No. 19 **Sustainable Blewbury** January 2018
www.sustainable-blewbury.org.uk

**For the latest news and more information, please see our website**

## *Sustainable Blewbury news*

### Two talks at the Manor Barn

#### *Restoring England's threatened chalk streams: Paul St. Pierre (Environment Agency)*

**Monday, 5 March in Manor Barn, 8.00 pm**

Paul St. Pierre will talk about work to restore chalkland rivers, with particular reference to the Kennet and Lambourn valleys, and also relevant to Blewbury's Mill Brook. Chalk streams are a unique and rare habitat, typified by crystal clear waters and abundant wildlife. Southern England has the highest concentration of these rivers in the world. However, in recent decades they have deteriorated due to man's involvement and climate change. Hear how we are restoring these natural wonders back to their full glory! *Profits will be donated to Water Aid.*

#### *Tropical forests, people and climate change: Dr. Catherine Long*

**Monday, 26 March in Manor Barn, 8.00 pm**

Catherine Long (who grew up in Blewbury) will talk about her work supporting local communities and indigenous peoples in Africa and Latin America to secure their rights to control and manage forests – and to engage in global debates on climate change and other issues that affect their lives directly. This includes deforestation and its causes, along with some success stories about community and indigenous managed forests, as well as recent information about biofuels and wood pellets that affects the UK directly. *Profits will be donated to a charity of Catherine's choice.*

**For each talk, tickets are £6.00 including wine & nibbles, and will be on sale at the Post Office, or on the door (if not sold out).**

### What next?

#### *April: Sustainable Blewbury AGM*

#### *June/July: SB 25th Anniversary Celebrations!*

Blewbury Environment Group was founded 25 years ago, in 1993. It evolved into SB around 2009, so 2018 is our 25th anniversary. We are planning a big celebration!

## *Interesting web links*

- Global warming continues: 2017 was one of the three warmest years on record. Following on from 2014, 2015 and 2016 each breaking the record for warmest year, what makes 2017 particularly significant is that it is by far the warmest year ever recorded in which there was no extra short-term warming from an El Niño event in the Pacific Ocean. The 18 warmest years have *all* been since 1998. See for example **bit.ly/2CvOlEi**.
- A mixture of good and bad news on renewable energy in the UK. In 2017, wind farms generated more electricity than coal on more than three-quarters of days, and solar generated more than coal on more than half the days. Overall, renewables generated more than three times the electricity that coal did. See **bit.ly/2pND6lN**.
  On the other hand, in 2017 UK investment in wind, solar and other renewable sources dropped by 56% to $10.3bn, while worldwide it rose by 3% to $333.5bn. Alan Whitehead, shadow energy minister, said: "The government's …policy lurches away from clean solar power and onshore wind has spooked investors. See **bit.ly/2mC0MVr**.

- Like a number of other cities and many organisations, New York City has decided to divest from fossil fuels for its various pension funds; the current fossil-fuel investments are about $5bn. New York is also bringing the fight against climate change to the fossil fuel companies. The city is taking five fossil fuel firms – BP, Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Shell and ConocoPhillips – to court on the grounds that that New York has suffered from flooding and erosion due to climate change, and is seeking to shift the costs of protecting the city from looming climate change impacts back on to the companies that have done helped to create this existential threat. See **bit.ly/2EuYXk9**.


## *The Mike Edmunds Community Orchard – one year on*

*By John Ogden*

The Community Orchard Movement has been around for some years now. And some of our neighbouring villages have planted orchards – it was time for Blewbury, with its long fruit-growing tradition, to catch up! And so, as a project of Sustainable Blewbury, a group of volunteers, the Community Orchard Group, or COGgers, started planning in 2016, secured a grant from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to cover all the costs, and planted 47 trees in December 2016. The orchard is planted on Tickers Folly Field in a wonderful setting under the North Wessex Downs, part of it in a wildflower meadow.

The orchard has been named for Mike Edmunds, who was a leader in preserving and enhancing Blewbury's environment and Sustainable Blewbury's founding chair. In June 2017 we held a village picnic on the field to celebrate the opening of the orchard.

One year on and the trees appear to be thriving! Certainly, and against expectation, none have needed to be replaced. It is an eclectic mix – cooking and eating apples, pears, plums and cherries and a few 'surprises': two each of medlars, quince, cobnut and sweet chestnut. (There is a full list below.) Wherever possible we have selected traditional Oxfordshire and Berkshire varieties, and also asked the village for its favourites. It is probably another five years before the orchard will become really productive, and we are often asked 'who can pick the fruit?' The answer is – anybody. It is an orchard for the community.

And the community will need to continue to put in some effort to ensure the continued health and well-being of the orchard. During 2017 we organised watering sessions during very dry spells, as well as weeding and pruning days, though pruning will only be a major task after few years. Within the next two months we will have another weeding session primarily to keep the turf well back from the trees to make mowing easier. But none of this takes long – we have always had a very good turnout of volunteers, the orchard has been accepted by the village.

There are more photos and details at **www.sustainable-blewbury.org.uk/orchard.htm**.

Anybody who would like to become involved with the orchard project, or indeed with any of Sustainable Blewbury's various activities, should contact John Ogden: **jogden@blewbury.net**.

| **Eating Apples (14)** | **Cooking Apples (5)** | **Plums & Gages (6)** | **Miscellaneous (8)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ashmeads Kernel | Arthur Turner | Cambridge Gage | Nottingham Medlar |
| Blenheim Orange | Davies Seedling | Early Transparent Gage | Royal Medlar |
| Charles Ross | Newton Wonder | Opal | Portugal Quince |
| Devonshire Quarrenden | Reverend Wilks | Victoria | Vranja Quince |
| Discovery | Rosy Bramley | Warwickshire Drooper | Kentish Cobnut (2) |
| Egremont Russet | **Eating Pears (6)** | Whites Early Increment | Sweet Chestnut (2) |
| Lord Lambourne | Beth | **Eating Cherries (5)** | |
| Mrs. Phillimore | Beurre Hardy | Lapins | |
| Orleans Reinette | Concorde | Napoleon Bigarreau | |
| Oxford Conquest | Conference | Stella (2) | |
| Oxford Sunrise | Merton Pride | Sunburst | |
| Peggy's Pride | Windsor | **Cooking Cherries (2)** | |
| Ribston Pippin | **Cooking Pear (1)** | Morello (2) | |
| Winston | Ulvedale St. Germain | | |

## *Ash dieback*

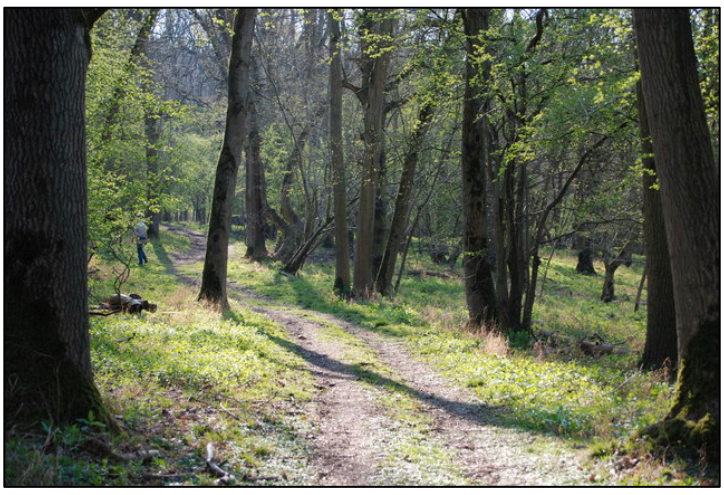
*By Jo Lakeland*

We hear about ash dieback fairly regularly these days, and you may have noticed warning posters going up around the village again, but just how dangerous is it?

**Wytham Woods**

The answer is that it is *very* dangerous to our ash trees. Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute said in 2016: "With over 120 million ash trees in Britain, the tree is the third most common broadleaved tree in the UK, and with over 90% set to be wiped out by the twin threats of ash dieback and the emerald ash borer, our woods are in serious trouble. A lot of important work to combat the disease, understand the impacts of the huge ash tree population loss and to find solutions is taking place right here in Oxfordshire", at Wytham Woods.

But on January 2nd this year a Times article began: "Wytham Woods, Oxford University's outdoor laboratory (for 75 years), contracts ash die back. … The disease was first confirmed in 2012, came from continental Europe and is caused by a fungus. It has been spreading across England and, for most ash trees, it is a death sentence. … Last year the first tree of Wytham showed the tell-tale signs of the disease. That means that soon as much as a third of the wood will be gone."



**Living Ash Project**

And even closer to us, the Earth Trust launched their Living Ash Project on November 13th 2013. This aimed to "identify ash trees with good tolerance to Chalara ash dieback. … Evidence from Denmark, where Chalara ash dieback is more prevalent, indicates that approximately 1% of trees show good resistance to the disease. … The identification of resistant trees is needed as the basis for a genetically diverse and resilient population for future productive woodland planting. Quickly identifying resistant trees and using them in a breeding programme will enable us to rapidly produce resilient trees." Early in 2015 Ash die-back was recorded in Oxfordshire and in October 2015 it was recorded in Paradise Wood, the Earth Trust's research woodland.

"Ash is the third most common species of tree in the UK and dominates many of our native woodlands. It is valued for both its benefit to wildlife – it creates ideal habitats for a variety of mammals, insects and plants – and for its timber qualities. Despite being one of the toughest hardwoods, ash is flexible and therefore often used for tools and furniture, construction as well as firewood and charcoal." Ash dieback should not spread through treated ash wood being used for furniture etc. (Extracted from **bit.ly/2DQ8EwW** and **bit.ly/2BvdM4k**.)

**Where did it come from and how does it spread?**

It is a fungus, and it was first confirmed in the UK in February 2012, when it was found in a consignment of infected trees sent from a nursery in the Netherlands to a nursery in Buckinghamshire, England. Transport of infected trees is one of the main methods of spread. Being a fungus, its spores are carried up to 10 miles by the wind, hence the advice that *the spread of ash die-back can be slowed by burning, burying or composting fallen ash leaves.*

> The Forestry Commission website **bit.ly/2EbNmI5** includes advice on identifying ash trees (the most obvious winter feature is its smooth grey ash-coloured bark), the symptoms of infection and most importantly, what to do if you think you have found an infected tree.

The overall pattern of its spread is outwards from East Anglia. The Forestry Commission has two online maps showing the country divided up into 10 km OS squares – one printable: **bit.ly/2DCBIoq** and the other interactive: **chalaramap.fera.defra.gov.uk**. The squares are colour-coded for the year from 2012 to 2017 in which ash dieback was reported in that square. Analysis shows that by 2017 Ash die-back had been confirmed in 63% of England's 10 km squares, 73% of Wales', but only 19% of Scotland and 9% of Northern Ireland. The squares also show that although no infection has been reported in the Blewbury square, it has been reported in Abingdon, Wallingford, Central Oxford, Reading and Swindon, *all in the last two years*.

The Forestry Commission needs the public to help by reporting infected trees. The images below come from their website **www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-8zlksx.**

The important thing to look for in winter is the diamond shaped lesions or scars usually surrounding a dead side branch (left-hand photo above). There is a much greater variety of symptoms in summer, including die-back of the crown of the tree (centre and right-hand photos above).

***We have a substantial programme of activities in and around the village and we urgently need more volunteers in all areas. Getting involved is fun and can make a very positive contribution to village life and local environment. If you'd like to get involved in what we do, or to receive our free Newsletter, email us at info@sustainable-blewbury.org.uk or phone John Ogden at 01235 850372.***