

SLOG Chairman's Report 2021/22

This past year has seen a gradual return to normality after a couple of difficult years. We managed to run our budding & summer pruning workshop at Growing Well last August despite summer showers. Our first orchard visit for a couple of years was a very pleasant occasion with members pleased to get out and socialise again after the restrictions. The late August visit to Crookfoot orchard in the Lyth Valley was timely because some of the old pear trees were subsequently uprooted by Storm Arwen at the end of November. Fortunately Phil Rainford had grafted scion wood from all of them so the wide range of varieties there, many of which are unique, have been preserved.

Despite a relatively light crop, members made good use of our apple presses. We ran three members pressing days, all on a time slot basis that worked well despite the rather damp Autumn weather.

We had a pleasant winter meeting where we named some more unique apple & pear varieties and enjoyed John Hibbert's excellent perry. The winter pruning workshop at Grange Community Orchard in January was well attended. We held a very successful grafting workshop at Growing Well in March and followed it with another in Staveley. The Committee got together at Witherslack and completed 200 apple grafts which Kirsten & Paul are growing on at High Newton for eventual sale in October/November.

After two frost affected years we finally had a largely frost-free spring. The blossom was magnificent and resulted in a heavy fruit set which was thinned by a working party in the SLOG orchard in July. The DNA results were very late this year due to laboratory problems but when they finally arrived we found as usual a few surprises. Two of the trees in the SLOG orchard were found to be MM106 instead of the expected varieties. The scion wood had come from Growing Well so the original grafts must have failed there and been replaced by rootstock growth. We will remove the smaller of them and attempt to use the bigger one as a multi-variety tree in order to get even more varieties into our limited space. The original policy of replacing false identity trees is running into difficulties because new maiden whips are struggling when planted between established 7-8yr old trees.

In closing, I want to highlight the voluntary work of so many people who ensure that SLOG continues to provide a valuable service to our members. Hilary Wilson & Phil Rainford who share their expertise in our workshops, Andy Brown for keeping the website colourful and up-to-date, Kirsten & Paul for managing our tree maintenance & sales, Adam Walker as Treasurer, Joanna Steven our Membership Secretary, Mike and Christine Gibson who manage the Spiedel Mill & Hydropress kit hire, Dick Palmer who manages the Voran Mill and Rack & Cloth Press plus all who joined SLOG orchard working parties and all Committee members. And thanks to all members for your continued interest in, and membership of SLOG. But I must emphasise that none of us are getting any younger and health and family problems keep cropping up, so anybody who wants to get more actively involved would be made very welcome!

Andy Gilchrist, Chairman SLOG, July 2022