

## ***Friends of Dartmouth Community Orchard***

### **Short Report to Dartmouth Town Council:**

#### ***Mid September – mid November 2017***

1. Over this autumn period, the main thing to be done was pick and store the apples ready for the Community Apple Pressing event. This involved approximately 35 hours of work involving 14 members of the Friends. Additionally, one Friend cut the grass in the entrance area as the contractor had failed to do it.
2. The ten new trees ordered for planting this winter have arrived and will be planted during the remainder of this month. In addition, 30 whips of native, non-apple trees available free from the Woodland Trust have arrived. The aim here (discussed with the Clerk) is to create a small copse in the corner where the Ambulance Station boundary meets the wall running along Mount Boone. It is a difficult patch of land to access owing to the steep slope, but should be suitable for the planned copse.
2. Apple picking generally went well this year with many members of the community picking small quantities for their personal use. One abuse occurred when someone (identity not known) stripped the trees in the western paddock during September. It is a couple of years since this has occurred and there are various theories about who and why, but no evidence. Nonetheless there were plenty of apples for the pressings.
3. Our two events went well. The stall we ran on the Sunday at the Food Festival attracted a lot of interest and we signed up 15 new members from 10 different households. People, particularly children, enjoyed participating in the apple pressing using a small basket press. The main event Apple Pressing event held the day after the clocks went back was also a success as reported in the *Chronicle*. I have nothing to add to that account (as it was me who wrote it!). We appreciated the Mayor attending.
4. The interpretation panel funded by the 'Growing Orchard Communities' project has been installed (picture attached). It is our intention to add more panels as funds become available, focusing on the orchard's history, its wildlife, and its volunteers.
5. The Clerk has asked the contractor to complete the grass cut this month, but so far it has not happened, though some of his men did trim the path edges and paths to, and around the trees, which was helpful. It is now getting rather too late in the season and the grassland health will be compromised. We have an immediate need for the contractor to brush cut the entire orchard to enable us to plant the newly arrived trees, which should be planted within the next two – three weeks. Without this the volunteer effort will be extremely difficult.
6. There have been no exceptional observations of wildlife. However, birds are now using the orchard for winter forage and roosting - starlings and a buzzard for the latter, and finches, tits (including long-tailed) and other small birds for the former. Tawny owls are calling at night. Queen bumblebees can be observed prospecting for overwintering holes. A few Red Admirals are still on the wing, as are bats in this mild weather. A recent recording session confirmed the presence of a similar range of species as last year.

Peter Shaw

*Chairman, Friends of Dartmouth Community Orchard - 9/11/2017*