



TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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The Carse of Gowrie Orchards: What Next?

Notes of Evening Meeting held on Tuesday 11th December 2007
Inchtute Hotel, Inchtute, Perthshire

Paul McLennan - Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust (Chair)

PMcL gave a brief welcome to the evening and introduced Dr Crispin Hayes. He also gave Syd House's apologies as he could not attend the meeting. Thanks to Inchtute Hotel for catering and venue.

Dr Crispin Hayes - Hayes Eco Consultancy Ltd (Facilitator)

CH discussed briefly how we have got to the stage where we know the extent and condition of the orchards in the Carse. Now would be a good time to wrap it all up with an Action Plan and the setting up of a Carse of Gowrie Orchard Forum. CH welcomed Phil Elliot and Tony Douglas from the Scottish Borders to talk about the commercial aspect of orchard owner: cider making. This was the presentation postponed from the day-long seminar held on 16th October.

NOTES FROM PRESENTATIONS

Phil Elliot - Peelwalls / Eden Brands

The accompanying PowerPoint presentation will be put on www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk.

As ex-Royal Navy, Phil worked with a local cider firm in England. He had an ambition to return to Scotland and make Scottish cider from 100% Scottish apples. It is a myth that Scotland is too cold for apples. Phil found land to buy in the Borders. Sir Michael Strang Steel was a founder. Investment was ultimately secured from TriCap and the company name changed from Peelwalls to Eden Brands.

There is a story in the name Peelwalls, however. Peelwalls itself is set in the Scottish Borders on the east coast. There was character, it was authentic and there was land available to buy; the buildings were derelict. 23,000 litres of cider are now produced per month; there are 4.5 foot thick walls which is a good environment for cider. The yeast becomes airborne - there is no need for additional yeast. Another side of the business is imported grape juice / fruit wines. Local strawberries and raspberries are used from Dunbar. Two original ciders are made, plus Perry (from concentrate).

In Selkirk there were 26 trees over a hundred years old. This old orchard was derelict but 200 new trees were planted. Set near the Battlefield of Selkirk, replanting of approximately 190 trees will begin soon. The Borders Forest Trust has an orchard programme; they are competitors in cider. The Philip Haugh estate is

4 acres and consists of 100 old trees. They have added to this by replanting some areas.

Phil had been contacted by Catherine Lloyd of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and was therefore aware of the survey carried out in the Carse. A promise of 48 tonnes of apples resulted in just 6 tonnes - there are just not enough Scottish apples around. The whole variety in age, location, health of the orchards here is a logistical nightmare. There needs to be some kind of hub formed where all apples can come to a central point.

Tony Douglas - Peelwalls / Eden Brands

Cider has become a very trendy drink, the old images have been wiped away and there has been a big resurgence in the drink. Mainstream lagers and beers have taken a back seat. The major brands of cider include Magners, Bulmers, Thatchers and Westons. They have discovered that draught cider has become popular.

More products have been added to Eden Brands - still and sparkling cider is made, only Scottish apples are used and there are investors who are now interested. The market is enormous, worth £1.5 billion. The company's portfolio consists of still and sparkling cider, single variety and fruit wines such as Scottish raspberry and strawberry. There is massive future potential - to focus mainly on the cider, made in Scotland, with faster production, quality presentation, competitive prices, targeted marketing and strategic patterns. Peelwalls cider is very fruity, less metallic than typical ciders and not orange in colour. It has been tried and tested.

Peelwalls targets local small-scale companies, locally based supermarkets (promotion for education), garden centres, restaurants and visitor attractions. The original marketing channels included Salaman.com and other internet sites. There are definitely opportunities available with new ciders. The idea would be to retain a few supermarkets, but specific products could go to named partners - for instance, Carse ciders could be sold locally with their own label.

There has been an excellent reception from buyers / owners of local hotels etc. Combining tourism and local brands is commercially viable and many local businesspeople are keen on this idea. Eden Brands already have a quality image; in time perhaps e-commerce may take off.

Questions & Answers

Q - Isabell McDiarmid

It is disappointing there is no co-ordination in collecting apples and that there needs to be a central base. What about local people - there is the issue of travel and transport, whether it is worthwhile? Will you be picking / collecting yourselves?

A - Phil Elliot

Yes we would like to, but it's not physically possible. For larger growers producing 2 tonnes over 8 acres, we would consider providing boxes.

PE noted - Magners only has 1 acre of orchard in Ireland. Its apples come mainly from Poland and China as concentrate. Peelwalls produce purely Scottish cider from local sources, the taste will vary as there is no concentrate used, and it matures like a wine - that's the beauty of it. Options would be to have a generic theme for the mass market, or single variety for a more refined separate market. The most important aspect is that it remains purely local and Scottish.

Q- Is it tradition that cider competes against beer?

A- PE - it is true that cider comes in small bottles and is stronger. 1 bottle at a time is savoured and drunk slowly. Bubbles make the duty a lot higher. Still cider - 6% and carbonated - 5%. Real Scottish ciders are on the same market as real ales.

Q- Any idea of tonnage produced by orchards?

A - PE - 4,000 trees on 14 acres produce c3.5 tonnes per acre. Peelwalls orchard is still young, so this will vary.

Q- What's the best combination of conditions to make cider? Are soil type / exposure / walled gardens essential?

A- PE - Original walled gardens were protected and were ideal but with climate change, a lot has changed. Peelwalls undertake soil samples, trying Scottish varieties but also Bramley. Climate change has meant more thriving varieties. It has been a steep learning curve. There is a 30 acre orchard in Dunbar with 50 trees. Restoration work is only being done gradually in stages subject to funding.

Q- How critical is WHEN the fruit is picked for cider? Does it matter how it is stored before collection?

A- PE - heavy winds may mean early fall, but the fruit will keep well if kept at the right temperature. Apples kept at 5C stored in June were still useable in March. It is better to store the apples than the juice. Once pressed fermentation will start. Different varieties keep better than others.

Q - Peter Mulheron (local resident) - pointed out that James Grieve apples grow well in the Carse. He has 70-100 trees. How labour intensive would it be?

A- PE - you would have to keep the grass down, spray to keep the roots clear for 2/3 years; trees would need protected from rabbits and deer. It would need a couple months to prepare, if planting new trees - in January. Old trees would need pruned in spring.

Q- Does cider ferment in the bottle?

A – PE - Wine is filtered so that yeast goes away. Sugar stays. Still cider has residual yeast. As it is filtered naturally, it will have fermented very little. AVB - 6.1%. Even still cider will have a slight natural sparkle.

Q - Crispin Hayes - What variability can you have for Perry?

A- PE - they did have success in the past with perry from concentrate but it has since disappeared. There are too few pears left. There are a lot of single variety pears in the Carse. Local people would be interested. TD - this might be a natural progression for us. In Sweden they make sweet cider from pears. Eden brands would be very interested in taking all pears and would make a medium perry. Pears trees live much longer than apples. There is no programme in Sweden for replanting pears - more and more is made from concentrate.

Q- What advice is there out there?

A- PE - There would be all kinds of help given - advice on pruning, orchard management etc. There is a lot of free information out there.

Q- Is it ad-hoc?

A – PE - It was ad-hoc before. The product is however outselling the capability of production. It is also very important that we have Scottish apples available to produce a purely local product. Prices also fluctuate a lot - one day it can be £40 per tonne, another day £80 a tonne. We could, in time, fix our own price and therefore wouldn't have to fluctuate with the market.

Q- Have suppliers sold out?

A- PE - Yes - we are still waiting for trees. However Westons - cider makers in Herefordshire - have directly helped with the supplies of trees. It used to be £26 per tree - now it is £11. They have the buying power, so we order together in bulk. Westons is a family company and happy to help.

Q- What about storing apples in containers? Is temperature control important?

A- We store fruit in potato boxes in potato sheds at 5C or 6C as long as there is air ventilation to replace the stale air. If storing for only 2 or so months, a temperature of 9C is acceptable as long as there is air circulation.

Q- PE - What about old varieties? Do you have experience with these?

A – PE - Yes, I believe there are many varieties in the Carse - around 370. We tend to be more experienced in the varieties we know are successful such as Superb, Discovery, James Grieve and Bramley. Of course we are always keen to find out more - especially single varieties. There can be a mix of varieties used for cider.

PE - single varieties are worth using especially for the local market. Although there are costs in producing the labels, design work, and the type of bottle used.

1 tonne of apples produces 500 litres of apple juice.
10% is lost in fermentation and 2% is lost in the filtering.

Q- Elaine Whiteley - I deliberately decided not to plant cider apples i.e. Cox apples as I read in a book that they were no good.

A - PE - Yes Cox apples are small hard and sharp. In the Borders there were no cider apples when we started.

CH mentioned that he had not surveyed each variety within the Carse, but a second phase of surveying has been proposed in 2008, subject to funding.

PE - Cider apples now have a dual use - in Somerset they still have cider apples that they can't eat - and can't use.

The Next Step

CH - wrapped up the Questions and Answers session and introduced the second tier of the evening whereby he proposed there should be a local residents' group meeting to discuss the possibility of setting up a Carse of Gowrie Orchard Forum. The second group could consist of people from further afield who could discuss the Slow Food Movement and opportunities to tie in with the idea of orchard management, healthy eating, community participation and education.

PMc and CH gave thanks to everyone's input and time and hoped they enjoyed the evening.

Notes from the second session of the evening held by Douglas Ritchie (attended by RH)

Douglas Ritchie - Leader of the Perth Slow Foods Group Cittaslow.

DR gave us a run down on the movement:

The Cittaslow Movement began in Italy originally after a McDonald's restaurant was opened on the foot of the town steps in Rome. Cittaslow means slow city - slow food produced in slow towns and cities.

It began on the back of the negative influences of fast food. Slow food aims to encompass family and social life, while enjoying all aspects of food without anything artificial. The outcome is clean, fresh and fair prices for producers.

There are over 100,000 members across 40 different countries around the world. It is about taste awareness - taking time to enjoy and make food.

A network of 100 towns across the world agreed on using the same factors including waste management, historical character, local produce, infrastructure (seating, parks, and toilets) and hospitality. Perth

became the first slow town in Scotland in March 2007. There were 20 local groups involved in getting the programme started. There are 60 different criteria objectives to agree to including such things as air / water quality, open space, local contacts etc.

Information is shared; people made a network of connections which in turn sparked new projects. The Carse of Gowrie Project grew out of this. Provost Hulbert help get the study going.

Questions and Answers

Where in Perth is Cittaslow?

Hotels and pubs have adopted the Cittaslow initiatives. It is about guaranteeing suppliers of local produce. It is quite a challenge, and not always necessarily organic. Organic is a debateable subject. Food producers and farmers are often concerned that organic has become a brand. The argument is that traditional methods are still good. Fresh eggs - the best example of organic not being that great. The criteria may have to be reworded. We have to encourage either sustainable methods or dismiss fertilizers or chemicals. Unfortunately a lot of farmland has become contaminated over recent years.

Do Tesco buy locally? Questionable. And is the full price paid for?

DR asked all to introduce themselves:

Mandy Fooks (MF) - Food for Life Project. Works with community orchards, fruit fairs especially in Newburgh, Fife. A range of fruit is produced including apples and plums. Scottish food could be posted onto Scottish websites, such as "Larderbites.co" an online shopping basket idea. Some filming of "Landward". This could be a valuable outlet for producers on a smaller scale.

Ann Lolley - works with local community groups and has set up a small orchard which they hope to replant next season. Unfortunately it was badly vandalised. She looks after an orchard near her home. She is interested in food health benefits and has an agricultural degree.

William MacDiarmid - reminisced that in the school holidays kids could spend time in the orchards - they were big places. Unfortunately new housing has taken over many places. He said he and his wife have 4.5 acres of orchard overflowing with fruit. It is very old but in good shape. Hates waste, no appreciation anymore: orchard management is a dying art.

MF - Newburgh School Orchard is family orientated and has incorporated heavy solid seating suitable for young or old.

Q Would the Forestry Commission support tree planting? A: There might be funding available as long as the land has been certified.

TD - noted that sticking to reliable sources is the best. Commented on the number of pears around - would need to find out where they are. Mentioned that it is still early for Peelwalls Ltd to be self-sufficient.

WMac - noted that 5 years after planting his trees he had a great supply of fruit.

MF - enquired about the NTS and whether they look after orchards. A: NTS do have some orchards but many have staffing problems. In the Borders most NTS sites are historic mansions. There is an excellent new orchard at Elcho Castle, near Perth.

Q - How easy is it to get Peelwalls Cider to outlets? A (TD) - There wasn't enough capital to begin with but after working on the labels and bottle design, the interest got going and funds began to come in, finally allowing Eden Brands to become financially viable.

Q (directed to TD) - you work 52 weeks a year - have you had big success then? A (TD) - Things are going extremely well. We have hardly scratched the surface yet. We have still to tap into independent delis, new garden centres, local farm shops and local markets. The potential is huge.

AL - suggests capitalizing on the boom in the market. There may be ups and downs - what would life span be of the company? Things come in and out of fashion. The strength would be your commercial involvement and generated interest in the local economy / local jobs / return and market shares into the community.

TD - yes we are struggling to get guaranteed supply. There is limited scope in Scotland, it is going slow as there is less competition. However, if things got going with help from the Carse of Gowrie - there is a lot of scope. We would label bottles with Carse of Gowrie Cider and sell locally and to a range of different regions in Scotland.

TD - Micro breweries are also becoming very successful - cider making could be compared to a micro brewery. There are opportunities for this to connect with the slow food movement.

Q- DR - are you working with micro-breweries? A (TD) - Yes we are working with a local one. Westons cider company also gave us useful advice. Caledonian Breweries have been helpful too. Direct deliveries to individuals is not cost effective - we need distributors. This will take time to piece together bit by bit.

Q- Is there a particular age group that cider is geared towards? A (TD) - yes generally it is aimed at a younger audience but it is really consumer friendly to all.

TD - there is success in giving opportunities to taste. The buyer is important. Peelwalls have outlets for sample tasting, the cider is distinctive different, fruity and natural. We have to promote this.

Q - Does cider go well with certain food? A (TD) - cider goes well with sausages. The SECC Promotion Fair they attended was useful. They might make up a cider and recipe book one day!

Slow Food - Arc of Taste - the information is always there but unfortunately there are lost brands. By encouraging local produce we can involve small scale community projects.

DR suggested TD get in touch with Edinburgh Slow Food Group who have tasting evenings help buy bulk and could help build up demand.

Notes from the second session of the evening held by Dr Crispin Hayes (attended by CL)

Local Residents Meeting - discussion of setting up Local Residents Forum

CH facilitated the session, asking those taking place to put "post it" notes on the questions "how" and "what" as regards the future of the Carse orchards. Further details will be available in due course, but in the meantime:

WHAT

- Restoration - conservation & renewal
- New Planting - in old orchards & in new orchards
- Children's involvement
- Heritage Varieties

HOW

- Get ACI/RHET involved
- What have we got? How many?
- Local sustainability
- Voluntary Conservation groups - cadets, youth groups, FCS (Blair-), Green Gym, Norwich Union, Scottish Bus Blairgowrie, community groups

Next Meeting

The meeting concluded just after 9.30pm and there was then the opportunity for "networking". It was agreed to hold another meeting, purely for local orchard owners and residents – again at Inchtute Hotel –

on 30th January (7pm): all with an interest in setting up a working “Forum” welcome. Hopefully a Chair would be chosen at the end of January. The three inaugural organisations (Forestry Commission Scotland, Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust, and Tayside Biodiversity Partnership) will continue to be part of the Forum and to offer guidance where appropriate.



Appendix 1

CARSE OF GOWRIE ORCHARD SEMINAR DELEGATES LIST		
First Name	Surname	Organisation
Diane	Alderdice	Forth Valley Food Links
Michael	Almond	Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust / and orchard keeper
Alison	Black	St. Madoes, Glencarse
Ken	Cox	Glendoick Garden Centre
Fiona	Davie	Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (mature student)
Jackie	Doe	Muirhouses Farm, Grange
Lawson	Doe	Muirhouses Farm, Grange
Tony	Douglas (Speaker)	Eden Brands Ltd (Scottish Borders)
Prue	Dowie	Angus Council (and local resident)
Elizabeth	Eddy	Flatfield, Errol
Paul	Eddy	Flatfield, Errol
Dorothy	Eggleton	Longforgan Orchard owner
Phil	Elliott (Speaker)	Eden Brands Ltd (Scottish Borders)
Mandy	Fooks	WECAN! Community Orchards
John	Hancox	The Children’s Orchard, Glasgow
Dr Crispin W.	Hayes (Facilitator)	CW Hayes Associates: Eco-Consultancy
Rachael	Higgins (Facilitator)	Tayside Biodiversity Partnership
John	Hulbert	Perth Provost
Mrs	Hulbert	Carse of Gowrie Group
David	Imlay	Forestry Commission Scotland/ local resident
Catherine	Lloyd (Facilitator)	Tayside Biodiversity Partnership
Ann	Lolley	Broughty Ferry Environmental Project
Isabel	MacDiarmid	Stirling Orchard Owners
William	MacDiarmid	Stirling Orchard Owners
Felicity	Martin	Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust
Ellen	McCance	WECAN! Community Orchards
Phyllis	McKay	Carse of Gowrie Group
Hazel	McLean	Forestry Commission Scotland
Paul	McLennan (Chair)	Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust
Cllr Peter	Mulheron	Councillor PKC

Diana	Rettie	Farmer, Ballindean
Philip	Rettie	Farmer, Ballindean
Douglas	Ritchie	Slow Food Perth
Kelso	Russell	Almondbank, Perth
Sylvia	Russell	Almondbank, Perth
Willie	Stewart	Tealing Orchard
Tim	Stobbs	Abernyte
Bid	Strachan	Forestry Commission Scotland
Mark	Sutton	Scotherbs UK
Andrew	Thomson	Community Woodland Association
Andrew	Thrieland	Fingask
George	Ward	Kinpowie, Ballindean orchard owner
Ian	Whitehead	Dundee City Council Trees Woods & Greenspace
Elaine	Whiteley	Orchard keeper, Perth
Robert	Wilson	Scotherbs UK
Dr Trefor	Woodford	Carse of Gowrie Paths Group
Total - 46		

APOLOGIES		
<i>Syd</i>	<i>House (Chair)</i>	<i>Forestry Commission Scotland</i>
<i>Roger</i>	<i>Humphry</i>	<i>SCRI</i>
<i>Liz</i>	<i>Houghton</i>	<i>Rose Cottage, Letham</i>
<i>Bill</i>	<i>Wilson</i>	<i>Fife Council - Countryside</i>
<i>Christine</i>	<i>Hall</i>	<i>Scottish Agricultural College</i>
<i>Mike</i>	<i>Strachan</i>	<i>Forestry Commission Scotland</i>
<i>Catherine</i>	<i>Herdman</i>	<i>Megginch Castle, Errol</i>
<i>Susan</i>	<i>McPhee</i>	<i>Forth Valley Food Links</i>
<i>Alistair</i>	<i>Nixon</i>	<i>Errol</i>
<i>Emma</i>	<i>Roe</i>	<i>The Childrens Orchard, Glasgow</i>