**SLOG Chairman’s Report 2022/23**

I am pleased to report that SLOG has had another busy and successful year with membership numbers continuing to increase and finances in good shape.

Our budding & summer pruning workshop in August at Growing Well was well attended in good weather. Later in August about twenty members enjoyed an orchard visit to Andy Brown’s Mill Field Orchard at Crosthwaite.

The apple harvest in autumn 2022 was heavy due to the absence of frost at blossom time. Consequently our apple presses were well used raising record receipts and best of all, no breakdowns. The barrel press was used by 5 schools, Hawkshead Primary, St.Cuthbert’s Windermere, St.Oswalds Burneside, Queen Katherine’s Kendal, & St.Paul’s Barrow. Our three members pressing days at Halecat, Foxfield and Sprint Mill were all fully booked on a time slot basis. In addition we attended four apple day events run by other groups, offering identification & advice.

There is currently great interest in tree planting generally, and in particular, fruit trees; and this is reflected in the record number of around 200 trees sold by SLOG during the winter of 2022/23. In addition, our grant scheme donated trees to: Broughton Community Orchard, Dean Gibson School, & Coniston Parish Council.

Our winter meeting in November named a few more apple & pear trees which had been declared unique by DNA analysis. We have now given names to 26 pear and 20 apple varieties.

The winter pruning workshop in January at Grange Community Orchard was attended by almost thirty people, many travelling from a considerable distance. Fortunately the weather was dry and not too cold.

Our bulk rootstock order on Mathews increases every year, this year it was about 1,800 rootstocks, most of which will result in new fruit trees planted in Cumbria & North Lancashire. We ran three grafting workshops this year, attended by around sixty people. Subsequently 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.

Blossom this year was later than in previous years but there was no frost damage in the SLOG orchard so an early summer working party was required to thin the fruit set after June drop. The five weeks of drought in May & June put severe moisture stress on recently planted trees which required quite a volume of water to save them from dehydration. The mowing of the SLOG orchard has this year been put out to contract with satisfactory results.

The DNA results this year showed that some of the pears in the SLOG orchard were not authentic, so those trees have now been correctly identified. We have also made progress in clarifying the identities of a couple of very rare Yorkshire apple varieties, *Red Balsam* and *Myrtle’s Mystery*.

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 2023