

The  
Cidermaking  
year

2005

By Rose Grant



Cider by Rosie



# The Cidermaking Year by Rose Grant

## 2005



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## JANUARY

From UKCider

### GREGG'S PIT PERRY

I bought some bottles of Gregg's Pit perry when I was at Much Marcle for Big Apple weekend and decided to save it for Christmas. This has been a real treat that I think is worthy of mention, because I am not usually that fond of perry. It was smooth clear and golden nectar that had really retained the flavour of the pears it was made from. These were Aylton Red and Blakeney. The still version was delicious and the sparkling was perfect for seeing in the New Year. (And none of the hangover that comes with sparkling wine).

Well done James Marsden. Now I know why you win awards at Putley!

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### MARK'S VIGO PRESS

I have had one of these presses for about 12 years and it has always suffered from the opposite problem. Under full pressure the pomace tends to ooze upwards between the edge of the piston and the inside of the basket. The problem is easily solved by using a cloth within the basket to contain the pomace. However it looks as though the manufacturers of the press realised that there was too much clearance and increased the piston diameter and in doing so, have made it too tight.

This subject is no big deal but having just changed ISP, I wanted to say something to see if I am still able to post on UKCider. The group seems to be unnaturally quiet lately. Perhaps it is the season to be snoozing (after much cider drinking). Either that, or everybody is too busy messing about with medlars!

Rose



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## FEBRUARY

From UKCider

### BAG-IN-BOXES

I have used two types of bag in boxes. The tough plastic one is often supplied by home brew shops and is quite expensive at around £5 for the 10 litre version. The bag has a diagonal seam and it collapses like an old fashioned fire bellows as the wine or cider is withdrawn. Unfortunately the plastic is too stiff which gives it a tendency to glug air in, when the box is getting near to empty, thus defeating its main advantage.

The multilayer thin plastic type that are used for wine are the ones made by Smurfit in France and are those that are now supplied by Vigo. The makers recommend these for short term storage of up to 3 months. I did a trial of this type last year, filling two 10 litre boxes with my cider in May. I then tasted the cider from these, every so often, throughout the summer. It was fine with no noticeable deterioration. The boxes were in my cider barn and subjected to ambient temperature variation, but the cider was still good enough to refresh me whilst cider making in October. I had by then begun to notice a slight edge to it, but it was not unpleasant.

A few weeks ago I tried the boxes again and the cider had acetified. This was not unexpected after 9 months of storage, especially after reading of Andrew's studies with regard to the porosity and permeability of plastic bottles and juice drums. However the trial clearly showed that cider will keep very well in these boxes for 3 or 4 months. If cider for sale is still left in them after 3 months, then something has to be wrong with the cider or the outlet selling it! I think they are a good solution for the small scale producer, now that they can be obtained at a sensible price.

I have followed Weston's use of the bag in box with interest. Their 20 litre boxes are a great idea for parties. The organic vintage in the 3 litre box is an attractive impulse buy in supermarkets. Definitely clever stuff. I think they have got it right. Good luck to them, because their ciders are nice as well.

Rose

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Perhaps I should bottle some of my oak fermented cider. I had intended to sell it all in 10 ltr bag in boxes. Incidentally, Vigo has just started selling the Smurfit range of bag in box at very reasonable prices. The 10 litre one is £1.65 inc. VAT. They also sell the 3 and 5 litre versions. I hope they will extend the range to include the 20 litre as I believe this is the future for selling cider to pubs. There is



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no problem with air spoilage and they are available at a throw away price. Several producers have told me that pubs tend to lose polypins and they are not cheap to replace.

The next Vigo catalogue is not due until June. I discovered their new bag in box range by pestering them. I had previously tried to do business directly with Smurfit on line. All was going well until I asked them to quote for 500 off. Then silence! Vigo has obviously been able to buy an attractive quantity, which is good news. For your information the prices of the B in Bs from Vigo, including Vat are:

- 3 litres      £0.94
- 5 litres      £1.00
- 10 litres     £1.65
- (first price break is at 400 off. Ask for Mavis)

Cheers,

Rose

PS. I get no commission for this, But Vigo if you are out there, I'd like a bit off that stainless steel mill I 'm saving up for!



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## MARCH

From UKCider

### SUPPLIERS OF CIDER BOTTLES

Quite a number of us, who are small scale producers of cider and apple juice in UK, use bottles produced by Bristol Bottle Co Ltd. This firm is happy to deliver a single pallet of bottles. As an example, I paid £ 221 for a pallet of 812 green 75 cl and 1000 screw on plastic caps, earlier this year. Clear glass and bottles in other sizes are also available by the pallet load.

The driver told me that he had several other pallets to be delivered in my area and that my "one off" requirement was not unusual as he travelled all over the place to small producers. Whether this extends to Ireland I do not know, but it could be worth asking. Tel 0117 9869667. Best of luck with the cider. You've got some good apples there. Could be a promising market too, if you can wean them off the Black Stuff!

Rose

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### PUMPS

Thanks for the ideas. I am using a small pump that works at about the same rate as hospital pumps. It is the Europump, an Italian food grade pump sold by Vigo at £60. I mention this in case others may be thinking of getting one. It works fine, is self priming but slow at about 1 gall/min. OK for 5 gall fermenters but torturous for pumping out barrels. Unfortunately it also overheats after 15 minutes and is switched off by its thermal cut out. I have been able to get round this by putting a small fan next to it. That way it will pump out a whole barrel before cutting out. But it takes time! I want to get the Okoflow that does 11 galls/min (but costs £370)

Rose

What a wealth of info on pumps! Very useful. Thank you all.

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I checked all the barrel bung holes as soon as I saw Jeremy's posting about the bilge pumps. The holes range from 40 to 60 mm diameter so these pumps would be fine as they are 38 mm. They are OK for clean water and must be corrosion resistant and appear to be totally encased in plastic. They look like being a possibility. The only downside is that they a LV DC power supply or a car battery. The pumps are obviously designed for marine use as they use 12 or 24 v DC.

Logic tells me that Roy would not be making his consistently good cider if there was any problem with having the Clark pump immersed in it, year after year. These pumps also seem to a very cost effective solution for vats. (Machine mart currently has the 400A on offer at £35 and it has a float switch) This could be a good pump for automatically pumping juice from the press bucket to the vat.

I had a look at Gary's dishwasher pump. That looks like the real business, totally stainless steel. I have often marveled at the vast amount of stainless steel in dishwashers when considering how cheap they have become. Now Gary, if there is a pump like that in mine, it must be time to get a new dishwasher! I could have a state of the art dishwasher AND a cider pump for less than the price of Vigo's Okoflow!

Rose.

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### VIGO MILL FROM EBAY

Q: Is that you who won this Rose?

A: Yes-!! Tis I, delighted I am to be sure!

Sorry if it was you bidding against me, but I really wanted that mill. I intended to buy one this year so it was a good saving to be able to get one at just over half the price. Now I am looking for an Okoflow pump, as also featured in the Vigo catalogue. If anyone has one for sale please let me know.

I must say a big thank you to 'Yarlington Mill' who advised UKCider that the mill was on eBay. I will look forward to pulverising your eponymous apples with it later this year.

Rose

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Thanks Mark and Ray for your kind and generous postings.

I'm afraid I was still in post eBay euphoria when I replied last night. Please excuse the triumphalist undertone with the thought that I will do penance for my gain by having to drive to Arundel! Driving



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east /west across the south of England is gruesome compared with going north. It is probably better going via London!

The flood of postings since the auction has shown that there would be considerable interest in collective purchasing of cider making equipment, probably sourced in Eastern Europe. This is an excellent idea as there are a good many things, as well as mills, that are overpriced. I mentioned the 'food grade' pump by Okoflow and why, oh why, do stainless steel vats have to be so hideously expensive? Stainless steel products are getting much cheaper lately. The other day I saw a SS waste paper bin that would hold 50 litres for £40.

I would be pleased to join a group purchase scheme. It could also benefit the quality of cider generally; if small producers could afford to throw away their old barrels and ex juice drums! How sweet it would be to see Vigo knocked off their expensive perch.

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### ALUMINIUM VATS

I have obtained two large ex vineyard fermenting vats. They are called Sputniks, which describes their appearance rather well. They are made of solid aluminium and have an internal enamel coating. The coating is chipped in a few places especially around the pipe connector bosses. I am in a dilemma as whether to risk using them for blending my cider in. Can anybody advise me as to the effect of aluminium in contact with cider? I note that my press racks from Vigo are held together with aluminium rivets so I'm wondering if this metal is permissible in moderation.

The best course would be to repaint the bare places in the vats, but I do not know what would be best to do it with. I thought that perhaps car body repair epoxy would be suitable. Has anybody else had this sort of problem? I would be interested to know how you got over it.

Rose.

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Q: is aluminium safe for long term cider storage?

It is because aluminium is no longer used for cooking that I am concerned about the vats. We have cooked using stainless steel pots for many years, although I must confess to using a large aluminium dixie for heating the mulled cider for our wassail party. Nobody in the village seems to be showing early signs of dementia just yet!



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I had half expected Andrew to come back and say that cider on aluminium would react to produce an unwholesome salt called aluminium somethingate that would give a nasty twang to the cider! Anyway it's a good idea to ask Vigo as I think they were the original supplier of the vats.

A: Aluminium and cider are generally recommended for *transient* contact only (e.g. Pollard and Beech 'Cidermaking' 1957).

Andrew, thank you for your comprehensive reply. I have not yet risked using these vats and have blended by the complicated process of pumping cider from one oak barrel to another, then to another, etc. However after the over- oaking experience of last year, that I mentioned recently, I am tasting frequently to make sure it does not happen again. As soon as I feel happy with the degree of oaking, then I will need to transfer the cider to the bulk vessels for final storage and maturation. I will need to find a suitable food grade lacquer to repair the internal coating of the vats, before I do this. It was interesting to learn that aluminium drinks cans are internally lacquered. I wonder what the lacquer is.

Thanks again, Rose

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### THOMAS HARDY AND PLANTING

I enjoyed reading that, as I long been an admirer of Thomas Hardy. I think of Giles Winterborne in the Woodlanders when I'm planting trees in the orchard. Hardy described how Giles planted with the strongest part of the root system pointing towards the prevailing wind because it gives the best anchorage to the new tree. It is basic mechanics, but I've never seen this good advice in a horticultural book. My orchard is exposed to the prevailing southwesterly, so I always plant like Giles.

Rose

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### ALUMINIUM VATS AGAIN

In case anybody is still worrying about my aluminium vats. They have been used for wine by the vineyard that sold them to me and they are definitely not pre 1970. The vineyard bought them from Vigo so they can't be all that old.( I should think that Alex Hill was still only making his own cider at Clayhidon in the 70s .) The enamel in the vats is rather a shiny sort of heat cured paint by the look of it and grey in colour, not at all like the hard white enamel found on mugs and old fashioned wash bowls. I am also pleased to say that the problem has been solved due to the great kindness of Gary



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Awdey, who has sent me some food grade epoxy, all the way from the USA! I will be able to touch up the bare places with this and then be able to use the vats with confidence. Thanks again Gary.

Rose



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### APRIL

From UKCider

### POWERSTOCK FESTIVAL

If any of you dear folk are going next Friday evening, 15th April, please note that it is in Powerstock village hall, (not at the Three Horseshoes as shown on the Wiki) and it starts at 6.30 pm. Powerstock is a small village in the back of beyond, 5 miles north east of Bridport.

Nick, who organises it, told me that the Festival is going from strength to strength. Last year over 300 people attended. He said that the idea was to promote a resurgence in the growing of cider apples and the making of real cider in Dorset. It looks as though the aim has been met. When the first festival was held 3 years ago the contributors were mostly commercial makers from Somerset and beyond, whereas this year there is only one commercial maker, Nigel an excellent cider maker of Bridge Farm Cider, West Coker, near Yeovil ( almost in Dorset ). Now get this, the other FOURTEEN ciders available are produced by local amateurs! Nick said that the interest in real cider has grown phenomenally in west Dorset. We are beginning to rival Putley down here. Watch this space 3CCPA! Do not be dismissive of the term 'amateur' either. I was informed that the Chideock group make 1200 gallons and drink it all themselves! Can you picture it?

Those interested in the size of glass discussion we had recently, may like to know that this event sells the cider in wine glasses at 40p a go. It could still be a challenge to try all 15! Sorry 16..... they are going to try and squeeze a box of mine in as well.

Hope to see some of you there. (will wear one of Ray's UKCider badges)

Rose.

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### AFTERWARDS.....

The festival was a great success. The cider bar was so packed with people that it was more akin to a rugby scrum. It was a major feat to get round to see what was on offer, never mind being able to taste it all! I did manage to try a fair sample, by sheer persistence and was fascinated by the range of flavours. There was the inevitable old scrumpy partly ascetic style through to a deliciously smooth cider blended from Sweet Coppin and Brown's Apple. I also tried the Suicider from Devon. This had a rich and distinctive flavour that I enjoyed. It would have been interesting to ask what apple varieties were used but conversation was nigh on impossible. After all this excitement I was pleased to spot



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Nigel from Bridge Farm Cider and enjoyed a glass of his ever dependable Dry. Very drinkable and in my opinion, what real cider is all about. I had not expected to see perry down here, but there was a lot of interest in a perry on offer from Bo Rutter of Shaftesbury. I thought that it compared favourably with the excellent Gregg's Pit. Whilst I'm full of admiration for the organisers of this event, it is obvious that it is a victim of its success and needs somewhere more spacious. There was just too much to fit into a village hall what with all the cakes, pies and homemade jams. There was even a band within yards of the cider bar.

Rose.

Ps. Glad to see I'm not the only one cursing Westons for their label glue. Roy, now you know why I gave you the 3 pinters! Will be trying the dish washer tablet next time. Sounds promising.

---

I have been talking to the landlord of the Royal Oak at Okeford Fitzpaine. He intends to have a beer and cider festival in June. This village is in the Blackmoor Vale just south of Sturminster Newton in what was once an intensive cider apple growing area. The old boys who 'inhabit' the Royal Oak still remember those times and they just love the opportunity to taste some real cider. The pub sells Burrow Hill and Weston's Scrumpy. My cider has won the approval of this venerable tasting panel and will also be on sale there. I will post the date of this festival when it has been arranged. The landlord would like it to become an annual event.

Rose.

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### PICKING AND STORAGE

Q How to judge ripeness, and benefits of storing apples post harvest

A An interesting subject.

I appreciate the dilemma, being near 'Windy Wellington'. I have not forgotten how we were blasted out of Wellington harbour on the Picton ferry!

People often say that it is a big mistake to make cider from under-ripe apples, which is obvious since they have not developed their full sugar potential. Then there is the opposite wisdom where ripe fruit is stored to soften, as this facilitates milling and increases the juice yield. The cider makers of old often did this and there are famous photographs of huge heaps of apples outside cider factories



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and farmers putting apples in the loft of barns for preliminary storage. It is a job to know what to do for the best.

I can see the argument for softening the apples but I hate making cider with apples that are going bad, which is what seems to happen all too easily, if you leave them lying around. My present policy is to wait until the first apples fall. (We can have strong gales in the Autumn too). I then see if the rest can be shaken off. If so, then I will take the lot and mill them within the next few days. If the apples will not shake off I leave them and just mix those that have fallen prematurely with the apples from an earlier ripening variety. This seems to be a good compromise. The juice tastes sweet and the SG is usually promising. The workload is reduced as there are not many bad bits to be cut out. It seems instinctively to be the hygienic way of going about it.

It will be interesting to hear other views on this, as it is not easy to tell if a cider apple is ripe by tasting it.

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### COMMUNITY ORCHARD

I have been trying to start a project of planting a community orchard on a piece of common land in our village. There used to be several little orchards here up until the 50s, one of these being totally planted with Tom Putt cider apple trees. It would be nice to put a little of it back again and we could hold village events there, like wassailing.

The Parish Council are generally in favour but one councillor is adamant that common land cannot be converted to orchard even though it would still remain open to the public at all times.

Does anyone have any experience of the legal situation that is involved here? There is a fair bit on the web about grazing rights and the right to gather firewood, turf or acorns, but I can find nothing about orchards.

Rose

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### A CONTACT COMMON GROUND (THEIR BOOK IS MARVELLOUS).

Their book is also a treasure of mine. In fact it was the glorious picture of the May festival at Lustleigh in this book that inspired me to introduce the May Queen festivity in my own orchard last year. I also went to see it at Lustleigh last May. They have an old cider orchard right in the middle of the village that was bequeathed to the people there, as a community orchard. Their May festival is a



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well established tradition that has been performed every year since the 1950s on the first Saturday of May. It will be May 7th this year and I must go and see it again. It is such a beautiful event with all the apple trees in bloom and the children's maypole dancing is superb! Lustleigh is about 20 miles west of Exeter, if I've tempted anyone to go.

I did contact Common Ground and they suggested that I asked Hartley Wintney Council about their orchard which is planted on Hunts Common close to their village in north Hampshire. I contacted the parish clerk who was most helpful and sent me a pamphlet describing the history of their project. They did not have an easy time of it. The idea was first mooted in 1994 as way to celebrate the Millennium, but the first trees could not be planted until Autumn 2000 due to bureaucratic obstacles. Surprisingly, the Hampshire Wildlife Trust seemed unable to accept that the landscape we currently enjoy was essentially shaped by mankind and the proposal to plant an orchard on meadow land was anathema to them. They briefed the District Council against it, but to cut a long story short, the Parish Council won in the end, by sheer persistence.

I can be persistent too!

Rose

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A Orchards should really only be planted on agricultural land which is already wildlife-poor.

Perhaps I should not have used the emotive word 'meadow'. Nobody with even the slightest feeling about conservation would want to do anything to spoil a wild flower rich meadow, such as for example the famous preserved meadow land at Kingcombe in west Dorset.

I have never been to Hartley Wintney so I do not know anything about the conservation status of Hunts Common. However the Council brochure states that they have planted 63 trees on 2 1/2 acres. This is low density planting by any standard, so there will always be plenty of light to encourage meadow flora and wild life. It is also their intention to mow only once a year to assist wild flower propagation.

The trees they have planted are mostly old or threatened varieties, some of which were Hampshire varieties specially grafted from the National collection at Brogdale. It seems to me that they have added greatly to the conservation potential of the land, rather than detracted from it.

From cover to cover the Common Ground book 'Orchards' is a eulogy of the multiple value of orchards for people as well as flora and wild life conservation. The 'Sharing with Nature' chapter lists a great many varieties of birds insects and grassland flora that thrive in traditional orchards. One of James Marsden's essays is lyrical about the birds and butterflies he has seen in his orchard. The



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other extols the intrinsic protection from pests due to the healthy population of beneficial insects. There is very little that is negative in the whole chapter, save for the scathing reference to commercial orchards with high planting density and herbicide strips. Obviously irrelevant to the community orchard.

I started my own orchard on 2 acres of barren farmland 15 years ago. I manage it without chemicals and I only trim the hedges by hand when they get really overgrown. I love to see the hawthorn blossom burgeoning out of my hedgerows in May and the dog roses in June, yet I have only lost one tree to fireblight. It was a Czar plum and plums are especially vulnerable.

The hedges are 8 ft thick and bursting with God's creation. In fact, it has worked against me as the badgers passed TB to my beloved Jersey cows and one by one they have had to be slaughtered. It is amazing how the bird population has increased. My Ashmead's kernels get pecked to shreds if I try to leave them into December. To begin with I could grow more soft fruit than I could cope with. I am lucky if I get any at all nowadays, as I cannot be bothered with netting. The wild flowers also increase year by year. It does not take all that long for a new orchard to become a wildlife haven!

As for our proposed community orchard, the small piece of common land is no more than a bramble patch with potential to become a dumping ground. I have no doubt at all that an orchard would make it a great deal more attractive to people and all manner of wild things.

Rose

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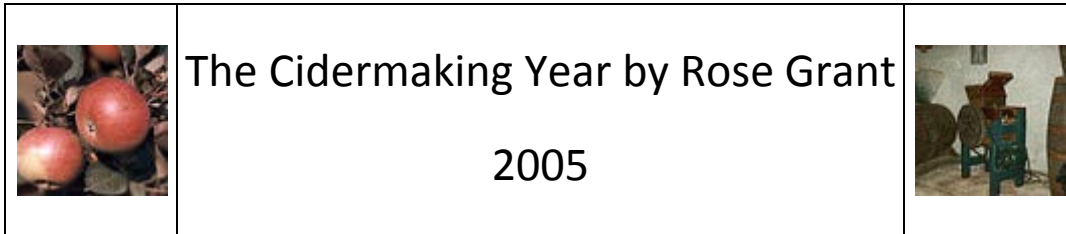
I can confirm that Roy's orchard promises to be a very pleasant 'component in the landscape'. He has also altruistically planted a good number of perry pear trees. Apple trees take ages enough to give a useful crop. Planting pear trees is for posterity!

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### MAY FESTIVAL

Stephen just prompted me about this. YES it is still on for May 21st, here in Winterborne Houghton not Worth Matravers. Charlie's cider festival at the Square and Compass is always in November.

Our May Festival started as a cider tasting social event for our little village ( pop. 200 ) to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee and to help raise funds for our main event on the Day itself. This just involved local folk and was held in our cottage. It was quite a success so last year we decided to move it to the orchard call it a blossom time celebration and reintroduce some of our old English customs such



as Crowning the May Queen and Morris dancing plus a tasty barbecue. It was wonderful and made a lot of people happy ( I have to say that my cider played a little part in this!!!)

UKCider members are warmly invited. It would be good to see you especially if you can bring some of your own cider to add to the "tasting" .. ..(Sorry can't sell it--No license)

The event will start at 3.30 pm with the May Queen Crowning and procession which will be followed by Maypole dancing. Then there will be morris dancing and folk music played by our local Bulbarrow Band while we enjoy the delights of barbie & cider. There will just be a small charge to cover the cost of the food.

So if you feel like doing a West Country mini break , why not call by? I'm sorry I can't offer any accommodation. We will be in a pickle as the cottage is being rethatched in May. However if you want to spend the night in the orchard it is Ok to bring a tent. There is a loo and running water available in my barn, but no electricity.

Let me know, off group, if you want to come and need further information, how to get here etc.

Rose



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### MAY

From UKCider

#### MAY FESTIVAL IN DORSET

Just a final reminder if any of you would like a trip to Dorset tomorrow:

The Festival events begin at 3.30 pm in the orchard. Come to Winterborne Houghton, a small village 6 miles west of Blandford. The road through the village becomes a no-through road. Keep going until you see the phone box on the right and look for the parking in the field in front of the church. I live 200yds further on at Michaelmas Cottage. It is on the right and currently being rethatched. ( grid ref ST8185 0445 ). The orchard is 300yds back behind the house, accessible via a footpath. I will put up signs to assist. All cider is free, we just charge £3 per person to cover the BBQ food.

I've been busy putting my single varieties in Weston's flagons for the Tasting and have a tip to pass on about removing the labels. (The subject came up here recently). There is a one shot throwaway scourer available called 'Spontex' and it is marvelous for getting every bit of Weston's sticky gunk off the glass. It is much nicer to use than wire wool and a lot more effective.

Hope to see some of you tomorrow.

Rose

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#### LATER...

Michael, it was good to meet you and Jacqueline along with fellow UKCider members, John Cutler and Tim Owlett with his lovely family. Thank you all for coming, in spite of the unpromising weather and for bringing your cider to add to the bar. Weren't we lucky that it brightened up so well by the afternoon? The BBQ was washed down with more than 100 pints of cider so I think we had a successful event! Fortunately for me there is a bottle of your excellent cider left over, which I am enjoying as I type. It has a nice clean appley flavour. It is obviously made with great care and is most enjoyable. My bottle 'under the table' was Porter's Perfection. I reserved this for special guests because I remember how quickly the Kingston Black disappeared last year. This year I had more KB so it did not need to be cunningly hidden.

Rose.

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### CUTTING BACK THE TIP

Q How to rescue a young tree with a frost-damaged tip.

I've sometimes lost the tip of a new whip for one reason or another. I have found that by cutting back to just above the uppermost healthy leaf axil, it is possible to grow a new leader. After a while you can scarcely notice that there has been a problem. Just wait and see how much, if any, is really dead. It sounds as though it may yet recover. If not then cut it off cleanly where the wood is still alive.

Rose



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## JUNE

From UKCider

### ASHMEAD'S KERNEL

This wonderful apple deserves greater recognition. It is known to be a good eater. Some say that it's flavour is better than Cox. It is certainly much easier to grow as it does not succumb to canker and is also tolerant of poor chalky soil, like mine. My 13 year old A K produced 13 gallons of juice last year, 10 of which I pasteurised and sold to a pub. The juice has a beautiful flavour and was appreciated by pub customers who had agreed to be the driver for their evening companions.

Now I have had a pleasant surprise. The other 3 gallons I turned into a single variety cider. Most of this disappeared at my May event. I noticed that the Morris Men seemed particularly fond of it, so I kept a bottle back to try. I was in no particular hurry whilst I still had some KB and PP. Now comes this very hot weather and the pubs have bought all my cider. I sat in the garden this evening in need of refreshment so I opened the AK. I was amazed by how enjoyable it was. Clear sparkly dry and slightly sharp but the flavour was superb and very refreshing. I recommend that anybody with a few square feet to spare should grow this apple. Wow. It is a corker! If you think I'm getting carried away, it is because I am enjoying my second glass of AK, here at the computer. I am reminded of my teenage years in Somerset when scrumpy was 8d a pint. There was a rhyme that some of you may remember:

One pint of scrumpy, you feel a warm glow,  
Two pints of scrumpy , you are rearing to go,  
Three pints of scrumpy, you forget all your sins,  
Four pints of scrumpy, you hear violins,  
Five pints of scrumpy , every man is your friend,  
Six pints of scrumpy, your knees start to bend,  
Seven pints of scrumpy , you've started to lean,  
Eight pints of scrumpy, God save the Queen!

Personally I never got past the 2 pint stage and as for 'rearing to go', I used to fall off my bike on the way home! Right now I'm just going to fall into bed.

With a warm glow,

Rose.



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Stephen, I was interested to hear that you and Julia are also fans of Ashmead's Kernel. You seem to have really gone for it with enthusiasm. To have converted 30 trees, speaks for itself! I planted two more of them last year and I think I will get a few more this year. I always use M25 rootstocks as the extra vigour helps to compensate for my poor soil. John Campbell asked when they started to crop. Mine, like yours, took about 5 or 6 six years before I got a small crop. The Ashmead has always cropped very well, though for the first time this year's crop looks rather light. I hope it is not going biennial. Last year the crop was so heavy that it broke a branch off. Thank you for the information about its origin. I've often wondered where it came from. The 'kernel' is also curious, being something pertaining to stone fruit or nuts. Your Dr. Ashmead may have grown it from a pip, but never a kernel. Perhaps in 1700, apple pips were also called kernels. Thanks also for details of the book. I will have to treat myself to it! Rose.

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### DEER

PS. My reply to Mark some weeks ago, concerning his broken off Redstreak has been sadly prophetic. Last year I grafted 10 Kingston Blacks and grew them in pots until they were healthy whips. I planted them in the Autumn with stakes and rabbit guards. This year they were all shooting away beautifully. Today I noticed that they have nearly all been nipped by deer. I wish I had used taller guards, but I have never had this problem before as rabbits have always been my No. 1 pest. My extra KB production has been set back a few years by Bambi and his chums.

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I really seem to have started something dear to many people's hearts!

Glad to tell you that my beloved young KBs are now fully enclosed in head to toe plastic mesh. After the attack they quickly sprouted lots of new shoots. Before I netted them, I nipped the ends of all shoots except the uppermost, that I intend will make the new leader. I will report progress. I'm hoping that the setback will not be too serious. Last year was the Year of the Aphids. Very few this year, I'm glad to say. The affected trees have recovered OK. So it's not all bad.

Such are the joys of cider growing! Think of it as you sip it dear friends, in those favoured London pubs. It don't juss grow on trees yer know!

Rose.

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### BIG APPLE

Having just returned from Big Apple at Putley, I commented on the excellent display of cider apples provided by Hereford Cider Museum as a central feature in the Great Barn. I took a lot of photos of the display to help me with future identification and said that I could put these on CD, if anybody was interested. Trevor and Frances were interested so I was able to make one and send it to them when my apple pressing was over. Since then many of us have been delighted to obtain the pomona CD, which is superb value and very well produced. It has made own pictures somewhat redundant!

Talking of pictures, I was at Vigo today to collect some equipment. Whilst in the sales office, awaiting my invoice, my eyes dwelt on their notice board. There was a fine picture of our own Michael Cobb holding his Supreme Champion silver cup at the 2004 Bath & West and standing beside a Vigo press similar to the one that he used to produce his award winning cider. I wonder how many of you noticed that he also won first prize for his dry cider this year. I had the pleasure of tasting his cider as he kindly brought some to our May festival. It was excellent with a clean applely flavour and crystal clear. The award was well deserved! Well done Michael. You have given the big producers some food for thought!

Rose.



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### JULY

From UKCider

#### BRAMLEY CIDER

Glad to hear that I am not the only one who enjoys Bramley cider! It does have a fine flavour and is a refreshing accompaniment to any meal. One of my neighbours has an ancient Bramley in his front garden and insists that he gives me all the apples from it every year. The apples are beautiful, very large and are a lot more flushed than is usual for Bramley. It would be a shame not to make use of them. I wonder if their unusual redness means they are actually the Bramley derivative, Crimson King.

I always make cider from this tree as a single variety so that I can add it sparingly to my blend at a later stage, as I think fit. It can be a big mistake to put it all in at once, as it is so acidic. Last year I made 20 galls from this tree and I kept 5 galls back, as a single. It has proved to be a pleasant drink for warm summer evenings.

Rose.

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#### FIRST YEAR, SOLD OUT

My first year as a commercial producer has been more of a success than I dared to hope. My cider is sold out. This is a pity, just as we are getting some real cider drinking weather! The local pubs that have been selling it want more of the same next year and a further three have asked if they can sell it. Cider drinking seems to be on the Up, hereabouts!

I want to increase production up to the 1500 gallon ceiling and have been investing in stainless vats and better equipment. Last year I used a 16 inch rack & cloth press that produced 6-7 gallons from a cwt of apples. It will be a battle to get more than 600 gallons out of this in the pressing season. I really need to obtain something like one of those old farm presses with the stone base that I've often seen used in Herefordshire.

If anyone knows where one of these may be for sale, please email me. It does not matter what the wood is like as I can rebuild it. I am prepared to collect from almost anywhere with my Landrover and trailer.

Rose.



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### SPEED OF THROUGHPUT

Q What is the limiting factor on throughput?

I have given some thought to alternating two presses. Ergonomically it makes a lot of sense and would allow me to double my output from 300 to 600 gallons. However I think that would be the production limit. It would cost me £ 350 to make another 16 inch press the same as the one I have now and I would still be wanting a bigger press to go up to 1500 galls, in due course. Logistically it works out like this: The apple pressing season is, say 12 weeks. That is 60 pressing days, assuming that the weekends are reserved for collecting more apples and praising the Lord. It is inefficient to download a press too soon, as a few hours more can give an extra gallon or so. This really limits the operation to one pressing per day. The 16 inch press gives 6 gallons, so over the 60 days this is 360 gallons at best. To make 1500 galls in a season the press must deliver 25 galls per day. A big press with say a 3 ft x 3ft x 2ft high cheese, would give 50 gallons or more. It would only be necessary to press every other day. The intervening days could be used for apple washing and milling followed by overnight maceration prior to the pressing. I think this is the way I've got to go, even if I end up having to make the thing myself! The problem is I have not got time to do it because I am busy extending the cidery to make room for the new vats. The pressing season will soon be here again, so the ideal solution would be to find a large press that I could buy, assuming that the price is reasonable. Surely there must be one going begging near Glastonbury! I could bring your bottles back, if so.

Rose.

---

Q What percentage extra do you get by waiting for a day?

20 - 25 %. It depends on the apple variety being pressed, but I suppose the first hour gives 5 galls. There is another 1 to 2 galls if I leave it for another couple of hours, whilst periodically giving the jack a few extra pumps. That is as far as I go because even another 4 hrs will only add about half a gallon. I have sometimes done two pressings a day but it gets tedious. I always rinse and sterilise the racks and cloths before reuse so it is a bit of a rigmarole, going through the process twice. However this is what I will be doing, if I do not manage to get a bigger press.

As for Vigo's 3 pressings per hour, they have to be joking! I know that sub contract pressing works well for Roy, but there is something special about doing the whole job oneself. I wouldn't want it to be otherwise, but just need bigger equipment to make it less fiddling.



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Q but is it near the limit of size for getting cloths?

Vigo will sew their cloths together to make larger ones, to order, but the price is crazy. I would stick to net curtains and sew them together myself. Net curtain material (as recommended by Andrew) is excellent. Surely the reason for interleaving racks in the cheese, apart from stability, is so that the juice can be released from the centre of the stack.

Rose

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Dick, that was an incredible quantity to make from such a small press in one day. there must have been a lot of keen volunteers! I am not so blessed as I usually do it all myself. I have had the occasional volunteer amongst my friends in the village who find the idea of such a rustic activity appealing. However once they have helped and realise what messy hard work it is, they do not offer again! I am looking for a strong young lad who wants to earn some pocket money this year.

Actually from all that I have read, it is best not to try and press too quickly, as quality is impaired. My bedtime reading at the moment is dear old Professor Warcollier's Principles and Practice of Cider Making (thanks Gary). Warcollier states that "a slow pressing is essential to provide facilities for the juice to oxidise slightly, for the pectin substances to be released and for the oxidised form of tannin to combine with part of the pectin which is present in a flocculent state in the juice". He goes on to say that this assists subsequent keiving and formation of a brown head. In his view pressing should extend over at least 45 minutes and should be preceded by maceration. Of course this is the council of perfection, should one be trying to make an award winning naturally sweet cider. Probably for standard fully fermented dry cider these complexities are not so important, but I do just get the impression that a good cider should not have a hurried inception.

Rose.



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## AUGUST

From UKCider

### RUM BARRELS

RE: keeping the barrels sweet by burning sulphur

The 'jury is still out' on this one. I haven't taken the bungs out yet to see if they are still OK.

I agree that they have a good fall back use as flower pots. I have two half casks of cannas flowering magnificently at present. This was from the first cask I ever bought where I learnt by my mistake of buying one where the bung had been removed. Since then I have only bought casks that are well stoppered up ( indeed one still had a litre of whiskey in it) The only trouble with half casks as flower pots is they are too heavy to move into the greenhouse for the winter, so the plants have to stay put and take their chance.

I've been following the discussion on spirit flavours with interest as I made 6 barrels of whiskey tainted cider last year. I thought the flavour was interesting but not to my own liking as I prefer the pure cider flavour. This year most of my cider will be in stainless vats but I think that assuming the barrels are still OK, I will do some ' oak matured' as well. It would be interesting to offer the choice between the two types and see how they go. The 240 galls of whiskey cider sold effortlessly so that tells me there are a good number of people out there who do like the flavour. In any case the whiskey flavour should be less this year as the barrels have now had cider in them.

Eventually, I suppose, the original spirit flavour becomes insignificant and just the oakiness remains, so it could be worth persevering with the barrels. I too am a fan of Julian's cider and I've not noticed a spirit flavour in his. The huge oak vats at Burrow Hill are so enormous that I suspect they were built on site and have only ever had cider in them.

Rose

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### LOTTERY

joke: A farmer who won a million on the lottery. When asked what he would do with the money he replied. 'Oh, I think I'll just carry on farming until it's all gone'.



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You struck a chord with me here Stephen! Planting an orchard these days, is a deed that is done purely for the love of it. I share your experience with my own. Having had a wander round this morning, I think I will be lucky if I get 50 gallons from my own orchard. There are more trees than usual are taking a holiday this year. However the great thing about having a mixed orchard is that there are always compensations. This year the apple crop may be poor, but the plums are fantastic. I seldom have such promising Victorias. There has been a very good crop of Opals. They were delicious due to our plentiful sunshine this summer. I highly recommend Opal to anyone thinking of planting a plum tree. Unlike Victoria it crops heavily every year, yet the flavour is almost as good ( Victoria is one of its parents). It also gives a nice early start to the plum harvest by ripening in early August. Another compensation for me is that this year I can make Stoke Red single variety cider again. Last year not even a solitary apple, this year an abundance! I think Stoke Red is even better than the fabled KB.

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### MORE PLUMS

Q: Querying the Parentage of Opal plums - it is Swedish bred from Ouillins Gage crossed with Early Favourite and was introduced in 1948.

Yes Andrew, I plead guilty. It was duff gen. Having mentioned Brogdale, I had a look at their site after sending the posting. It is a great place to check up on all manner of fruit trees. I looked up Opal and found that it does not have the family link to Victoria, that I had been led to believe when I bought it. This was rather a sad discovery because I had become convinced that you could taste the Victoria in it!

A really ripe Opal is like a foretaste of the delicious Vics that are yet to come!

I also looked for a new plum I am growing called Jubileum. This was raised to commemorate the Queen's Golden jubilee. It has not fruited for me yet so I hoped to find something about it. There was nothing, except that I did find Jubilee, which is a Czar\Victoria cross. I am wondering if I was conned. Nevertheless a combination of Czar and Victoria is a mouthwatering concept.

Sorry to have got all plummy on the Cider. At present the plum season is providing a little pleasant relief from the frantic hard work of getting the cidery ready for action again. I am busy painting the walls and tiling the floor, to make it all lovely for the hygiene inspector's visit.



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### HYGIENE IN THE CIDER HOUSE

Q: I thought painting etc in the ciderhouse only applied if you were bottling or producing apple juice.

My wall painting is purely by choice as the barn is made of concrete blocks and would otherwise be a grim place to spend much time in. It does at least give an impression of cleanliness if the walls and ceiling are clean and white. It also means you have to deal with the cobwebs, every so often! Of much greater importance in my opinion, is the floor. I am tiling the concrete floor so that it can be easily and effectively washed down. Last year my floor had a fair amount of juice, cider and pomace spilt on it which got 'ground in' to the pores of the concrete. One could tell from the build up of the cidery smell that my efforts at cleaning up had not been very effective. It was not an unpleasant odour but the concrete could well have become a breeding ground for harmful bacteria. The ceramic tiles will be easy to swab and fortunately the underlying floor has a slight slope down towards the door, as the barn was once a piggery. I am not following a set of rules as one would if setting up a butchery, just doing what makes sense. From what I have heard, one is very much at the whim of the inspectors in any case. I know a chap who makes vinegary cider in oak barrels that he bottles up to sell at farmers markets. The inspectors were seemingly oblivious to the earth floor of his barn and that the only apple washing facility was the hosepipe outside. They were more concerned that he did not have a fire extinguisher! Like you Mark, I will be interested to hear other producers experiences. For example, Chris King Turner told me that they insisted on him having a separate basin for hand washing.

Rose.



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## SEPTEMBER

From UKCider

### MEASURING ALCOHOL PERCENTAGE

I have had a Vinometer since my winemaking days. It is a small glass capillary tube with a little reservoir on one end. The idea is that you put a little wine in the reservoir and wait until it drips freely out of the other end via the capillary. Then you turn the thing upside down and watch where the column of wine in the capillary comes to rest. This part of the tube is calibrated in percentage alcohol which allows the operator to read off the value against the position of the point reached by the wine. The further the wine falls the higher the percentage alcohol.

It seemed to work pretty well with wine as the readings were much what I had expected, give the starting SG and sugar added. I reasoned that cider is very similar to wine and that the gadget would be useful for this as well. However it seemed to me to be always reading about 2% too high.

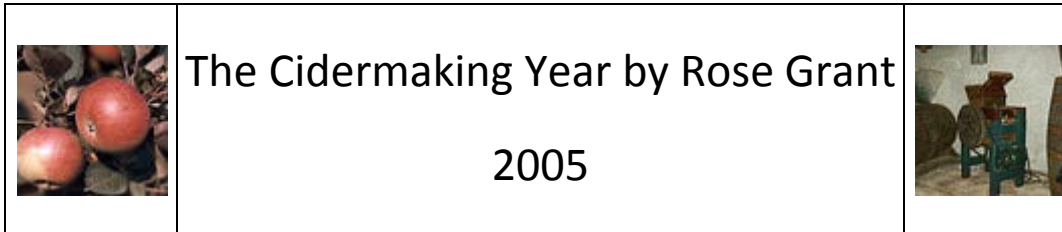
Now the other day on UKCider came the useful input about the 'French Vigo', a company called Tompress. I emailed for a catalogue and it arrived a day or two later. They have a good range of products including a Cidrometre and a Vinometre. Both are the capillary devices that I have described, but the cider version appears to be bigger. It seems that cider needs to have a different capillary and perhaps explains why my device is unreliable. I am tempted to send for one, but will await cautionary feedback from anybody with experience of these things. [www.tompress.com](http://www.tompress.com) sell some items that are also available from Vigo. They are also cheaper, but do not get too excited. It is a long drive as they are in the south near Toulouse. I suspect that postage would be prohibitive especially on large items like vats and mills.

Rose.

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### VINTAGE CIDER

Having originally got into orcharding and cider making by reading the book, *Cider & Juice Apples* by RR Williams, I've always assumed that 'vintage' refers to the quality of a particular apple variety. Table 10 in the book lists vintage apples, e.g. Stoke Red, Kingston Black, Dabinett etc, as being apples that will make high quality cider in their own right, without blending. I see this list as a go/no/go indicator for single variety cider. I used it as a basis for planning my orchard but having recently discovered other 'quality' apples such as Porter's Perfection, I know that the list is by no means exhaustive.



It is not surprising that wine drinkers find 'vintage cider' confusing.

Rose

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#### RE: BLENDING

I did notice that some of the varieties were noted as being good for blending, so I did not plant those. I preferred to concentrate on those that can produce good cider on their own, like KB. Part of the fun, for me, is being able to compare the flavours of cider made from different apples. If Andy will forgive me, rather like comparing Shiraz, Cabernet, Merlot and..... Medoc. I also think that it is instructive to know what each apple variety is contributing to a blend, so I make singles in demijohns of every new apple that I come across. This makes for a few surprises when I put them out at my annual cider tasting. Some people love bone dry Bramley. A good friend of mine swears that there is no cider that beats that of Ashmead's Kernel, which isn't even a cider variety. I have to make it as a single for him every year.

Actually, having blenders in the Vintage list rather spoilt my perceived definition of the term. I wondered why they were there, because there are all manner of cider apples that are good in a blend, e.g. Tom Putt, Redstreak etc. Were they perhaps selected as having a minimum of a certain percentage of each of the 3 main attributes, i.e. tannin sugar and acid? If so, then this would define 'Vintage' and it would be useful for this to be known. At present the vintage cider thing is very woolly, as recent postings have shown. It would be nice to be able to say why a particular apple is 'vintage'.

Interestingly, we once discussed Sweet Alford here. This is listed as a good vintage 'sweet' so I duly planted one, 15 years ago. I now realise that like your own, it is actually Le Bret. Nevertheless, it makes a pleasant single. I am looking forward to making a few jars of it this year. Last year I was deprived, as it is totally biennial. Could Le Bret to be a vintage Apple, I wonder?

---

#### AN EXPLANATION OF 'VINTAGE'

If you are looking for a chemical explanation, I would hazard a guess that vintage varieties are primarily the slow fermenters, the low-nitrogen uptake varieties which consequently seem to develop the more interesting characteristics as ciders. Or, in addition, they are the ones which have the more characteristic inherent flavours that are preserved or generated during fermentation. The distinction was (and still is) between vintage cultivars for high hedonic quality and bulk cultivars for



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the mass market. The major drivers behind the non-vintage varieties are orcharding considerations such as yield, regular bearing, manageable tree form, freedom from disease etc. Vintage varieties are selected purely on ultimate cider quality, not on how tricky they are to grow. Andrew Lea

---

Thank you Andrew. As usual, you have provided us all with good insight into another of Cider's mysteries! I think that what you have said, sums up the vintage situation rather well. I've filed it for my future reference when somebody asks yet again; What is vintage cider? Your note about speed of fermentation was interesting. I had noticed this with my single varieties, but until now, had not placed any significance on it.

---

### MILL FOR SALE ON EBAY

"That looks like Rose's old one"

Yes. It was mine. I sold it earlier this year after I bought the Vigo 800 mill. It is a good little mill but having only a 1/4 hp motor, is somewhat slow. Nevertheless, although it was monotonous, I put about 3 tons through it last year. It would suit someone only making a small quantity and is much easier to use than those hand cranked mills that require superhuman strength to turn. The Vigo 1500 that I've just bought, has a 2.8 hp motor. I've just started using it. It is a superb machine and I do not think I will ever yearn for anything bigger. Now I just need a bigger press to go with it! I'm getting the bits together to make a hydraulic, 30 inch cheese press, but I can't see me being able to make it until next year.

It is that frantic time again now!

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### ON RAY'S PRESS

RE: [Homemade Press Mk II](#)

Hi Ray, That is a fine looking new beam on your press. You should be confidently set up for the new season. Make sure you have a chunky steel plate where the jack bears below the beam. I had one only 1/8" thick and the jack nearly drilled a hole in it!

The 17 inch press I made last year is similar to yours except it is made of 4 x 2" oak. I found that the two beam timbers bent alarmingly so I packed the gap between them with plywood. I thought, it



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won't bend now. You can't bend plywood that is sideways on, the crossed grains would surely prevent it. How wrong I was, the whole thing still bent! Then John Cutler came to the rescue and got a friend of his to make me a U shaped under beam bracing plate in 5mm steel. That's it, I thought, the perfect solution. Would you believe it, the whole thing still bends like Robin Hood's bow! I've stopped worrying about now, but I'm careful not to push things too far as the jack is capable of exerting 12 tons. Also, guess what, it has still made a dent in the 5 mm steel plate at the contact point.

I like your idea to try making the racks of polyprop. Home made wooden racks are expensive of time and materials and like you say Vigo's are far too expensive. The plastic racks should also be more hygienic. I am building a bigger press that will use a ram from a tipping trailer. The frame will be made of 9 x 9" oak gate posts. Will it bend? I expect so!

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### STAINLESS STEEL NAILS

I used a scrapper for several years that had a wooden drum driven by an electric motor. There were umpteen rows of stainless steel screws around the periphery of the drum. Having screwed the screws into the drum, the chap who made it had then cut the heads off, leaving lots of sharp stainless spikes, each protruding about half an inch from the surface of the drum. It was a vicious but effective method of producing a fine pomace. Stainless steel screws can be obtained at a reasonable price from [screwfix.com](http://screwfix.com)

I can vouch for the non corrodible nature of the Stainless Turbo Ultra wood screws sold by Screwfix. Last year I used them for making the cheese former and racks of my rack & cloth press. They were and still are, totally unaffected by apple juice. They are also remarkably cheap. For example the little ones that are good for making racks are 3 x 12 mm. The cost of these is only £6.43 per 1000.

The larger ones still only work out about 50% more than the plated screws, so I now use them for all fixtures and fittings in the ciderhouse. I have found that ordinary screws even if not actually in contact with the juice, tend to corrode very quickly. It is as though the malic acid is in the air! I expect that it is really just that the humidity is always high where cider is being made, due to all the washing and sterilising etc.

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### WASPS

Anybody else noticed that there is a wonderful lack of wasps this year. Usually my orchard is festooned with bottle traps by now. A lady on the radio, who sounded like an expert on the subject of bugs, said it was because the queens were all killed by a cold snap in the spring. I can't recall the cold spell but maybe that was also why some varieties of apple are not bearing well this year. You win some, you lose some! On the winning side were the remarkable plums, ripened to perfection by our good summer. Great to enjoy plump juicy Victorias without all those infuriating wasp holes!

Dick Dunn writes: They're not gone, Rose. They just moved over here!!!

Sorry to hear you've been so badly afflicted with them, Dick. How on earth did European wasps cross the Atlantic? Last year we had a plague of big fat French wasps, but they only had to fly across 20 miles of water to make it here.

I've had a lifelong hatred of these nasty little striped things with their stings all a twitching ready to inflict severe pain. I was brought up in a plum growing area and our garden was surrounded by orchards. There were so many wasps that it was impossible to get through the summer without being stung several times.

A more pleasant memory is that there were also a great number of Red Admiral butterflies that feast on the fallen fruit. They are really eye catching as they have a bright crimson stripe on their wings. I have been glad to see more than usual of these amongst the plums, this year.



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## OCTOBER

From UKCider

### THE TREES

It is the perfect time to go for them. The mid season varieties have been falling madly due to the windy weather in the last few days, Those that have not fallen only need the slightest shake to bring them all down.

I've just had a phone call from Dora, a friend who lives near Wimborne. She has six cider trees in her garden and the apples are raining down. I sadly had to decline them as I've just got another 2 tons of Somerset apples that are keeping me rather busy! If anybody else would like to take up the offer, ring Dora on 01202 882275.

### IKEA

IKEA have wonderful rectangular, white plastic storage bins. They fit nicely under an apple mill so are ideal for the temporary storage of the pomace. Even better, they come with a lid to keep the flies out, which is good if you want to macerate the pomace overnight. Best of all, one side of the bin is sloped which makes the job of scooping the stuff out so much easier. I used them over the whole season last year and I've just been to get some more so that I can get ahead of the pressing when I have a milling session. With the lids on, you can stack the bins of pomace up like Lego, while they await pressing. The only thing that is a bit off putting is that the juice turns them brown, but I sterilise them with sulphite and have had no problems.

### FRUIT FLIES

When I started cider making this year, I congratulated myself that my newly improved and more hygienic ciderhouse, was without flies. They were a curse last year and I put it down to all the spilt juice and poor housekeeping. However I frequently washed and sterilised the equipment and managed to get through without making any vinegar, but I was not happy about it. I therefore decided to give the ciderhouse a makeover this summer.



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I now have a tiled floor that I mop carefully at the end of the days work, using sulphited water. As before, I sterilise the racks, cloths and all utensils. All was well in my new hospital like environment for about two weeks. I have it cracked, I thought.....until yesterday.

Yet again I've been invaded with a cloud of those minute black flies, hovering over the press and diving down to settle on the juicy sides of the cheese. They are driving me potty but I can't think how to get rid of them. Insecticide spraying is obviously not an option and last year I found that they were not much attracted to fly papers. I also tried an industrial UV fly killer, but the little varmits just fly through the high voltage grid without touching it!

Has anybody found a solution to this problem? Is there, perhaps, a substance of incredible stickiness that is more attractive to them than apple juice?

---

### SPIDERS?

I don't think the spiders will oblige me by returning to their old haunts before I've finished pressing this year! I have almost solved the problem by painting insecticide solution on the metal casings of the florescent light fittings. I noticed that when I was not pressing, the little whatnots all went to roost on the warm light fittings. Not any more, they don't! There are now very few of them and before anybody mentions it; no, the dead ones did not drop in the cider!

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### FLIES

I am now convinced that they come into the cider house on, or in, any apples that are bad. I do the whole operation, cutting out the bad washing, milling and pressing, in the same room. On reflection, it is probably a better idea to select and wash the apples outside. I have now started to inspect every shovelful of apples as I take them out of the trailer and I throw the obviously bad ones out at this stage, before barrowing them indoors. I am sure it has helped.

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### FRENCH CIDER

This evening I've been drinking the first bottle of the French cider that I bought at Cherbourg. It was only £1 per litre but I think it is really good and easily competes with Westons for full bodied flavour. Rather like Frome Valley but with nothing like as much gas in it. I wish now that I had bought a whole lot more, especially seeing what Lord Palmerston charges for it!



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The question that comes to mind is that this cider is unpasteurised, fully dry and yet only 5% abv, how do they do it? Presumably it is diluted with water, since dry cider always finishes at around 7 to 8 %. I wondered how reduced alcohol cider is made, when I once tried some low alcohol Westons. It was pretty awful and to me it tasted like cider that had been diluted. Can it be made any other way than by dilution?

A Yes. By distillation, reverse-osmosis membranes, or special strains of yeast.

Thank you for the full info on low alc cider, Andrew. I did buy cider over there. The label says 'Cidre du Cotentin'. It is made in St Joseph by Cidrerie de la Brique. I look forward to more of it later, when I've done another pressing or two here! If I do happen to have purchased some l'eau Francaise in each bottle, then it certainly has not spoiled the flavour.

Rose.

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### WELCOME

Welcome to UKCider, Mark.

I hesitated in replying to your request because I knew that Stephen would give you the definitive picture with regard to the economics of orcharding and cider making. He has done this extremely well and I concur with what he has said especially the bit about learning from your mistakes. Some of my trees still haven't produced anything worthwhile after 15 years! Fortunately I planted many different varieties, so I now know what works for my soil. The trouble is that it is a very long term experiment and I now have to wait another 15 years (God willing) before the extra trees of the "good" varieties, that I have since planted, bear a useful crop. I suspect that in Kent your soil is above chalk, as mine is in Dorset. If so, let me know and I could advise on what works well. Chalk is far from ideal for apple growing, but has the advantage of being well drained and will produce OK if the top soil is well cultivated and manured.

As a matter of interest I have found that Kingston Black crops reliably and well on chalk. Yesterday I was in the good apple growing area of Somerset collecting apples and enjoyed a pleasant wander through the orchards. Whilst there was a reasonable crop on most varieties, I noticed that the KBs were very poor compared with my own. The KB is known to be a poor cropper in apple growing areas and is not usually planted in commercial orchards. So like everything else, it is 'swings and roundabouts'. Even chalk can have its advantages.

I would not want to try and make a living from cider making. It is far more profitable to sell juice. Last year I sold juice to a pub at £3 a 75cl bottle but the best could get for the cider was £1.80 per



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litre. This is about £1 a pint, which the pubs then sell for £2.60 a pint. C'est la vie! However, it's much more of a challenge to make good cider and a lot more interesting! I am not bothering with juice this year and all that wretched pasteurisation.

I did 300 galls last year and made about £2000, allowing for that which I gave away to friends. All of this money and as much again I have reinvested in buying better equipment. There is still more that I want to buy, such as those increasingly expensive stainless steel vats, so it will be a year or two to break even. After that my hard work will be rewarded by having a supplementary income.

I think that to have a living from cider making would require quite a big investment in equipment so that one could profitably break through the 1500 galls excise limit. One would have to make some careful calculations and have another source of income to get over the initial investment period. (Are you there Chris? It would be nice to have your view of this, as I know you are thinking of crashing the barrier.)

Rose.



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## NOVEMBER

From UKCider

## COLD

Next time you enjoy a glass of real cider by the warmth of a blazing log fire in the pub inglenook, spare a thought for the cidemaker on a cold November evening smoothing layer on layer of icy pomace on to the press. This craft product is truly hand made, sometimes with very cold hands indeed!

Yes!!! I have just finished the last pressing of the year. It seems a world away from when I started in mid September. It was so warm then and you may recall that I was plagued by the fruit flies. In the last couple of weeks the flies have completely disappeared. Have they have died or hibernated? I really don't care, but I do know that it has been just too dammed cold for them, because it nearly was for me too! Making cider has been a test of endurance just lately, so I am not sorry to have finished.

Actually I'm feeling rather pleased with myself since I have more than met my target. Last year I did 300 gallons and wanted to double it this year. A final check around the vats this evening told me that I have made 750 gallons. You may remember that I wanted to get a bigger press in the summer to go with the Vigo 1500 mill. I had no luck with finding one so I've had to continue using the 16 inch press that I had last year. I made an extra rack to give me 7 layers instead of 6. This got the output up to 10 gallons a go, which means that my last cheese this evening must have been about the 75th that I have done. I have pressed 5.75 tons of apples so the yield was 130 gallons per ton, which is quite pleasing.

Next year I am going for the excise limit which will mean doubling this years' output. Recently I have been able to buy a large steel electro- hydraulic press with a 34 inch bed. All being well this will be installed next summer. Each layer on this press will be 4 times the area of my present press and I should be able to get well over 50 gallons per pressing, depending on how many layers I can build. The Vigo mill can deal with the pomace required but the limitation will be in washing and handling the apples. This part of the job has been time consuming enough this year. The only sensible thing to do is to put the mill on the upper floor of the barn to feed pomace to the press from above, in the time honoured way. This in turn means that I will have to make an apple washing pit outside and build an elevator. I had a good look at Julian's elevator when I was at Burrow Hill. His is homemade and he told me where I could buy the chain and sprocket wheels in Yeovil. It should be fun if it all works!

I will keep you posted, Rose.



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### USEFUL TOOLS

I expect most of us have seen the old wooden apple shovels in cider museums and wondered how they managed to push the clumsy things into a heap of apples. It must have been heavy work in those days. I have found the modern equivalent that I have bought, tested and can thoroughly recommend. It is called a corn shovel and has a huge business end made of aluminium alloy. The shovels are light to use and can pick up a large quantity of apples. They cost about £25 from farm shops.

I once bought a plastic grass rake, tried it on the lawn and decided that it was nigh on useless. It then lurked in the garage for many years while I continued to use the rake that it was supposed to replace. This was the conventional type with a head made of bent wires, which was much more effective on the grass. Now I have discovered that the plastic rake is a perfect tool for apple washing!

I made a washing tank by cutting a 1000 litre Plastic IBC container in half. The tank is next to my trailer and this is where the story begins for my much maligned plastic rake. Firstly it is good for pulling the apples into the wash tank from the trailer. Then with its head inverted (curly teeth sticking upwards), I push it backwards and forwards just below the layer of floating apples. This really gets the apples moving and they are vigorously washed. Finally it is a perfect tool for removing the apples from the wash as the apples are drained as soon as they are lifted from the water. I have really appreciated being able to do all this without getting my hands in the water now that the weather has turned so cold.

Of course it is still 'hands on' with the pomace, which feels really icy through my Marigold gloves as I load the press. I want to do one more cheese today so I'd better brace myself for another visit to the cider house and the perishing pomace!

Rose.

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### HARVESTING

Having had much backache over the years from picking up apples, I have been very pleased this season and the last to be able to buy apples that have been mechanically harvested. That is, until now! The last batch I bought were picked up after a period of heavy rainfall. They are filthy and some have patches of Somerset clay that is stuck on to them like glue. It is really trying my patience to get them clean. Recently I was offered the chance to have the apples from a small orchard of 14 cider trees. I just could not refuse such an offer, but thought of the woeful backache I would have to



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endure. I waited for the apples to fall and started harvesting last week. Knowing that I would not be able to pick them up by stooping for very long, without pain, I decided to kneel. This is a better way of doing it but is also wearisome and can bring on pain in the neck. Eventually I discovered that the best way of doing the job is to rake the apples into a heap (leaves and all) using a grass rake. I then laid down by the side of the heap on a plastic bag, propped myself up on my left elbow, akin to the banqueting style of ancient Rome. This may have looked bizarre, but must have pleased Pomona. I found that it was simple and painless to sort the apples from the leaves in the heap using both hands and then toss them into the basket with my right hand.

I've done rather a lot like this now and I thought it worthy of mention because I found the work enjoyable instead of irksome. The view of an orchard from its floor is a wonderful thing and to be there close to the carpet of crimson Dabinetts and yellowing Brown Snouts is strangely fulfilling. Best of all, my handpicked fruit is all good and will be quick to process. It is clean, there are no bad ones and the half eaten ones have been left for the birds to finish. There is something to be said for really getting down to it! Oh, but I still have a ton of the mechanically mucked up ones to deal with, which because they are taking so long, are now half rotten as well ! Rose.

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### PIG'S PERKS

RE "pumice" is a variation on "pomace".

Well bless me. An er thought tis that ole bit o stone er uses to grind the black appley stain awf me ands.

Q but does it refer to the pulp before or after pressing!

Interesting one this, I'm curious to know if people have heard of a different name for the stuff after it has been pressed. I always think of it as 'pig's perks'. Well, that is I used to. Last autumn I finally overwhelmed my pig keeping friend, there were so many bags of the perks. Unfortunately because of the glut, he left some of the bags standing around for too long. When piggies got their perks they became very drunk and aggressive towards their kindly keeper. This year he solemnly told me there was no way that he wanted any more of my perks so I've had to bury it all in the garden. I will have more apple seedlings than dandelions next year!

Rose.

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### SUNTANS

This year my Suntan apples were the tastiest I've ever grown. We have had a good summer which made them big and red, but I am convinced that their fine flavour was due to the heavy mulch of cow manure that I put around the tree. Rose.

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### STOWFORD PRESS

I think it is the gas that murders a keg cider like Stowford press. If one had the patience to let a glass of it stand for a few hours it would be possible to taste the cider without the overriding CO2! It reminds me of the awful Watney's keg bitter before real ale came on the scene.

A lot of pubs now sell Weston's ciders from 20 litre bag in boxes. This is much better, eg the tasty 'Organic Vintage'. This method of delivery also preserves the quality as there is no air spoilage.

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### BRAMLEYS

Today while my trailer was being loaded with more apples at Sparkford, I took off down the A303 and visited Burrow Hill Cider. Julian Temperley showed me the revised layout of his process now that it uses a huge Voran belt press instead of conventional rack & cloth. It was impressive to see it working though I felt that it lacks the romance of the old method, not to mention all the hard work!

The delivery and washing of the apples still looked conventional. A big pipe was gushing water over them in the yard from whence they were directed to the mill by a flume and an elevator. It was then that I noticed the huge apples mixed up with the bittersweets. "Bramleys", said Julian, "They are so useful for maintaining the right acid balance in the cider. I would not be without them!"

Rose.



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### DECEMBER

From UKCider

#### THE DISPOSAL OF POMACE

The mortal remains of 6 tons of apples buried behind the ciderhouse has become a place of winter feasting and revelry for the local rat population. Their telltale bore holes, surrounded by the still golden pomace that they've excavated, have appeared in many places. I think I've learnt that burying the stuff too close to home is not a good idea! It does not compost and disappear into the ground as quickly as I imagined.

I used to keep a few pigs and they were the most incredible devourers of pomace, absolutely made for the job. They adored the stuff. I know that one or two pigs would root up and dispose of my present problem in no time at all, though they would probably stagger about a bit.