

## THUNDRIDGE COMMUNITY ORCHARD

*Received a CPRE Hertfordshire Environment Award in 2018 and were visited by our Lead Environment Judge, Dorothy Abel Smith, in May 2019 to see how they were getting on. This is Dorothy's report on the visit:*

Jean's Orchard, as it is known locally, was formed early in 2018 and received the Environment Award that year. The late Jean Hobbs wished her orchard to be put into trust for the community. The village orchard covers just under an acre of land.

The purpose of my visit was to look at progress made since 2018, I met with Neil Bell, Chairman of Trustees, Jane Harris, Trustee, liaison and publicity and Steve Beech, active volunteer and website (jeansorchard.uk).

Q: Has this award given you and your supporter's confidence to continue?

R: Yes, it was a great boost and very welcome at the time when forming a charitable trust.

Q: What progress has the Orchard made in the last year?

A: The heritage fruit trees planted in 2018 have done well and are expected to produce a good crop this year. The home-made jams have proved popular. Large numbers of bulbs have been planted. Extra storage and visitor space has been created. Books, magazines and photographs have been introduced and the CPRE Hertfordshire Rural Living Award is proudly displayed.

Q: What are your plans to move the project forward in 2019 and beyond to make the Orchard sustainable and does this mean fundraising?

A: Fundraising is necessary to enable development. Bees will be introduced, garden tools and good perimeter fencing are required. More bulbs and fruit trees will be planted and a stumpery created using up surplus timber. Further arts and crafts courses are planned for all ages and perhaps poetry reading will be introduced.

Q: How many volunteers are working here and is interest increasing when people can see what has already been achieved?

A: Saturday morning is the main working time and usually 8-10 volunteers come. There are around 16 in all. The enthusiasm and interest is certainly increasing as the orchard develops.

Q: Thundridge Primary School - do the children take part and what interests them most?

A: School groups came in 2018 but there will be greater interest when there is more to see and do. Education plays an important role as part of the charitable undertaking.

Q: Conservation was one of your chief aims - are you pleased with progress made since you began the project? Has the orchard attracted wildlife?

A: Yes. Birds are increasing and we have badgers, bats and hedgehogs.

Q: What are your open days and are there plans to increase public access?

A: The orchard is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays but we have to respect the privacy of our neighbours. Access is permitted by the adjoining owner. As the orchard develops, there may be opportunities for extended opening.

Q: Finally, it was the late Jean Hobbs' wish to form a Community Orchard - would she be pleased with what you have achieved in less than two years?

A: Yes!

