

particular news

Winter 2005

Winter Greetings - enjoy the season - eating is a creative act

sustainability is about living together



Cover illustration © Christopher Wormell

Creative eating is championed ...

... in Common Ground's 16 page illustrated pamphlet. It presents arguments for making the connections much more apparent between what we eat and where it comes from. The closer the circle, the fewer the links, the more of a real living people can make, the more stays within the locality, the more positive relationships between nature and culture can sustain the place, heightening confidence and identity.

The pamphlet is full of examples of growers, producers, associations, independent shops and markets who are shortening the chains, providing locally produced, seasonal food and drink which help to maintain distinctive landscapes, wild life habitats and cultural variety.

By choosing to eat more locally grown, organic food in season, we not only get the best from the food and have a healthier diet, but produce less pollution from food-miles, have more contact and influence over the growers / producers, produce less packaging and less food waste. And we can engage more with nature around us and give creatures more encouragement to live with us. We are all implicated, we can all make a difference.



Grasshopper © Brian Grimwood

Local Distinctiveness is worth eating for

Copies of the pamphlet are available as pdf from the website or from Common Ground: single copies free with SAE (A5 envelope + 35p stamp). Multiple copies for the cost of postage.

Look for the new Website Pathway - Producing the Goods within our redesigned websites: www.england-in-particular.info & www.commonground.org.uk

It includes wide-ranging and inspirational examples of good practice. Our thanks to the growers, producers, independent shops and organisations who have allowed us to use them as example, as always busy, pioneering people are among the most generous.

We welcome information and stories about exemplary growers, producers, retailers, organisations to add to the evolving case studies.

What we can do

-  Champion foods that reinforce the particularity of our place.
-  Grow our own food in gardens, allotments, community orchards
-  Buy local foods. Buy food in season.
-  Patronise our local market, W.I. country market, farmers' market, farm shops, independent greengrocers, bakers ...
-  Favour organic produce when possible.
-  Demand more information from the producer.
-  Choose products with minimal or no packaging.
-  Don't be fooled by appearance - misshapen or blemished fruit can be just as tasty and good for you ...
-  Create new meals with left over food - don't waste it.
-  Compost fruit and vegetable peelings.
-  Link food festivals with the places where food is grown and made.
-  Celebrate with our own local event such as Apple Day (October 21).
-  Create a Parish Map or ABC around local food and its making.

Common Ground Rules for LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

We are lucky to live near our office in Shaftesbury and able to walk or cycle to work. It gives us a chance to contemplate the changes that are taking place along the road that leads from the edge of the town to the centre.

Places are dynamic, and change is constant. We do not want to fossilise places or be over prescriptive but, as with planning guidelines, Common Ground's rules for local distinctiveness are offered as a way of looking and ensuring that changes are for the better and benefit the place and its people.

The most frequent change along our road is the removal of the boundary hedge and replacement with slatted wooden fencing, often



Painted in an unnatural red-brown colour. This not only breaks up the unifying framework of the boundaries along the road and looks ugly, but fences are not nearly so generous to nature as hedges. Most hedges provide shelter and berries, and if they are dense enough, nesting places for small birds beyond the predation of magpies and squirrels.

Conservation Area policy may stipulate what kind of boundary walls or hedges are permissible. But outside Conservation Areas there is less control. Village Design Statements can provide supplementary guidance to reflect the special character of a parish.

In many cities and suburbs, householders are paving over their front gardens and turning them into off-road parking bays. This obviously reduces the amenity value of the road and reduces property values, but also increases rainwater run-off, deprives street trees of water and provides no room for wild life.

One of the joys of the walk to work is to see and listen to the birds. We are lucky to still have a colony of house sparrows. They spend much of their time chirping from within a tall remnant field hedge, but prefer to nest in ivy or Virginia creeper growing up the walls or in spaces under the eaves of the houses. Unfortunately some of the roofs have been refurbished recently and any holes or gaps into the roof space have been filled in, leaving no places for the birds to nest. Nest boxes have been put up, but they seem less attractive to sparrows than roof spaces.

Shaftesbury, perhaps the highest town in England is situated on a greensand spur 700 feet above sea level. Most of the houses in the old part of the town are built with this greenish-grey soft, permeable stone. Due to water seepage or to fashion, a growing number of householders are painting or rendering their greenstone walls and so reducing the impact of this locally distinctive material. We should welcome advice on how buildings constructed with greensand can be kept waterproof without resorting to rendering or whitewash. Listed greensand buildings cannot be rendered without permission from the District Council. Do we see the locally typical as boring, or are there genuine problems of weather-proofing?

The summer sky above our town used to be alive with house martins and swifts. Their numbers have declined and the removal of house martins nests from the outside of buildings has not helped. It takes the birds hundreds of journeys carrying beakfuls of wet mud (often not easy to come by) to construct their nests under the eaves. The joy the birds bring outweighs any inconvenience of a few droppings that can easily be cleared away. These nests should be protected by law.

In the centre of town, the High Street widens before it makes a dog leg turn. Once known as the Cornmarket, it provides space for the small weekly market – Shaftesbury has had a market since at least the Middle Ages. The weekly market and W.I. Country Market enables us to buy direct from local producers. The monthly Farmers' Market offers food from within a 30 mile radius.

Authentic paving stones have long gone from Shaftesbury's High Street, but the concrete slab pavements are still edged with a variety of fine kerbstones. We hope they will find a new use in the forthcoming town centre enhancement scheme.

The loss of family-run shops to chain stores that homogenise the high street is a familiar phenomenon country-wide. One obvious response is to patronise the local shops, only using a chain store or superstore as a last resort. The New Economics Foundation, who devised the term 'clone town', have found that "local authorities and innovative town councils are already using existing aspects of planning law to protect and enhance diversity". Find out what policy your local authority holds, and work to change it if it does not sufficiently support local shops.

AK

10 ways to enhance the local distinctiveness of your place:

1. *Make sure the boundary between your garden and the road is in the local idiom.*
2. *Hang on to and look after garden walls made of local stone and brick.*
3. *Get together to produce a Design Statement that can be used by the local planning authority.*
4. *Ask your local authority to prevent the paving over of front gardens and removal of boundary fences/hedges or walls.*
5. *Make sure your house is bird-friendly. If you are having your roof refurbished, ask the builder to leave places for the birds to enter/nest.*
6. *Campaign to reveal the geology - the local brick, tiles and stone of the locality.*
7. *Value buildings made from local materials. Seek advice from your local authority's building conservation team before considering painting or rendering your building – this should be a last resort.*
8. *Do not remove house martins or swallows nests. They need our help more than ever. Make space in your loft space for swifts. Refrain from using pesticides and insecticides and let the birds do the job for you.*
9. *The market and the market place are historic and cultural gifts to any town, and add to its prosperity. Campaign to keep your market place and patronise your local produce markets.*
10. *Support your local independent shops – they are a dying breed.*

England in Particular The Book - Progress

Fen Skating © Glyn Godwin



Yes, at last we are in the final stages, Hodder & Stoughton will publish our new book **England in Particular: a celebration of the commonplace, the local, the vernacular and the distinctive** in May 2006. With hundreds of black & white illustrations amongst nearly 600 essays organised from A - Z we hope this will provoke increasing interest in locality and the value and importance of the everyday richness in our surroundings.

Land Lines

BBC Radio 4 - 13.30 for six Wednesdays from 4 January 2006.

Land Lines is the puzzle that connects people, place, local history and natural history. Local listeners challenge landscape detectives to read the clues in a landscape and unravel its story.

Common Ground's Sue Clifford and Richard Purslow from Windgather Press join presenter, Brett Westwood and producer, Grant Sonnex in programmes 1(4 Jan), 4 (25 Jan) and 6 (8 Feb) in Cornwall, County Durham and Yorkshire. Programme 1 is from Looe in Cornwall and includes the 6th Century Giant's Hedge (an extraordinary 6 mile long earthwork), a drowned landscape, the origin of the longest long distance footpath in Britain, and the link between smuggling and pilchards.

Save Our Orchards

We have extended our Orchards Gazetteer online so that you can search county by county for orchard fruit, produce, local orchard groups, community orchards and so on. Please keep us up to date.

We have been in touch with many producers who use orchard fruit to make: fruit purées, damson cheese, elderflower sorbet, membrillo, fruit vinegar, apple chips, apple ice cream and the more traditional apple pies, juices, cider and perry to ascertain the buoyancy of demand, to encourage participation in Apple Day and to discover their role in helping to enhance the particularity of their places.

Apple Day 2005 at Lackham, Wiltshire



We are still losing traditional and modern orchards but there is an upsurge of interest by small entrepreneurs. New orchards are being planted with local varieties and surplus fruits are being transformed by new artisan producers who are helping to sustain cherished landscapes and traditions.

Apple Day (October 21st) was celebrated in hundreds of events across the country including by the Archers in Ambridge. Common Ground also published **Apple Games and Customs** which may explain why there was so much griggling and a'scraggling, longest peel competitions, dookin' for apples and who knows what else going on.



Apple Day 2005 at Glastonbury, Somerset

Congratulations to the winners of the **Longest Peel Competitions** who once more tested our credulity! We look forward to next year's entries.

Adults

- 1st Barney Hilken from Bolton - 708cm.
- 2nd Terri Ghoneim from Chelmsford - 314cm.
- 3rd Mrs Joan Phillimore from Damerham, Hants - 234cm.

16 and under

- 1st Heather Blanshard from Skelton, Cumbria - 298cm.
- 2nd David Grogan from Wolverton, Bucks - 97cm.
- 3rd Amberly & Sarah from Bath - 93cm.



Apple Day 2005, Royal Horticultural Society, Hyde Hall, Essex

New publications



Apple Games and Customs brings together traditional games and new ones, stories, songs, rhymes, seasonal customs, apple gifting, wassailing, cures, divinations and superstitions from across the country.

If you are interested in trying apple pie beds, crabbing the parson, fork apple, worshipping, dookin' for apples, bite apple, griggling, a'scraggling, dubbing apples, souling, pothoring and ponking, a

cattin', going a gooding, pig face Sunday, whistle wassail night, clemening, worshipping, howling and youling...then this is the book for you!

With an introduction by Sophie Grigson and the new cover painting by David Holmes, the book will be available in independent bookshops and direct from Common Ground for £5.95 plus £2.00 postage and packing (cheques payable to Common Ground).



The Apple War

The storm troops have landed,
The red and the green,
Their pips on their shoulders,
Their skin brilliantine.

Uniform, orderly,
Saleable, ambitious -
Gala and Granny
And Golden Delicious.

Quarter them, they're tasteless;
They've cotton-wool juice,
But battalions of thousands
Routinely seduce.

In shy hen-haunted orchards
Twigs faintly drum,
Patient as partisans
Whose time has almost come,

From Worcester and Somerset,
Sussex and Kent,
They'll ramble singing,
A fruity regiment.

Down with Cinderella's kind,
Perfect toxic, scarlet;
Back comes the old guard
Costard, Crispin, Russet.

James Grieve, Ashmead Kernel,
Coppin, Kingston Black -
Someone has protected them.
They're coming back.

U. A. Fanthorpe

The Apple War © UA Fanthorpe, from *Queueing for the Sun, Peterloo Poets*, 2003. This poem (above) is available as a simple card (A6 b&w) at 25p per card.

We have other poetry cards about apples :
'When wintering birds gathered under an apple tree..'
by *Michael Hamburger*.
'Apple Trees'
by *Leonard Clark*.
We thank the poets for their generosity.

(left) Andy Goldsworthy - Ice Sculptures.
Three different colour cards with envelopes. £4.00 inc. p&ep.

Common Ground
Gold Hill House, 21 High Street, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8JE
01747 850820 info@commonground.org.uk

Contact us for previous copies of this newsletter, or download them as PDF files from our web-site.

www.commonground.org.uk
www.england-in-particular.info

Common Ground is a national arts and environment charity. We play a unique role in linking nature and culture, working to inform, inspire and involve people in enjoying and taking more responsibility for their own locality. Parish Maps, Community Orchards, the Water Market and Apple Day are a few of our projects. **Producing the Goods**, champions production and consumption that reflects and sustains locality, nature and culture.



Common Ground and **Producing the Goods** are funded by **Defra Environmental Action Fund**, the **John Ellerman Foundation**, the **Tedworth Charitable Trust**, the **Headley Trust**, the **Garfield Weston Foundation** and others.

Charity no. 326335.