

# SHROPSHIRE ORGANIC GARDENERS

## Autumn 2022

### Newsletter 46



***Treflach farm pigs. Who could not love them!***

For gardeners, allotment holders, window box owners, who wish to grow without chemicals and meet with others.

[www.shropshireorganicgardeners.org.uk](http://www.shropshireorganicgardeners.org.uk)

# SHROPSHIRE ORGANIC GARDENERS

We are a group of growers of fruit, vegetables and flowers with gardens, allotments or smallholdings in various places in Shropshire.

Winter meetings on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.  
Summer meetings from May to October are usually at weekends, and consist of visits to members' gardens, outings, practical workshops, demonstrations etc.

See the programme on the back pages.

We are regularly involved in putting on displays at green days/climate events/local and sustainable food events.

Subscription rates: £12 per person per year  
Visitors: £3

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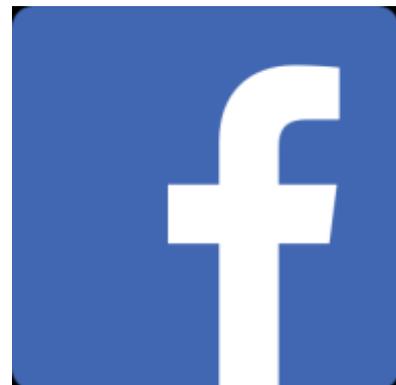
see above!

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SHROPSHIRE ORGANIC  
GARDENERS- SOGS

Members only group;

Soggies Surviving  
Join the Conversation.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello everyone and welcome to our Autumn 2022 newsletter. Where on earth has the year gone since Spring I ask myself!

Back then I mentioned the warm weather arriving, and it didn't disappoint. Pretty much a drought, though Shropshire was luckier than most in not having a hosepipe ban. More than ever we need to think about what and how we grow, and perhaps to fit in just one more water butt to see us through the dry times. What are you going to try differently next year to be water wise? - all tips and hints to Maralyn please.

We didn't quite match 2021 with no rain on summer visits, but despite a serious downpour for 20 mins, the visit to Sam and Kate's at Shepherd's Barn was utterly inspiring, and they both work part time too. I was told that the spring bulbs are something to see so we'll organise an informal early visit in March or April.

Talking of visits, what a wonderful start to the year with Kate Nicolls and Sue Bosson's gardens in Wales. A perfect day and two really interesting gardeners and their gardens and goodness, there was a lot of cake at Sue's to finish up with.

Two organic farm visits this year, The Downes' Farm at Longnor (solely dairy) and Treflach in October (pigs galore and very cute they were too), both very different and both with enthusiastic and energetic owners at the helm. Read more on these visits further on.

A good sprinkling of us visited the Newtown Community Garden in July and linked up with Sue Stickland and Dave Chester-Master who help run it. What an excellent community asset it is for Newtown. A few of us then took the advantage of visiting their own garden up in the hills – as delightful and tranquil a place you could wish for.

We hit an all time high this year of over 40 attendees for of our visits and Linley was only lower at 36 due to logistics. It makes all the organising worthwhile, so long may your enthusiasm continue.

The winter speakers programme is almost complete and the recent Planning Group meeting hosted this time by Judy and Ian, agreed a Zoom Meeting for January is still a good idea. Thank you to the

members who did respond to my email regarding this idea. The two Rachel's are following up potential speakers.

The second item to note is our new indoor venue for the coming season starting on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November at 7.30pm. It is difficult to get suitable venues with the right parking so please bear with us and see how we get on this winter in the new venue which seats up to 60, is warm and carpeted and had a nice new kitchen.

It is **The Bradbury Room, Drapers Place, Horsefair Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6BP**

Please check our SOGs website where Angela has put the details including a map. Parking will be alongside the Abbey or in the main Abbey Foregate car park. Both free in the evening.

Thanks to Lorraine, for suggesting the venue and I look forward to seeing many of you for the first meeting – see back for programme.

**SOGs Website** <http://shropshireorganicgardeners.org.uk/>

Have you looked at our website lately? No? Then please do.

New member, Angela Cattermole bravely took on (much to my relief) the role of website administrator from Sue Bosson who had looked after it for many years but had to step down a year ago.

With fresh eyes, Angela has refreshed the Home page with details of our new meeting place starting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, added a new page on Who We Are for potential new members, and a much enhanced Useful Links page of organisations with whom we closely ally. She has also archived more of the older photo's to make way for all the new ones from more recent summer visits and events.

You will also notice another new link on the bottom left – **Members Only**

For the last few years many of you have asked me to pass on messages to the membership relating to freebie plants, trees, seeds and all manner of garden items when you've been having clear outs, and I've been happy to pass on the information.

Also, because many members don't like or use Facebook and so don't take part in 'Soggies Surviving' where some members do advertise their plants and garden items, I asked Angela to see if she could create a pass-worded members section and she has done.

So this link is for you the members; you will be given the password on request to Angela, so that you can sell/give garden stuff, put up useful gardening based hints and tips and info you come across that you think other members might like to hear about.

Because of the limitations of the website, members will need to email the detail to Angela as administrator, and Angela will post the information. Please do give it a go.

Angela's email address is [angelajc@btinternet.com](mailto:angelajc@btinternet.com)  
Let's see how it works. Thanks to Angela for her hard work.

## *Rachel*

### **FROM YOUR EDITOR!**

No apologies for a piggy front cover – they seem to have been prevalent in a few articles this time. Whilst many of us don't have room for a pig, or indeed would want to own one, their expertise in making manure and digging the ground is second to none.



Many thanks for all of you who have made my life easier by submitting articles (and indeed, Rachel for spending a morning with me before the last one to show me how to use my PC. So much preferred the MAC). Now to sort out how to sort out how to store photos!

Apologies if I forgot your article or your photo didn't get in – maybe I will get more organised with time. Meanwhile, enjoy this edition and see you at the Christmas Bring and Share.

## *Maralyn*



## KATE NICHOLL'S AND SUE BOSSON'S GARDENS VISIT SUNDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2022. By Maralyn

Car sharing with Sylvi and Mike,  
we drove through the wonderful  
North



Shropshire Countryside into Wales to Kate Nicoll's garden in Llanrhaeadr. Kate is regional manager of WfGA for their training programme and the brains behind Attingham Park Walled garden, and inherited her front garden from the previous owner, including a wealth of interesting plants. Our initial chat was "over the garden wall" as we stood outside for Kate to tell us about both the plants and planting in the front garden and the transformation behind the cottage complex.

It was single file round the front, a slow, steady advance of SOGGIES as we admired many varieties of peonies, lathyrus, and others I can't remember! I was



particularly taken with a couple of marmalade peonies. Definitely a feature.

Behind the house, Kate and her husband had renovated adjoining buildings for Airbnb and made an smaller courtyard round the larger area. This included iron framed supports for fruit trees and climbers made by the same person as at Attingham Park. A nod to her past. In the centre of a long table was a boat-like wooden container with salads to eat with meals. A small, lean-to glasshouse contained the more fragile plants, though the whitewashed buildings ensured that this sheltered garden was a week or two ahead of ours.

On to Sue Bosson's garden in. Another long-time SOGGIE who has done a brilliant job over many years with our website. Sadly, Sue's husband has died, so she hopes to move nearer family so our last time in her lovely, relaxing garden. Starting in the front garden with raised pond, we wandered round the paths past the herbaceous borders, past espaliered fruit trees to the vegetable plot and admired compost heaps – as we love to do. It is always a draw for us - why do gardens hide them away?



Then of course, cake and chat on her lawn. This is what SOGGIES do best. Share our gardens, interests and expertise, and nurture friendships.

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*How do you count cows? With a cowculator*

**DOWNES FARM, LONGNOR**  
**SUNDAY 12 JUNE 2022 by JULIA BOURNE**



*Not just pigs!*

Some of us heard Tim Downes give his talk at last December's meeting, others visited the dairy farm in June and some lucky people did both. But listening to this talk, inspiring as it was, does not compare to attending the open day at this farm which, to my mind, sets itself up as a model for all organic dairy farms.

In his introductory talk, Tim, a tall, quietly confident, middle-aged chap, stood on the stage: a lorry trailer full of sofas, in a humongous barn that would soon be the venue for an event catering for over a thousand. He casually mentioned this while hosting 'Farm Sundays' which we were attending along with some other visitors.

Tim grew up on this farm which his grandfather began in about 1950 and his father, John subsequently took over. Today Tim, his wife Louise and his parents employ four full-time staff. As we set off on the farm tour, John joined us too, answering our questions.

In 2000, due to increased demand for organic milk, the farm converted to organics. It now serves a worldwide market including Aberdeen Angus beef. They practise regenerative agriculture here. Clover fixes nitrogen so they grow a lot of it. Yarrow, plantains and chicory herbal layer mix provides good grazing too.

The most impressive quality of the farm is the way it utilises the best of both worlds. The modern world of technology, and the traditional world, keeping valuable farm practices from the past. We were

introduced to a group of Norwegian Red-cross cattle, the bulls with names like Mr Darcy and Lord Grantham, and the cows who wore 'silent herdsman' collars, recording oestrogen levels and rumination irregularities, which are sent to an app on Tim's phone. But the farm also practises good, old-fashioned animal husbandry, the cattle being checked over daily. Despite the fact that computer systems monitor the cow's milk production, human skills acquired over generations cannot be replaced by robotics.

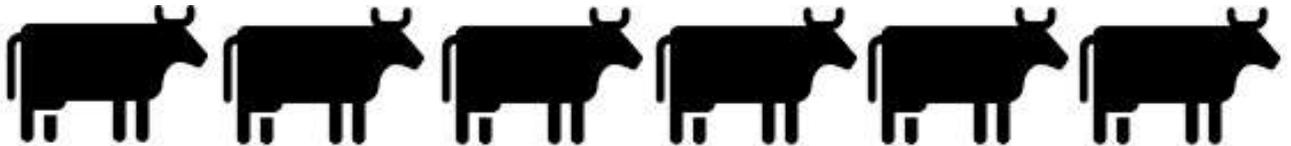
Standing in the sunshine, regarding the tall, ancient hedgerows, hearing the traditional names given to the fields - Malt Hedge, Brick Kiln and Double Gates - you could easily feel that you were living back in the 1950s. We listened as John told us that they don't do much hedge laying as bigger hedges help with carbon sequestration.

Using a silva-pasture system, trees are also planted for carbon storage along with soil aeration, increased biodiversity, reduction of heat stress in the cattle and they enjoy browsing them. Many of us were surprised to hear that walnut trees produce a pheromone that deters flies - useful to cattle. Most people are familiar with the benefits of willow with its aspirin properties. Including trees in the forage system helps cattle to stay healthy via medicinal browsing. Antibiotics are only used rarely, homoeopathy extensively. Tim said TB is their 'Achilles heel'; three of their cows tested positive, resulting in a planned cull and a 120-day lockdown.

We moved on to the viewing platform and crowded into the rather warm space to watch milking. Tim informed us that it was not all 'bells and whistles' but also that apparently 'ladies make the best milkers' as they have empathy with the cows.



Near the end of our visit, Louise and an assistant fed calves which drew a crowd and that rounded things off nicely before we returned to the barn for the gardener's delight - refreshments. Many thanks to the Downes family for hosting this open day which we thoroughly enjoyed.



## From Barbara: **IT'S APPLE SEASON**

### ***Eve's Apple***

*The lump in the throat called the Adam's apple was thought to be caused by the forbidden fruit getting stuck as Adam swallowed it. But was the fruit an apple. In the Book of Genesis God forbids man and woman to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But in Hebrew the word can mean any round fruit, such as a pomegranate or quince. So it seems unlikely that there were apple orchards....*

*In Europe it is usually shown as apple, possibly because the Latin words malum- evil and malus- apple are so similar they were either mistranslated or confused as a deliberate Latin pun.*

## TREFLACH FARM VISIT SUNDAY OCTOBER 2022 by Maralyn

Driving up the hills towards a fantastic view, we arrived to be greeted by refreshments in a building made for comfort. Catching up with friends and new faces, we then went outside to stand by the field which contained a very contented Boris the Bull, brought in this year after the sad death of the previous bull. No, we don't know how many children he has sired yet.



The 100 acre (40 hectares) farm belongs to Ian and Steph, who married last year in one of the barns. The drapes and ceiling flower rings evidence of the wonderful day they had. Ian's father was born at the farm after his uncle had moved there following compulsory purchase of their farm in Liverpool for the new airport.

Originally tenants, they eventually, bought the farm, which was run intensively as most farms were after WW2 to ensure enough food was grown in the UK to sustain the population. Ian did not want to be a farmer. He went abroad, worked in Construction. But then saw a different vision and returned home. He has now been running the farm for 15 years and is the 4<sup>th</sup> generation.

The farm is run on regenerative principles of sustainability, with climate change, biodiversity and the environment at the forefront. Alongside this, it has a food business with a butchery and bakery selling its meat products – check it out on their website! It also has another business bringing in children and disadvantaged young people to experience and learn skills at the farm. Derwen College students are involved.

The farm is also championing energy sources as they move towards carbon neutral. Solar panels and a ground source heat pump were proof of this, with maybe a wind turbine in the future. The farmhouse is

now warm. His sister can return from Australia, where she went to get warm, and also Steph agreed to marry him!

After an initial talk, we first visited the Mandala Garden and a more traditional patch. The Mandala garden was based on a circle of 20 raised quadrants, each used as an experiment in different composting regimes. With biochar – made from the brash from the hedgerows, dig, no dig.... Their best results were from compost and biochar. SOGGIES discussed the recent interest in biochar, and we concluded that, if you can't make your own, compost was good enough. Ian has to do something with his brash and this is an excellent use.

Recent Invertebrate Surveys highlighted 187 varieties of moth within a 12hr survey period – a stunning result. Different bird species are on the rise too. They use white clover on the paths in the veg gardens and the arable fields have 3m wide pollinator strips.

The more traditional patch was manured by the pigs from the adjoining pig shed. They get to eat the potatoes left behind and the weeds, and have a good dig, and the patch is well manured and dug. A win-win situation.

On to the garden with raised beds and a polytunnel. Standing on the wildflower area, we could look down on the neat paths, carrots, brassicas etc. Ian was concerned at the start about the mess. Mess – what mess? All around the farm there were working bits of machinery, areas left to their own devices for wildlife, (or no time to do it!) and many different areas of interest and diversity. Perfect for us SOGGIES!



The Polytunnel had a 'Wicking Bed'. A raised, plastic lined bed with a water inlet and drainage. Another experiment, the left bed was a wicking bed and the right one a usual bed. The tomatoes in the wicking bed were much better. Though you could argue they may be on the sunny side or other reason, this is certainly one worth trying.

Rachel suggested another way to being water-wise on raised beds, and that is to sink plain terracotta pots into the beds at regular spacing. The bottom hole needs to be covered to prevent water going straight through, and a lid placed on top to prevent good bugs and beetles drowning. The water seeps out slowly through the terracotta. This is a technique used to good effect in developing/drought prone countries.



***Master Composters Louise and Steve checking the bins***

We all loved the pig shed! Who doesn't love pigs especially cute ginger coloured Tamworths? Ian explained how they recycled the legumes used for green manure in the fields into manure which, in turn was added to the general compost (in the same shed) and then turned occasionally. Yummy indeed. The pigs were sold at a loss to their food business but also had this other use – and they love pigs! Let's hope they can at least draw even in future.

Back to the beginning. Tea and Cake. Peter missed a treat, as this time there were gluten free brownies, so even I was raving about cake! Another family expert, Ian's mum, had baked them.



What an amazing project/business/passion! Open minded, working across disciplines, and passionate. Ian and Steph get a medal from me!!!

<https://treflachfarm.co.uk>

## IMPROMPTU VISITS TO SOGGIES GARDENS SUNDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY by Heather Ireland

In July we had booked to go and see the changes at Linley Hall but Kate the gardener was unwell so it was postponed till September. At the last minute both Rachel and Dave, and Jan and Nick opened their gardens for anyone who wanted to visit. So, as I had missed both gardens when SOGS members had been to them before, I jumped at the chance. We were a select bunch – just 4 of us at Rachel's and a few more in the afternoon, but we were very glad to have had the opportunity to see them.

Rachel and Dave's Garden is very steep running down to a stream so lots of hard landscaping to make it all accessible including a skywalk to see the best view but also masses of plants and best of all Rachel knows the names of them all!! Productive veg beds with some escaping to nearby flower borders, interesting shrubs and trees, themed perennial areas and a large composting site – what more could you ask for?

After lunch we went to Jan and Nick's Garden – a complete contrast as it's all on one level except for the huge pond, which was dry in July, but I imagine is a sight in winter. We were impressed with Jan's dahlias out in flower already, but they are in pots tucked in by the walls on the sunny side of the house and obviously like it there.

Lots of veg beds with a wide variety of plants, 2 greenhouses and a base going down for another one, an orchard and woodland around the pond. A seemingly relaxed but full garden with good ideas about where/how to grow different plants.

It was fun seeing 2 such different gardens on one day – but best of all there was lots of cake too!



## ***SHEPHERD'S BARN*** **21st AUGUST by Rachel Strivens**



Set in the hamlet of Lower Corfton in the beautiful Corvedale Valley, this 2 acre south facing smallholding was the 'dream come true' for Sam and Kate Davies. The house itself is not exactly a shepherds barn, but was in fact a sheep shed, so the land immediately around the house had a lot of muck on it, hence it has the best soil. Generally though the soil is clay/loam and only 2" deep. Good but shallow, and really problematic in a drought situation like this summer when they ran out of their 10,000 litres of stored water!

The site has been chemical free since before the previous owners, and Sam and Kate continue living and working with nature. They have had no shop bought vegetables for some years and put their cold store to very good use, along with drying, fermenting and preserving a lot of produce. A lot of bulb and hedge planting has taken place over the years, with spring mulching being the 'answer to all problems'!

Lawns get mown at different times of the year, paths are laid out to be 1 or 2 mower widths and get cut just once or twice a year. At any one time there are areas of wild flowers for pollinators.

The aim is to have as much ground cover as possible. They have also had immense problems trying to get Yellow Rattle to take – they are not alone in that, as many people find it a problem when using it to clear areas of grass.

The whole of the veg garden is rabbit proofed and also home to some excellent compost bins.



### **Sam's recipe for homemade compost:**

1. Soil gathered from mole hills
2. Leaf mould or compost from bins
3. Sand – not fancy horticultural sand but just fine brown builders sand from Bromfield Sand and Gravel Co Ltd

### **Sam's Comfrey Tea:**

Using the dry method, put lots of damp, roughly chopped comfrey into a large bucket with a tap fixed into the base. Use a smaller bucket that fits fairly tightly into the top and put stones to provide pressure to

press the leaves down. The liquid will be very strong so dilute as needed.

Oh, and they do have a very nice composting loo!

A massive turnout of over 40 members to this really wonderful smallholding. Sam and Kate have agreed to come and give a talk on crop storage/preserving and fermenting, at the March 2023 meeting.



*I wish folk wouldn't make fun of my compost heap. It is bio-degrading!*

## MORE LINLEY HALL HINTS AND TIPS from Rachel

Don't forget to revisit the tips in SOGs Spring 2022 Newsletter 45

Our second visit to Linley Hall Walled Kitchen Garden on 10<sup>th</sup> September, proved just as successful and well attended as the first visit. Kate again provided a hugely interesting and invigorating tour with lots of hints and tips below.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow lots of Calendula and Tagetes (either Linnaeus Burning Ember or T. Cinnabar) and treat as a disinfectant for your raised beds.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try Coco de Paimpol haricot beans – originating from Brittany it semi-dries on the bush plant so provides a nicer taste and texture.</li> </ul>                                                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow a bed of Hyssop within your cropping beds. Pollinators love it.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow Summer Purslane – a good salad crop for drought conditions.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow Chicory to help with soil compaction.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow sacrificial crops for pests, which in turn brings in predators.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White Fly on your Tomatoes? Crush side shoots and some tomato leaves in rainwater. Add fermented apple juice and spray on white fly.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Zinnia Wobble Test ☺<br/>If the stems are soft the flower head will wobble and this is too soon to cut. Wait until stems harden. Later picking, longer flowering.</li> </ul>                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IMO Trapping – Indigenous Micro Organisms injected into the soil to boost organism levels – typically made with brown rice and sugar<br/><i>The Regenerative Grower's Guide to Garden Amendments: Using locally sourced materials to make Mineral and Biological Extracts and Ferments by Nigel Palmer, forward by John Kempf</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish Hydrolysis<br/>Put oily fish bits, bones and all, through a mincer. Add water and molasses and sauerkraut. Leave to ferment for 3 months.<br/>A clear golden liquid is produced which smells like linseed. Dilute 1:1000</li> </ul>    |
| <p>Try growing the Ukrainian Pear Tomato – very tasty and highly productive.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop watering and feeding your glasshouse tomatoes at the beginning of August. The stress helps fruit ripen.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The best bean Kate grew this year is Monte Bello, a French climbing bean.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Want to grow something different next year?</li> <li>• Try Trombocino Rapicante – Italian Climbing Zucchini (courgette) in the greenhouse or polytunnel. <b>OR</b></li> <li>• Agretti (Monks Beard) outside. Similar to Samphire</li> </ul> |

# SHREWSBURY FOOD FESTIVAL

## By SUE FISHER

Sue took the SOGS stand to the Shrewsbury Food Festival and sends us this:



The stall was in a corner of the marquee that had children's activities and a family of 6 pigs all 5 months old. The pigs were the main attraction.

However, that meant that families entered further and I had a good number of visitors asking about pest control. The wool packaging became a wonderful 'hands on' experience for many. Having an item that can be seen and handled seemed to be a great encouragement for further discussion.

The placement of our stall meant that it could be seen from the marquee entrance and the new display boards allowed the Sogs name to be seen from the other side. A number of membership forms and Newsletters were handed out. I am hoping that one or two may follow up and join us.

*Many thanks, Sue, for representing us. Do hope that more SOGGIES can spread the word out and about. Great fun! Ed*

## STREET ALLOTMENT PROJECT WINS AWARD! By CASPER AND FLEUR



Hello again from the Street Allotment Project! It seems a while since we've been able to catch up but hoola it's been a marvellous year! The year of course did begin with SOGs Potato Day which we dutifully chitted and planted with great results, especially the Organic Orla.

We have spent the year really reaping the benefits of soil maintenance over the previous winter by putting down mulches, horse manure and first batches of our homemade compost.

Our successes have many: peas, beans, cabbages ,tomatoes, cucumbers ,beetroot, onion, garlic, and pumpkins! Losses not so many and generally based around the heatwave earlier in the year. We lost lettuce, our fruits have been weeny and nasturtiums stood no chance at all (although they have started to come back).

For the project this year it was also about gathering volunteers and we now have a rotating brigade of about 7 volunteers who drop in and out of the Volunteer Sundays we put on. They have been an enormous

addition to the successes we've had, and we'll definitely continue Volunteer Sunday through the 2023 season. You are all very welcome. We were pleased to have a stand at the Shrewsbury Food Festival, which helped a great deal with our profile, and we met heaps of interesting and enthusiastic people. We have had our annual plot party which was so much fun and we raised enough in raffle donations to guarantee our seed purchases for next season. But as seasons change and we begin the slow decline to winter, you'd be forgiven for thinking the project would too but September has been amazing.

Our first piece of joyous news was that we had been awarded a certificate from the RHS Heart of England in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood', meaning our project really is beginning to bed itself down within the community. Great to receive this recognition.

On the very same day we received some more incredible news. We had heard that the guerrilla gardening group Incredible Edibles was trying to affect a motion in parliament called 'Right to Grow', which would allow people across Britain access to public land for the purposes of food growing, beekeeping and the like. Unfortunately, that motion didn't seem to gain ground, so we decided to try to get something like this through locally. We approached Councillor Rosemary Dartnell, the shadow spokesman on the environment, and she enthusiastically took it forward as a motion to Shropshire Council.

At the last meeting, on 22nd September the motion passed unanimously!! This means after some wiggling within the council to sort out the admin, our entire county will be able to approach their local council regarding plots of land for growing! The news has spread fast with the BBC, Daily Telegraph, The Daily Mirror and of course the Shropshire Star publishing the good news.

If this wasn't enough for us we have also been offered more land. Attached to the side of the Grange Community Centre there is a lawn patch which has been given over to us in its entirety. We do hope with this kind of location we can really engage with the community's young, simply by doing.

As we mentioned, the year draws to a close but after a visit to regenerative stock free farming legend Iain 'Tolly' Tollhurst we will now be turning the ship to his self-sufficient methods by employing biodiversity to hunt pests and green manures to feed the soil. Rye grass will be going in right now to over-winter on every single raised

bed. There will not be a sign of brown earth anywhere on the plots by the time we mow this crop down in February next year.

Here's hoping you've all had as much fun and success on your plots this year, and hopefully we'll catch up at the SOG's potato day.

Cheers  
Casper and Fleur

Fantastic Achievement! Ed.



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### **TANSY AS A COMPANION? From Maralyn**

*The idea of planting nasturtiums in a veg bed so the blackfly munch on them rather than your broad beans has been around for years. This year, the blackfly had a field day on the tansy in the herbaceous border - they were covered. Then I saw a group of around 5 sparrows having a feast, bending the stalks down as they enjoyed the fast food. Next time I looked – not a single blackfly!*

*This begs the question: is Tansy a good alternative to nasturtiums?*

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### **APHRODITE'S APPLE from Barbara.**

**Beware** - apples can be irresistible!

*A renowned huntress in Greek mythology, Atalanta, declared that she would wed the man who could beat her in a running race, but would behead him if he lost. Not keen to marry she outran all her suitors until one, Meleager, begged the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, for help.*

*The goddess gave him three golden apples and told him to drop them, one at a time, to distract Atalanta. Each time his love pulled ahead Meleager rolled an apple at her feet. It took all three apples and all of his speed, but he won the race and Atalanta's hand.*



The [Shropshire Good Food Partnership](#) is celebrating its first year of working across the county to build our vision of regenerative food, farming and land-use systems.

The Partnership, initiated and led by Jenny Rouquette with the support of a steering committee of food system experts and local food champions, brings together anyone with an interest in more sustainable and resilient food systems: councils, food businesses, farmers and growers, community and charity organisations, academic institutions, and researchers. Signing the [Good Food Charter](#) is our member's pledge to take action across the food system, building our collective momentum and driving change.

It has been a big year for the SGFP. We launched [six working groups](#), each led by a specialist in their area, to focus on priorities across Shropshire: *Healthy Food for All, Nature Connection, Grow Local, Wise Land Stewardship, Waste Reduction, Sustainable Food Economy*. In June the SGFP became one of the newest members of the UK's Sustainable Food Places Network. We have been having productive discussions with various departments in Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council about the importance of joined-up county-level food strategies. In addition to funds from Shropshire Council and SFP, we have received a grant of over £96,000 from The CO-OP Trust Foundation's Carbon Innovation Fund. This has allowed us to launch our first [Call for Proposals](#) for our Regenerative Food and Farming Research grants, with others to be announced in the coming months.

## **Practical action is essential to the Partnership**

Supporting local projects boosts their impact and visibility and inspires others to replicate initiatives in their own communities. For example, our Nature Connection working group has linked with a number of local farms and projects in and around Oswestry, supporting community farm open days, developing spaces where adults with learning disabilities can connect with the outdoors, building capacity around social prescribing, and partnering with the Shropshire Love Nature Festival.

To celebrate our first year, we'll be hosting The Shropshire Good Food Summit on October 15th, from 10am-4pm at the University Centre Shrewsbury. This event brings together our members and anyone interested in the building momentum for Shropshire's Good Food Revolution. The day will begin with a brief AGM to review the SGFP's first year, but will be above all, a day of collaboration, visioning and practical action to build the County's local Good Food Movement. Tickets are by donation via [Eventbrite](#) to pay for a communal meal of rescued and surplus food provided by OsNosh Community Kitchen and Food Hub.

In advance of our October Food Summit, we're inviting community members and groups from across Shropshire to gather, discuss and feedback their concerns, ideas and vision for our county's food system. These small 'satellite' assemblies will feed into the wider discussions and policy planning sessions at the food summit with the aim of sharing recommendations with the County Council on how to create a bespoke food strategy for Shropshire.

If you would like to find out how to get involved with the Shropshire Good Food Partnership, please visit [www.shropshiregoodfood.org](http://www.shropshiregoodfood.org) where you can sign up to the Good Food Charter, learn more about our steering group, become a local Food Champion, host a local food assembly in the lead up to the Shropshire Good Food Summit, or join one or more of our working groups.

Author Contact: **Daphne Du Cros, Coordinator and Director**, Shropshire Good Food Partnership. Please get in touch by emailing [Hello@shropshiregoodfood.org](mailto>Hello@shropshiregoodfood.org) and follow us on social media [@shropshiregoodfood](#)

## SOGS TO THE RESCUE

### Marian Byrne

This spring, I had had to give up editing the Sogs newsletter because



of eyesight difficulties, and my garden was overgrown and the paths dangerous, because of health problems over the last couple of years, so I was a little down-hearted. However, my spirits lifted when I had a visit from Rachel, Sue F. and Judy to discuss a Sogs working party in my garden, as a thank you for my 24 years of editing the newsletter. What a wonderful idea!

On April 30<sup>th</sup> the sun shone and 15 Soggies descended on my plot armed with their garden tools. They toiled for around 5 hours, with remarkable cheerfulness and vigour. I worried about their working so hard, but they did stop for lunch and socialising, and had occasional breaks for drinks. They did a great job of clearing the overgrown paths, cutting back, remaking some raised beds, erecting bean wigwams etc. They seemed happy at their work, and several said afterwards how much they had enjoyed the day.



I was delighted at the transformation of the garden and felt quite emotional when a beautiful special cake was brought out, celebrating my editing the newsletter, and a signed card from everyone.

I was so grateful to have so much done, and particularly appreciative of how it fired me with energy to carry on the good work.

*Thank you, Sogs!*

## ***ORCHARD ADVICE FROM A PRO!***



### ***Ian Mason***

"I am a retired orcharder, the orchard comprised about 60 old varieties of apple, grown to Soil Association standards. The SA Standards do not make life easy for top fruit growers and I had to wrestle with two significant problems in the early years. I'll explain how I overcame them and hope that this may be of use to other SOGS members.

Winter Moth Caterpillars - These eat the developing florets and can ruin the crop, The organic solution is to use Insect Barrier Glue. This is available from Agralan. It's a lot cheaper than using fruit tree grease from garden Centres. It is applied with a mastic gun and is 100% effective.

The life cycle. The caterpillars drop to ground on long threads after eating your fruit buds, pupate in the soil and the wingless females climb up the tree from mid-October during which time the winged males conjoin with them. Afterwards the females carry on up the tree and lay their eggs. The larvae hatch in spring, eat your blossom trusses and... repeat.

The glue is used to circle the trunk of the tree (and a stake if used) at about 2 feet above ground level. The Barrier Glue stops the females climbing the tree and, as you will notice if you have an infestation, catch all the winged males who were hoping for a romantic liaison.

The Fungal Diseases - Mildew, Scab and Canker which, respectively, ruin your crop, the fruit and the tree.

The organic solution is Bordeaux Mixture - a mixture of Copper Sulphate and Calcium Hydroxide (lime).

A word here about copper. Its use is on the SA prohibited list because it is poisonous to fish. Cases of rivers being poisoned were commonplace where farmers sprayed pig slurry on their fields which then ran off into streams (pigs are fed a lot of copper to make them grow big quickly). Hence the ban. The amount of copper used by an organic orcharder is, however, minute and poses no material risk to the environment. On this basis, the SA granted me a derogation for use of copper in the organic orchard.

Bordeaux mixture is not easy to source and, if it can be found, is expensive. But you can make your own for a fraction of the cost!

Amazon sells 500g bags of copper sulphate and 1 Kg tubs of calcium hydroxide for less than a tenner and this will last you for several years (it is also excellent for prevention of black spot on roses).

**Making it is easy, provided you follow a couple of simple rules.....**

- warm the copper sulphate in some water in a saucepan until it dissolves
- Dissolve the lime, separately from the copper, in cold water in a jug.
- Partly fill your sprayer with water then add the two ingredients and top up with water.

Other methods may work but, in my experience, if you do not prepare the two ingredients separately you invariably end up with a sludge that gums up your sprayer.

Only make what you can use today - it does not keep.

Use the spray in mid winter and again at green bud stage of the blossom trusses (usually Early to mid April).

A weaker solution can be used regularly on your roses.

A full strength solution for your apple trees will comprise about 4oz each of copper and lime to 10 litres of water.

Happy orcharding



**I have often thought that if heaven had given me choice of my position and calling, it should have been on a rich spot of earth, well watered, and near a good market for the productions of the garden. No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden. Such a variety of subjects, someone always coming to perfection, the failure of one thing repaired by the success of another, and instead of one harvest, a continued one thro' the year. Under a total want of demand except for our family table. I am still devoted to the**

**garden. But tho' an old man, I am but a young gardener. -Thomas Jefferson, letter to Charles Willson Peale, Poplar Forest, August 20, 1811**

## **TREES OUTSIDE WOODLANDS PROJECT**

### **DONATE YOUR TREE WEEDS!**

**Maralyn Hepworth**

Like many of you, I suspect, I am unable to just dig out a tree seedling and get rid of it, so I put it in a pot. Then what? Now is our big opportunity! Shropshire Council has been awarded funding to grow on trees from our gardens and other spaces to plant out around the county or give out to those who would like them. Whilst the government funded project officer works for Shropshire Council, it is being managed by Shrewsbury Town Council staff with no extra funding, as they have the Nursery space to look after them.

I arranged to visit Mike Pugh at the Weeping Cross Nurseries, who is managing the project at the nursery to find out more and donate my 10 saplings and Claire's Oak tree that I had adopted. I felt it would be happier out of its big pot. Would he accept them? Some were tiny, and the oak tree now quite big. No problem – they are joining the few others to be cared for over winter for biosecurity before they are moved on to open ground. This way, trees won't be allowed out to play if they have any pests or diseases. DEFRA has already inspected the site.

Whilst most tree seedlings are welcome, they won't be taking ash because of the prevalence of ash die back, so please dispose of these. The donations have only just started coming in, but I saw hazel, oak, sycamore and others. Once there, they will all be tagged, and we will know in which area our babies have gone to – though not an exact spot. More hunt your tree!

We wandered round the tree nursery, discussing the project and admired the new drip feed watering system which is now on a timer and can be set to come on any time of the day or day of the week and managed from an app. High tech stuff! This was funded by the scheme. watering system with an underground pump and hoses to the saplings which are connected to an app on a phone so they can adjust it at 2am!

High tech stuff. Ideally, it would have been better to have nurseries around the county in the Market Towns, but the funding did not accommodate that. Travelling a long way to deliver a sapling doesn't make climate sense. As SOGGIES we could take these to a meeting in Shrewsbury to be delivered in one car – maybe by me or Frank as we go past.

At present the project is in its infancy, but as the project progresses, there will be volunteering opportunities for helping to maintain or pot on the saplings at the nursery, or maybe plant in and around Shropshire. Shropshire Council also has the capacity to help local tree planting groups, as they now have the infrastructure and funds to assist with supplying pots, compost, stakes and canes.

As the site is secured, Mike will be setting up a day or so for donations to be delivered. I will send this to Rachel to email round when this has been confirmed. Meanwhile, keep your saplings, bring them to a meeting or team up with others in your area, and let's make a.....

## GREEN SOGGY CANOPY IN SHROPSHIRE!



## STRAWBERRIES

*Apparently hardly any old varieties of strawberry remain, because they have been replaced by modern commercial varieties grown for disease-resistance and ability to resist rough handling during transit. However, you may still be able to find Royal Sovereign, bred by Thomas Laxton in 1892. Did you know that strawberries were so named because of their straying habit, not because of the straw laid around the plants?*

## THE ROOTS OF SOGS – FROM THE ARCHIVES

**Ian Thom** has been diving into the past. Find out how SOGS began:

Rachel recently referred to the first meeting of SOGS, back in 1990. I thought I would follow-up with a bit more detail.

The first meeting of an “Organic Gardening Group” was held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1990, organised by Alex Lockton of Shrewsbury Friends of the Earth and Alison Ash of Berrington Hall. The meeting was hosted by Friends of the Earth (venue not specified), and included a talk by John Dalby on (you guessed it) “An Introduction to Organic Gardening”. Of the 36 people who turned up, 29 stayed on to set up a group, to be based in Shrewsbury. The minutes stated “The aims of the group are not entirely clear at the moment”, although it was then decided that “we should do a lot of educating of ourselves first, by holding talks, visits to important gardens etc, and talking and working with each other”. Not so different from 2022 then.

The following were the designated officials of the group: Chairperson Alison Ash; Treasurer Carol Thickins; Secretary Alex Lockton; Events Coordinator Jean Breakell. Membership to be £3.50 per year, and meetings would be 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month, 7.30 pm, at The Old Post Office Hotel function room, Milk Street.

The next meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1990 was attended by 15 people. The first hour was devoted to “introducing ourselves and our interests”, and then some decisions were made. The next meeting would have a talk on companion planting, some people would help with FoE’s campaign against the use of horticultural peat, there would be a trip to the Henry Doubleday Research Association at Ryton, summer meetings are to be held at people’s houses/gardens, not at the Old Post Office, Alex Lockton stepped down as Secretary in favour of Denise Dack, and, most importantly of all, “We are to be called Shropshire Organic Gardeners, SOG for short.”  
From little acorns...

*And 31 years later, the RHS bans peat!!! SOGS are trendsetters.  
We look forward to next exciting instalment! Ed.*



***Why are trees good at networking?  
Like SOGGIES, they are always branching out!***

## SWP CENNIN A THATWS - LEEK AND POTATO SOUP

Thanks, Maggie, for this recipe.

|                               |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 2 large leeks                 | 1oz butter      |
| 1lb potatoes                  | 3/4 pint stock  |
| 1 rasher bacon                | cheese          |
| 1/4 pint milk                 | salt and pepper |
| 2 tablespoons chopped parsley |                 |



Cut up the bacon and fry in the butter in a saucepan. Peel and cut up the potatoes. Clean and cut up the leeks. Add the vegetables to the saucepan and fry for 5 minutes. Stir in the stock and add salt and pepper to taste. Put the lid on the pan and simmer for 30 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Add the milk and reheat but do not boil to avoid the milk curdling. Add the parsley. Serve with grated cheese.

### Serves 4

Vegetarians can leave the bacon out. I have made it with water when I haven't got stock and it is fine.

From "The Welsh Kitchen" by Sian Llewellyn



### DID YOU KNOW?

Whilst some of you are no doubt members of

### GARDEN ORGANIC,

Did you know that SOGS have group membership and a long-time relationship with them?

And if you fancy helping with a bit or Citizen Science, there are opportunities to help them with their research by observing what happens in YOUR patch. Exploding Aphids sounds heaps of fun!

# **SOG'S AUTUMN/WINTER PROGRAMME 2022-2023**

**Meetings will be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month  
in The Bradbury Room, Drapers Place, Horsefair, Abbey  
Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6BP unless otherwise stated.  
7.30pm Start Time**

**November 2nd - Shropshire Good Food Partnership - Jenny  
Rouquette, Partnership Lead**

Shropshire Good Food Partnership brings people together across the county to create a food system good for people, place and planet. Supporting people to grow more food locally is an important part of this, from organic gardening to regenerative farming, increasing access to seasonal local produce and building the local food economy as well as addressing food poverty and reducing food waste. Jenny will share the story so far and the future plans and looks forward to a lively discussion.

**December 7<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Bring and Share and our Big Seed and  
Garden Paraphernalia Swap**

**Note Changed Date**

**January 11<sup>th</sup> - On-line Zoom Meeting - Vermicomposting**

Anna de la Vega FRSA CF Managing Director

Anna is the founder of The Urban Worm CIC, a social enterprise promoting worm farming as a regenerative solution for organic waste management and agriculture. Since researching worm farming technologies in the USA and Cuba as part of her Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (WCMT) Travel Fellowship (2016) Anna has been sharing this knowledge with a broad spectrum of industries from educational institutions to the military. Throughout the presentation Anna will share best practice in worm farming and the role it is playing globally, and in the UK.

**February 1st - Speaker/talk to be confirmed + final details for Potato  
Day**

**Saturday February 4<sup>th</sup> - Potato Day - Wattlesborough  
Village Hall**

**March 1<sup>st</sup> - Crop Storage, Preserving and Fermenting** - Kate and Sam Davies from Shepherd's Barn return to talk about their experiences from the last few years in how they save the produce from the smallholding in order not to buy any produce from outside sources.

**April 5<sup>th</sup> - AGM** + speaker/talk to be confirmed

*"Worms are more powerful than the African Elephant and are more important to the economy than the cow"* - Charles Darwin





The end of the Tail!