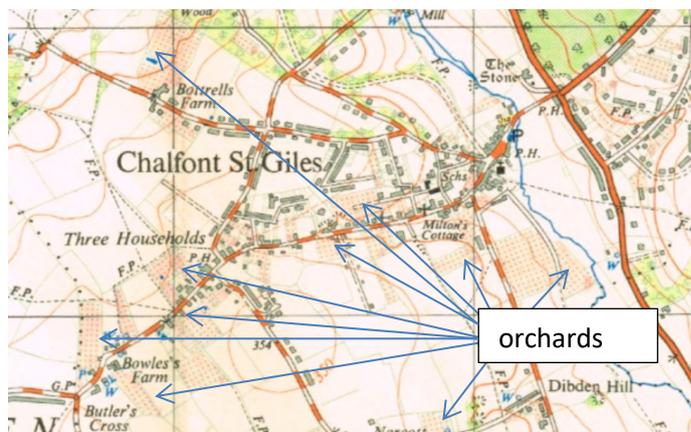


Proposed Community Orchard Project

If the pandemic has shown us anything, it's the importance of having more outdoor spaces where we can relax, play, learn and work together safely.

While we do have woods and open spaces, as the extract from a 1924 map below shows, Chalfont St Giles was once home to many orchards, and there are still some residents who remember them. While all the parishes we share boundaries with have established community orchards or nature reserves, it's sad that CSG has little to show of that heritage, except street names.

2022 is the Queen's platinum jubilee year and we are all being encouraged to plant a tree for the jubilee. Additionally, the Government is urging us all to "plant for our planet". The



Garden's Association reserved some of the proceeds from our plant sale to support these two initiatives and at our last committee meeting we discussed finding a location to plant a few fruit trees but since then our aspirations have grown! We can't think of a better way of recognising the Queen's dedication to the country than to create an orchard, a project that would benefit the village, bring together people of all ages, help with climate change and improve wellbeing.

The Committee has agreed to explore the proposal with the Parish Council and we have shared the idea on the CSGGA Facebook page to gauge interest from the wider community, the feedback has been very positive. The orchard project will be discussed at meeting of the Parish Council in September. Meanwhile, we have contacted the landowners of two potential sites – one an existing but neglected orchard and the other an unused meadow, both would be ideal sites.

Our research indicates that there is plenty of funding available for orchard projects, particularly as orchards can help reduce our impact on climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide, removing and storing carbon while releasing oxygen back into the air. The aim is to ensure that the orchard is self-sufficient in the long term, but we'll have to ensure there's sufficient funding raised initially to cover maintenance until then.

The CSGGA Committee has agreed to help get the project off the ground - we have the insurance, bank account and constitution etc, but, I believe it would then be prudent to pass it to a separate voluntary entity. Parish Council backing will be important as well as sufficient volunteers and, from the preliminary discussions I've had the signs are that there are those in the community willing to get involved – it will be essential to ensure that there is something in it for them not just asking them to turn up to weed and water!

If you would like to see a copy of the proposal we have submitted to the Parish Council, or have any comments or suggestions or would like to get involved, please get in touch. We will be reporting progress and plans to the AGM in October. **Briony Wickenden**