

Symondsbury Apple Project

Press Release: 25th January 2009

From field to orchard in a few short hours

On Saturday morning in Bridport hundreds of willing hands were bent to the task of transforming a field off South Street into an orchard. Members of the community and representatives from community groups came together to plant 360 hedging plants and 23 apple trees. Remarkably good weather, good company and hot food meant that the hard work was enjoyable and many people stayed for the day and took part in the singing workshop and wassailing in the afternoon.

The orchard group hit on the idea of planting on the traditional Twelfth Night, which is also the time to wassail apple trees therefore bringing tradition, celebration and positive community action together, with a lot of trees to plant they were hopeful that Bridport people would rise to the occasion, on the day the response was overwhelming.

After a morning of digging and planting, adults and children joined Sally Reed and the Acapella Singers in the church hall to learn three wassailing songs. Then everyone walked down to the orchard to gather around the central fire and soon a wonderful harmony of many voices filled the orchard. Any ancient wassailing tradition that may have existed here has been long forgotten but in Bridport's orchard a new tradition is in the making. To symbolise the hope for the future that is at the heart of this orchard project, an older and a younger person were chosen to complete the ceremony. Anna Lovell, representing the older people's forum, gathered children to toast one of the trees with cider and apple juice. And called for a good harvest and wassail, 'good health' to all.

This first phase of planting includes varieties that are locally successful rather than distinctive to the county. They are apples with good disease resistance so they can be managed organically. Most names will be familiar such as the early Beauty of Bath a very pretty dessert apple and locally popular Tom Putt, another early apple that can be used for cider, eating or cooking, it must have been a welcome addition to the diet before

commercial storage and imports made apples available all year round.

Dorset varieties are more difficult to source and some of them need to be grafted from local trees once these have been found the orchard will be completed after a couple more planting sessions. Work on paths and access will be undertaken soon in the meantime the group invites the people of Bridport to take a stroll around their new orchard.

The Symondsburry Apple Project,
The Office
The Old Post Office
Duck Street
Symondsburry
Dorset DT6 6EZ

Email: info@appleproject.org.uk

Phone: 01308 427449

<http://www.appleproject.org.uk>