspired by cider

Tim became one of the first Orchard Champions in 2016. We asked Tim why he decided to get involved, "I make quite a bit of cider and perry as a hobby using apples and pears from old traditional orchards from around the south of Gloucestershire. Each year I go back to the orchards to pick and there are fewer and fewer trees having been blown down over winter or they are more covered with mistletoe. Very few of the orchards are looked after by their owners or replanted and most are just used for grazing. My favourite bit of making cider is being in the orchards especially in an autumn evening as the sun is setting. I saw an article in the Herefordshire Times and liked the sound of learning more and getting involved in traditional orchard conservation through The Three Counties Orchard Project"



"I have loved learning about all aspects of orchards including the history, the biodiversity, the conservation, apple id and pruning. As a teacher I spend a lot of time teaching others and it was great to be on the other side of the desk."

Being part of a network

"Everyone who became an Orchard Champion with me was so nice. Everyone has different stories and knowledge to be shared. There is always shared cake, apple juice or cider every time we meet. Having an excuse to promote traditional orchards has opened many doors. I have met a whole new range of land owners, cider makers and orchardists. I have been offered more orchards to pick for my cider, helped conserve a variety of orchards and shared my interest around my village, my school and around the county."

Branching out

Tim has now turned his passion for orchard restoration into a business, Orchard Revival, making cider and perry with the fruit from traditional orchards in Gloucestershire.

You can find Tim's award winning cider and perry in a number of farm shops and cafes. Check out www.facebook.com/OrchardRevivalCider for more.



Find out more:
www.gardenorganic.org.uk



Orchard Champions

Chase Community Orchard & Apple Juicing

The seed of an idea

In 2017, Friends of The Chase School in Malvern had an ambitious plan to plant a small orchard in the school's science garden and so Friends member Sam Craig (right) contacted the Three Counties Traditional Orchards Project Coordinator Karen Humphries: "She was a complete inspiration," explains Sam. "I thought we would just be planting a few trees, but even a few trees can be an eco system, a science lesson, a history lesson, a community builder and a fundraiser. I wanted a few varieties which had stories that could be used in lessons". One of the varieties chosen, the Worcester Black Pear, is thought to have been so admired by Queen Elizabeth I when visiting Worcester in 1575 that she ordered the city to add three black pears to its coat of arms.



Friend and fellow Chase mum, Claire Dingley, suggested training as Orchard Champions together so that they could support the orchard and make it a feature of life at the school.

"I thought we would just be planting a few trees, but found out that even a few trees can be an eco system, a science lesson, a history lesson, a community builder and a fundraiser."

Laying down roots

Sam did not want to lose the excitement at the tree planting in March 2018, so suggested to The Friends of The Chase that they produce a Chase Community Apple Juice with apples donated by members of the school community.

Early the next school year, Sam and Claire delivered about 100 kilos of apples to Clive's Fruit Farm on the Monday and collected 96 bottles of apple juice on the Friday, which were later sold at the school's Christmas Fair.

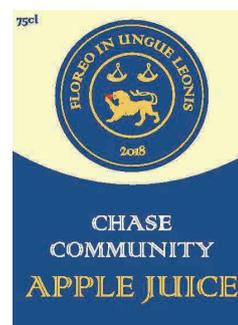
Bearing fruit

Sam sees the project having a number of benefits: "All the profits from sales will go into a larger juicing next year. The experience was so positive that everyone is on board for doing it again next year. In four years time, I really hope we will be harvesting apples from the school's orchard".

Chase School Headteacher, Mike Fieldhouse, was also positive about the project: "It is fitting that in The Chase's 65th year, we are planting old traditional species of fruit trees ... which will hopefully thrive for the next 65 years. It was great to welcome back Gwyneth, the school's first head girl, to help with the tree planting and pass the baton to Ellie, our current head girl".

The trees will produce their first harvest in 5 years, by which time the students who helped plant the trees will be in the 6th Form. Catherine, a Year 7 student, said "I really want to try one of the King Coffee apples, because it is supposed to taste a little bit like coffee".

The journey doesn't end there for Sam and Claire, who are looking forward to sharing their new found knowledge to others across the region.



www.gardenorganic.org.uk

10.0

Improving traditional orchards

Most of the orchards we took on were in poor condition and in need of work, not only to the trees but to the whole orchard environment. Several were so overgrown that the trees had to be uncovered, whilst others had been mown so closely that there was no scope for an orchard ‘floor’ to develop, with the associated benefits for wildlife.

Each orchard was surveyed for wildlife value by project experts and opportunities to improve this were included in the management plans produced. Orchard owners were encouraged to leave dead wood standing, ‘gap up’ where trees had been removed, change mowing or grazing regimes, protect trees from livestock and look at boundaries to provide wildlife opportunities. This tied in closely with our wildlife training where participants were often amazed by the explanations about the complex relationship between trees and mycorrhiza in unfertilised soils or the subtleties of boundary maintenance to discourage raptor predation or encourage bees. Advice on pests and diseases was also given and organic and ‘natural’ solutions were part of the project ethos. Wildlife sessions of any kind were well attended and enthusiastically received. Owners were also encouraged to plant new trees to ensure the orchard’s future.

For some owners the orchard needed to look neat and close mowing was the preferred management. As the project progressed we developed the idea of ‘neat ‘messiness; encouraging people to keep brash and dead wood, for example, in piles or wired upright to live trees and to leave corner ‘weeds’. This overcame an aversion to the orchard looking messy whilst increasing habitat value.

Where possible data sets were shared with the relevant organisation with responsibility for biological records in each county, although cut backs within County Councils and Voluntary Organisations collecting this data has meant



Wildlife sessions of any kind were well attended and enthusiastically received

that its recording centrally has become more difficult.

Each orchard was also mapped for fruit varieties, not only to find rare and local varieties but also to understand the history of the orchards. Many orchards can be dated by the fruit in them, which often reflected the trends of the time, and by the manner in which they were planted, which was often dictated by ease and seasonality of picking. This provided clues about the commerciality of the orchard or whether it was a ‘home’ orchard. Wherever possible this was reflected in plans for replanting. Volunteers and experts were extremely enthusiastic about finding lost and rare local varieties and



50 different rare and local varieties of orchard trees were planted out – 500 trees in all

orchard owners were keen to receive new trees grafted from them. Although a less visible part of the project the heritage and re-establishment of fruit varieties was seen as extremely worthwhile. 50 different rare and local varieties of orchard trees were planted out – 500 trees in all.

Understanding the history of the orchards proved one of the most frustrating parts of the project. Whilst hugely popular with participants there was a shortage of people in all three counties with expertise in orchard history to lead on this specialist part of the project, both in terms of providing information and in generating community involvement. This was finally resolved by making history courses more general – offering sessions on understanding historical maps, looking at museum artefacts and documents and on using the county archives, and through history ‘walk and talks’ around our project areas, but all with a strong focus on orchards. Our five guided orchard walks were especially popular. This had the benefit of making the sessions more appealing to a wider audience than our existing orchard enthusiasts. Although less community ‘driven’ than anticipated, several volunteers carried out valuable research into orchard social history and this was included in six exhibitions in local libraries and museums and made accessible on our website. The project highlighted how little historical research into orchard history has been carried out, not only in the Three Counties but across the UK, despite it being of huge importance in the shaping of our local communities and our landscape.

5
guided orchard walks were especially popular

6
exhibitions in local libraries and museums

One of the most important outcomes of this part of the project was a book and course, developed by Gloucestershire Orchard Trust – ‘Reading the orchard landscape’ – which aimed to address this problem and proved very successful in the trial session held. As a result there are plans to develop this further. Each orchard owner received a folder containing all the information gathered about their orchard and a copy of the management plan, together with fact sheets and useful orchard information. This means that they have information to hand as to how to carry out improvements.

10.1

Impact on the orchards

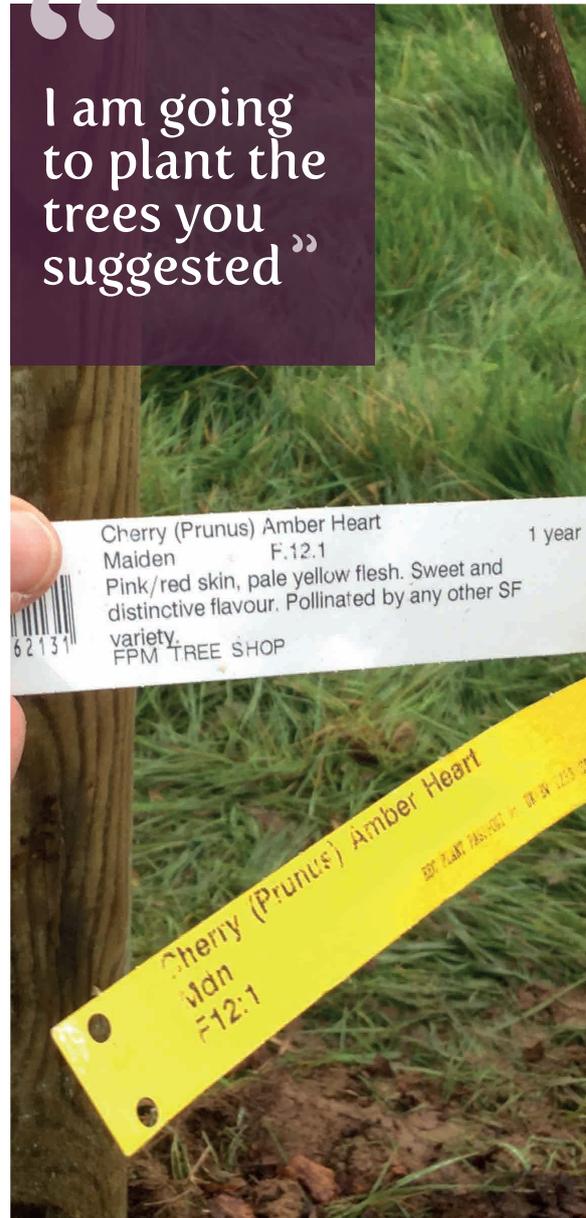
Helping orchard owners to understand the way in which their orchard is a mosaic of habitats has been key to helping them manage their orchards better for wildlife. The end of project survey showed that most were now considering wildlife. Many reported that they had not previously considered or understood the way in which grass, hedges, ditches and boundaries played a role, not only in improving biodiversity but in keeping their trees healthy. Several owners expressed their appreciation at their preference for neatness being listened to and being able to compromise about appearance.

I know you would like me to keep all the dead trees but I am getting old now and it's depressing to look out at dead things. I will make a pile with the dead wood instead of burning it, I want to see new life when I get up in the morning, but I am going to plant the trees you suggested in their space!
Alfrick owner

I'm about to make my plot more attractive for birds, having been inspired by talk of natural predators, and am thinking about bee tubes for the native bees. Small things but they should make a difference.'
Evesham owner

“

I am going to plant the trees you suggested”



'The most exciting thing has been to know that we have the noble chafer beetle in our orchard. We had no idea! I am now actively managing the orchard for Noble Chafer – leaving dead wood and encouraging white flowers in the boundary strips. I brag about this to anyone who will listen!'

Rochford orchard owner

An understanding of the historical value of orchards has also helped with their protection – volunteers in the Breinton area, for example, have researched both the environmental and historical value of their ancient orchards, knowing that they may be impacted on by expected development in the area.

'We have carried out surveys of the traditional orchards across the area and we're trying to make sure that everybody understands how important they are – not only for wildlife but also to the history of this place. This is the home of Bulmers and of cider and everything around us was shaped by that.'

Breinton community group

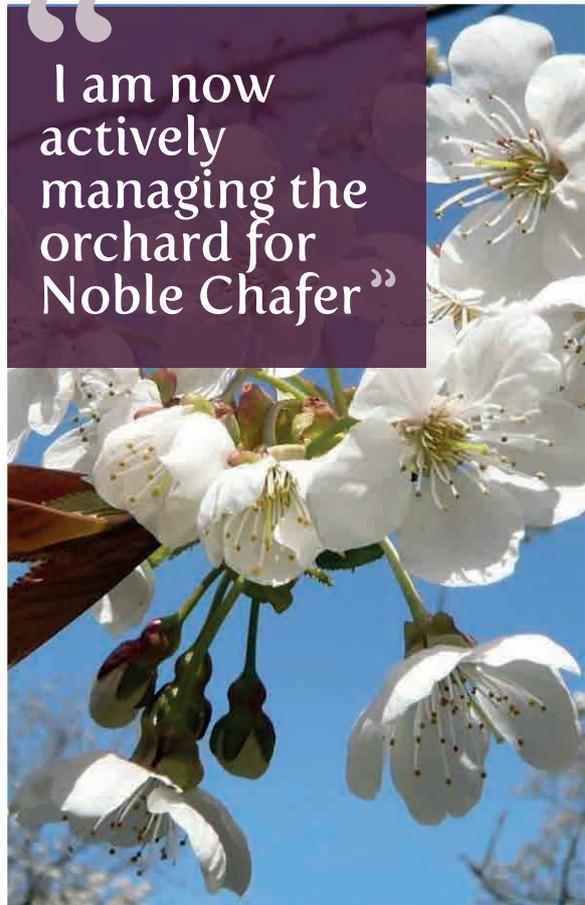
Re-planting, too, was done in a much more considered way in older orchards in the project, using advice from TCTOP experts.

'If you look carefully at the orchard – how it is laid out and what varieties are planted there – you can get a good understanding of its history. Everything was done for a reason. You can literally 'read' so much about its social history and role. If you were restoring a heritage building you wouldn't dream of putting UPVC windows next to the originals, so why would you restore an orchard in a way which hides its story? We've taken care at Wick to make sure this story isn't lost.'

Landscape historian

“

I am now actively managing the orchard for Noble Chafer”



“

If you were restoring a heritage building you wouldn't dream of putting UPVC windows next to the originals, so why would you restore an orchard in a way which hides its story? ”



Volunteers reported growing confidence in their ability to advise others

10.2

Impact on volunteers

Learning about orchards proved as popular as carrying out practical work in them. We were constantly surprised by the appetite of our volunteers for workshops and events which helped them to understand more about natural processes, fruit trees and the social history of the orchards. For some this has led to new interests and to volunteering in other areas. Volunteers reported growing confidence in their ability to advise others and to ‘make a difference’ in maintaining and protecting traditional orchards.

I’m using what I’ve learnt to help others who work with me to recognise the importance of traditional orchards in the landscape – both environmentally and historically. As a consultee in planning that’s really important. I’ve already noticed a difference.’

Orchard Champion

I really enjoyed the wildlife sessions and learning about traditional orchards. I feel well enough informed to carry on with this after the project finishes – I’m planning to survey all my local orchards to add to the data collected by the people’s Trust for Endangered Species.’

TCTOP volunteer

I absolutely loved learning about the old varieties and the stories attached to them and I have been thrilled to bits to plant out the Dewdulip Seedling trees into the orchards of Tenbury. Imagine being able to say that you have been involved with the finding of something thought lost and then putting it back where it belongs. Magic! It has completely changed my thinking about fruit trees!’

TCTOP volunteer

10.3

Improving – Added value

The lack of information about the history of orchards and the fruit varieties in them led to the writing and publication of several books and pamphlets. Our experts provided their time for free and TCTOP supported some printing costs. These books are a huge asset for local orchard enthusiasts and have been extremely well received by experts further afield. This is a lasting legacy for the project and a source of future income for the orchard groups which sell them. 8 books/leaflets were produced as a direct result of the project:



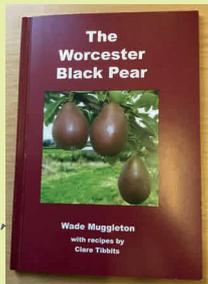
The Shadow Orchard
Jim Chapman



Identifying Orchard Fruit, a guide to resources
Jim Chapman

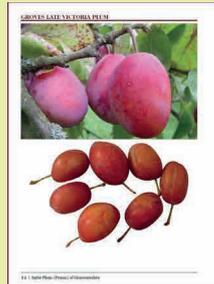


Traditional orchards and their wildlife in Gloucestershire
Helen Brent – Davies and Dave Kaspar



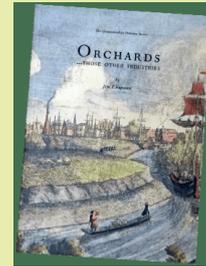
The Worcester Black Pear
Wade Muggleton
with recipes by Claire Tabbits

'This factual little book is written from the heart, Wade's passion for all things fruit shines through the detailed and informative text.'
RHS tutor, Paul Labous

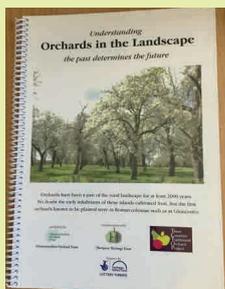


Native Plums of Gloucestershire
Charles Martell (Volume 4 Gloucestershire Pomona)

'Sections of this book were inspired by the presentations and discussions at and following the National Stonefruit Conference organised by the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project at Hartpury in August 2017.'
Keith Turner, Chair of GOT

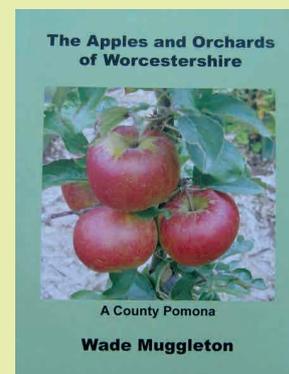


Orchards, those other industries
Jim Chapman



Reading the orchard
Jim Chapman

We also contributed to the Fruit Tree and Orchard information guide that the Welsh Perry & Cider Society produced
www.welshcider.co.uk/heritage



The apples and orchards of Worcestershire
Wade Muggleton
'Apple enthusiasts will love this little gem – the first apple Pomona for Worcestershire'
Amazon review

11.0

Enjoying traditional orchards

Our delivery year alerted us to the fact that few people have the opportunity to actually get out into orchards and experience for themselves what special places they are. A cornerstone of the project was to enable as many people as possible to enjoy activities and events in the project orchards themselves, both by encouraging them to take part in work sessions and to attend and organise events and celebrations. We used these to help people get an orchard experience. This was a key part of our awareness raising.

A huge range of opportunities was presented by the project and TCTOP also supported ideas by volunteers and owners. They included practical work sessions, church services, dawn chorus breakfasts, blossom picnics, music events, picking, juicing and much more.

The wide variety of events also addressed the issue of seasonality – maintaining interest at times of the year when traditional orchard activities were not possible, such as early summer. 35% of activities took place in Winter, 24% in Autumn, 20% in Spring and 21% in Summer.



The wide variety of events also addressed the issue of seasonality

11.1

Impact on the orchards

Not all orchard owners wanted to share their orchards other than for low key events and for work sessions and many were quite fearful of doing so. All the project owners hosted work days, often with shared meals, walks and informal talks but ten project orchards hosted community events. This was an opportunity for owners to show off the work they had done with TCTOP and also acted as a prompt to carry out more improvements. There was real joy too in sharing some treasured spaces with people who didn't normally have the opportunity to enjoy orchards.

'Our open orchards event has been wonderful. The orchard was looking at its best – well cared for and full of fruit on a beautiful summer day. What a joy to see people dancing in it, looking at the trees, smelling the apples and just admiring what we have done to improve it.'
Breinton orchard owner

'We really enjoyed the wildlife walk and the chance to show people what we have done. Before the event some hard work by volunteers saw us being able to walk around easily and show off our wildlife improvements.'
Longney orchard owner

10

project orchards hosted community events

“
Some hard work by volunteers saw us being able to walk around easily”



11.2

Impact on the volunteers

Those taking part in events expressed their astonishment at the dappled light, the noise of the bees and birds, the peacefulness and the general good feelings which orchards bring. The orchards proved great venues for a huge range of activities, emphasising their potential use as far more than a scenic backdrop.

'Wow! Well it's Monday and I haven't really had time to reflect on last week but my immediate thoughts are, what a wonderful week! We thought everyone involved was energetic, creative, enthusiastic and generous. Richard created a fantastic space in the orchard, what an amazing place to tell the insect story. The buzz is still with us all!'

Performer and volunteer, 'Buzz' Schools insect event.

As well as proving that orchards could be inspirational places for all sorts of activities, people also commented on their contribution to general wellbeing, being in them for whatever reason brought health benefits.

'When I first began volunteering I was at a fairly low point, having had a difficult six months with illness and bereavement. Being outside in the orchards – in rain or shine – enjoying the physical exercise, the gentle pace and the quiet companionship of like-minded people really helped. I now feel in a much better place.'

Orchard Champion

'I suffer from low mood but this has been a real antidote. Working with like-minded people makes it so enjoyable and the teaching was friendly and non-threatening. Who needs to go to the gym when you have fresh air and exercise in an apple laden orchard?'

TCTOP volunteer

“
What an amazing place to tell the insect story. The buzz is still with us all!”

“
Who needs to go to the gym when you have fresh air and exercise in an apple laden orchard?”



11.3

Enjoying – Added value

Early in the project we became concerned that in order to retain traditional orchards their owners needed to be able to enjoy some rewards for their labour. This often took the form of cider, perry and fruit but much of the crop went to waste or, at best, to wildlife. We had presumed that the owners might not have access to juicing equipment but a useful survey carried out by a board member showed that this was not the case. Whilst juicing equipment was in demand at harvest time there was enough available.

The budget for juicing equipment was instead used to fill ‘gaps’ which we had not anticipated – funding the purchase of a shared pedestrian apple collector, now used by a group of TCTOP amateur cider makers who use fruit in neglected orchards in return for orchard maintenance, the labelling of juice bottles for a volunteer led juicing project, and buying bulk storage for a community juicing project. As a result of listening to everyone involved in the project we commissioned work to identify opportunities for using excess fruit and to share best practice.

‘Our Trust Juice’ is picked from traditional orchards by volunteers and the owners receive a small payment. It’s then professionally bottled. We often sell at low cost to other community projects for their own fundraising and the profits go to orchard projects in Gloucestershire.’
Trust Juice group

We commissioned work to identify opportunities for using excess fruit and to share best practice.

Additional projects

The project ended with an underspend and TCTOP was advised to apply for this to be used to support several strands of work which might help with project sustainability in the longer term. As a result the end date was extended to December 31st 2018 and five areas of work were identified to be carried out during this period :

- Building on the success of the Orchard Champions by providing a third course
- Higher level ‘master classes’ for existing champions
- Piloting the use of Orchard Champions as Orchard Wardens, providing advice and help from TCTOP volunteers to carry out work in private orchards.
- Researching the issue of how to use excess fruit by funding an academic/consultants’ study of community/mid-tier based juicing options, to be shared with other orchard projects.
- Planting a Worcestershire mother orchard ‘gene bank’ on two secure sites.

A third orchard champions course

The third orchard champions course recruited 8 more orchard champions to the TCTOP project. Previous orchard champions were consulted to allow us to make improvements and the content and delivery was changed to allow for a more intensive teaching course with less students, delivered over a shorter time period. Feedback from participants has been good and this cohort is enthusiastic and committed. They completed 30 hours of volunteering each in just 9 months and have formed a tight and supportive group.

30
hours of
volunteering
completed in
just 9 months



6 advanced courses

Advanced training

Previous orchard champions and TCTOP volunteers had requested some more advanced training, particularly in areas which would extend their skills and help with setting up and supporting orchard events and groups. The extended timescale allowed us to deliver six advanced courses in tool care and sharpening, advanced pruning techniques, orchard event management, setting up orchard groups and advanced fruit ID as well as a hugely popular history talk. The feedback from all these was exceptionally good with participants finding them practical and useful and expressing their intention to use these skills in future orchard work.

Orchard wardens

Some of the TCTOP volunteers were also Parish Tree Wardens and expressed their frustration at the fact that orchards were not included in the training or handbooks for tree wardens as currently supported by the Tree Council. A pilot project was set up to see whether orchard training might be useful for tree wardens and whether they could provide effective 'eyes and ears' on the ground for traditional orchards.

After consultation with the Tree Council, partners and tree wardens a package of face to face training, video training and fact sheets has been developed to trial the idea. The outcome of this work has been very positive, with partners beginning work on a bid for a fully funded 'follow on' project as a result.

A package of
face to face
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The document
is also being
shared with
other orchard
projects and
members of the
UK Orchard
Network

Using excess fruit – scoping study

One of the key findings and frustrations of the project was in the amount of fruit which goes to waste from traditional orchards. Whilst useful for wildlife there seemed to be limited possibilities for its use at the typically small scale of production. A viable end use for the fruit was felt to be a persuasive argument for keeping traditional orchards, where picking and processing is seen to be problematic. An initial study by a TCTOP board member suggested that it would be useful to explore options for using this fruit and, with the help of Dan Keech of the University of Gloucester, a brief was drawn up for this. Common Cause were the successful tenderers and produced a thorough and practical overview of the possibilities both here and in Europe. The outcome of this work is that TCTOP partners have expressed an interest in exploring some of these possibilities, possibly with the help of the university. This is a concern of many other orchard groups across the UK so the document is also being shared with other orchard projects and members of the UK Orchard Network. It can be found on the TCTOP website.



Worcestershire mother orchards

There is currently a drive nationwide to make sure that each orchard region has a ‘mother orchard’ – an orchard where fruit local to the region is grown as a collection, forming a gene bank for local varieties. These local varieties are often scattered across large areas and may be extremely rare. Their importance is in their suitability for local conditions and resistance to disease and soil conditions; growers and breeders of modern varieties increasingly look to them in their breeding programmes.

Worcestershire had no mother orchards but work done through TCTOP to discover and graft old varieties, along with the writing of a TCTOP supported pomona, meant that it was possible to establish one. Suitable secure sites were offered and Worcestershire trees were sourced and planted by TCTOP volunteers on three separate sites. This is a fantastic outcome for the project, providing a safe gene bank for the future and links have already been made with local growers interested in propagation.

**Worcestershire
trees were
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Project Legacy

The impact of the project has been great in all areas of work. Not only have the project orchards benefitted but partners and participants have too. Partners described the good partnership working which resulted, building stronger organisations and the exchange of knowledge, all of which has created a robust orchard network across the Three Counties and beyond. The project leaves the skills hubs far stronger than when the project started, with improved practices, more committee members, a better ability to earn money and greater levels of knowledge.

Volunteers have reported improvements in their orchard skills and knowledge and their intention to maintain links with some project orchards as well as to provide help to others. This should continue to provide a better outcome for traditional orchards across the Three Counties. The commitment of orchard owners also promises to make sure that our project orchards have a brighter future. It is difficult to measure the enthusiasm of those who have taken part but responses to the evaluation surveys suggest that the project has gone a long way towards winning the 'hearts and minds' of many of those involved – possibly the best outcome that we could have hoped for.



Project partners and participants expressed a strong desire to see future activities and plans are in place for the following legacy projects :

- Gloucestershire Orchard Trust – a 5 year plan to build on the work of TCTOP, focussing especially on links with community orchards.
- Colwall Orchard Group – a plan for continued development of orchard mentoring and for a succession strategy for experts.
- Orchard Wardens – drafting a project bid for funding of an orchard warden project, based on the TCTOP pilot. This is a new partnership of interested groups, including the Tree Council.
- Excess fruit report – plans are in place to explore the possibility of looking at some of the possibilities in the report.
- Orchard champions are creating a new network so that they can work together and share ideas.
- Worcestershire orchard enthusiasts are exploring the possibility of a new county group.

We are confident that these legacy projects, combined with the impacts on partners and participants, will carry the TCTOP experience far into the future.



Future Learning

Issue	Lesson
Building relationships with communities and getting them 'on board' proved difficult. Turning interest into action was hard work.	It is important not to make extravagant claims about the effect of the project on local communities – it takes time to transform attitudes, create trust and to really see the impact of project work.
The project area is very large	The project spread over 3 counties was vital to many aspects of its success but probably too large for one person to co-ordinate and for people to come together easily. Events were held in all three counties and well attended, but involved a lot of travel.
There was not enough project officer capacity for good PR and publicity, no budget and no real communication strategy at the outset.	PR plays a huge role in a project such as this. A media plan and realistic communication budget are vital – as is not underestimating the time and resources needed to do this effectively. Small ideas – a branded tablecloth, t-shirts and banners – were especially good for 'brand' recognition.
Traditional communication routes were not effective, especially working through Parish Councils as first envisaged.	Parish Councils may not be good conduits for information. Embrace the 21st century ! Social media is an effective tool, use facebook and whatsapp. Parish and community newsletters are still very effective for many people.
Some events were less well attended than others.	Good PR helps enormously – but more people doesn't always mean a better outcome. Some events attended by just a few people proved better at encouraging repeat volunteering than events with lots of participants.
It was sometimes impossible to deliver outcomes in the way planned.	Review the work constantly and if something isn't working be prepared to change it. By being flexible you can often deliver your aims in a different way.
Developing trust with volunteers and orchard owners took a long time.	'Feel the love' .. nothing is as effective as meeting face to face and creating relationships – time consuming but worthwhile. Allow time for it in your project.
Orchard work is seasonal – bad weather and delayed project start dates caused problems with hitting milestones early on.	A summer start is good for orchard projects – plan your work, get things in place and then do practical work in the winter. Include activities which will keep up the project momentum at times when there is not much practical work.
There was a shortage of experts in some areas of the project – especially in orchard history.	Make sure you can properly resource all areas of the project, you may have to look further afield for some specialist subjects.
Creating cohesion at one-off events was sometimes hard.	Tea and cake helped enormously – people bond over food. We tried to create the European 'vendage' experience, eating together over extended lunch breaks. Our food became a real attraction.
Volunteers and their organisations don't always have a commercial mind set or want to work to timetables and rules.	Try to take the huge plusses – experience, enthusiasm and passion for orchards – as something that contractors rarely bring to a project, and factor in more time and explanations.
We didn't include the existing community orchard networks enough.	We probably needed to make better links with existing community project networks. Although they have a different focus they might have been able to work more closely with us.
Working with volunteers on private land (with its perceived benefits to owners) sometimes felt uncomfortable, but was key to the project.	Volunteers needed to understand that most remaining orchards are on private land and that our orchards were owned by people who would not otherwise look after them. We probably could have explained this better.



Main project contributors

Annika Rose-Brown – Orchard owner rep	Board Member
Chris Wedge & Geoff Newman Natural England Orchard Specialists	Board Member
James Bissett – Herefordshire Council, Orchard Expert	Board Member
Jim Chapman, Hartpury Trust, National Perry Pear collection curator	Board Member
Kelly Robinson – Orchard Owner rep	Board Member
Pam McCarthy – Orchard volunteer rep	Board Member
Colwall Orchard Group (COG)	Skills Hub for Herefordshire
Gloucestershire Orchard Trust (GOT)	Skills Hub for Gloucestershire
Worcestershire County Council Countryside Services – with Vale Landscape Heritage Trust	Skills Hub for Worcestershire
Ainsley Herriot – Marcher Apple Network	Fruit and variety expertise
Ann Smith – GOT secretary	Community Orchard expertise
Arthur Rowe & Tony Kennell Worcester City Orchards	Mentoring volunteers
Common Cause	Excess fruit study
Dan Keech – University of Gloucester	Excess fruit - advice
Dave Kaspar and Helen Brent-Smith Days Cottage Orchards	Training delivery
David Garrett & Rob Whitehouse – Garden Organic	Orchard Champions partners
David Spilsbury – Orchard owner	Access to collection of 100 var's
Hartpury Heritage Trust	Venue & events catering help
Jackie Denman – The Big Apple	Peer support, venue
Jayne Hunt – Welsh Cider and Perry (HLF)	Associate, Peer support & review
Katie Scarfe – A Forgotten Landscape (HLF)	Peer support
Kevin O'Neil Walcot Nurseries (Worcs)	Grafting rare local varieties
Martin Hayes – Orchardist	Training and mentoring
Nick Dunn, Frank Matthews Nurseries (N Worcs)	Fruit and variety expertise
Noelle Wilson	ABC course development
Orchard Origins – Herefordshire Wildlife Trust	Training delivery, peer review
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust	Practical work with volunteers
Pippa Palmar – Kent Orchards for everyone (HLF)	Peer support
Rob Watkins Lodge Farm trees	Fruit and variety expertise
Steve Oram – People's Trust for Endangered Species	Tree provision, expert advice
Tom Adams – tomtheappleman nursery	Mentoring and training
Andi Worsley – Worcs County Council Archives	History and heritage expertise
Gabe Cook – The Ciderologist	Advice and training
Gloucestershire Archives	Information & Training
Jenni Waugh – Jenni Waugh consulting	Website and heritage expertise
Paul Hudson & Worcs County Council Archives team	History and heritage expertise
Rob Hedges – Worcs County Council historian	Orchard walk leader
Alfrick Parish Council	Help with planning permissions
Hartpury Agricultural College	Venue for conference
Malvern Wells Parish Council	Help with planning permissions
Three Counties Showground	Venue, demonstration orchard
Worcestershire County Council	Finance and book keeping
Malvern Hills AONB steering group and Joint Advisory Committee	Project support
And with thanks to the many volunteers, orchard owners and enthusiasts who all helped us, and to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their generous grant.	

