

Slow Food Ludlow Marches

Annual Report 2004

Constitution

The Governing Document (Constitution) of Slow Food Ludlow Marches, which is based on the model Convivium constitution document supplied by Slow Food UK, was adopted at the Annual General Meeting held at the Bull Hotel, Ludlow, on 14 January 2004.

Officers and Committee Members 2004

The following were elected or appointed at the 2004 AGM:

Convivium Leader: John Fleming

Assistant Leader: Rosemary Smith

Secretary: Sue Chantler

Treasurer: Alex Perks

Management Committee: Sue Byatt, Peter Cook, Rosemarie Fleming, Graeme Kidd (Publicity Officer), Graeme Perks (Education Officer), Lesley Mackley, Phil Maile, Kate Norman, Peter Vale

Co-opted (Cittaslow Ludlow representative): Alison Cundall

There were no changes in the officers or committee members during the year.

Management Committee

The Management Committee met on 11 occasions during the period between the 2004 and 2005 AGMs. Matters considered at the January 2003 meeting including the setting up of sub-committees and the planning of events. At the February meeting Graeme Perks reported on education initiatives in Ludlow and possible links with the Manchester and Carmarthenshire convivia. Lesley Mackley had done a presentation on herbs and spices at Ludlow School. John Fleming reported on the work being done by the UK Working Party in setting up a national structure. He also reported that Three Counties Perry had been accepted by the International Ark Commission as both an Ark of Taste product and a Presidium. Alison Cundall and David Matson (a consultant working on a Cittaslow project for the East of England) reported on the development of Cittaslow in Ludlow and elsewhere in the UK.

At the March meeting, the committee planned further events and it was reported that insurance was now in place covering the activities of all UK Slow Food convivia. In April it was reported that significant recent publicity for both Cittaslow and Slow Food had resulted in many enquiries being received. It was also revealed that we had secured a grant from Shropshire County Council towards the expenses of a Three Counties Perry event at Ludlow Marches Food & Drink Festival, and we heard that Mary de Saulles had compiled a book of Shropshire recipes and was offering a portion of the profits to be used to develop Slow Food activities in the Shrewsbury area. In May we made further plans for events. The June committee meeting saw us planning much of the detail of the Slow Food marquee at the Food & Drink Festival; this continued at the July and August meetings. At the September meeting the committee reviewed the results of the festival presence. In October we received an update on Cittaslow UK activities, and Sue, Rosemarie and John reported on their experiences at the Salone del Gusto in Turin.

Membership

At 31 January 2005 there were 80 paid-up members of the Convivium. This compares with 47 in January 2004. Nationally, membership of Slow Food is rising at a similar pace.

Events

Carnivores' Carnival was held at Hopton Court in March and featured Lesley Mackley demonstrating cooking a kidney starter, followed by Chris Woodward's main course of mutton with caper sauce. Heath Farm Meats provided a fascinating butchery demonstration at the end of the meal, with the various pieces of pork auctioned off. In April, some members visited Ludlow's twin town in Italy, in conjunction with the Food & Drink Festival and Ludlow Italian Twinning Association to take part in the Magnalonga – a magnificent day in Valpolicella. In May we arranged a special meal at the Old Town House, Ludlow's newest restaurant,

During the summer we had planned two trips, one to the Welsh seaside with various foodie experiences along the way, and one to the Vegetable Kingdom at Ryton Organoc Gardens near Coventry. Unfortunately neither of these trips attracted a viable number of members, nor did our December outing to Borough Market in London, so we must conclude that outings of this nature are simply not popular.

Our major presence at September's Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival required much preparation and work before, during and after the event – but it was a great success and I think we were the first British convivium to attempt a Slow Food event on this scale. In our prominently-sited marquee we had displays about Slow Food in general, Cittaslow, and producer-staffed Presidium stands featuring Three Counties Perry, Somerset Artisan Cheddar, Gloucester cheese made from the milk of Old Gloucester cattle, Cornish Salted Pilchards, and Irish Wild Sea Salmon. Plus a continuous range of taste workshops and Slow Afternoon Teas in the workshop section of the marquee. Most of the 14,000 visitors to the festival will have been into the Slow Food marquee and this provided an excellent publicity and educational vehicle for the Slow Food movement.

October's *Slow Food Safari*, organised by Peter Vale, allowed us to explore some of Herefordshire's hidden delights, including Monkland Cheese Dairy, Broadfield Court, Oliver's Cider and Perry, Dragon Fruit Orchards, and, finally, Gregg's Pit Perry.

Last in the season, but by no means the least significant event, was the Squirrel Supper held in the Sun Inn at Leintwardine, a bar-less pub that has been completely unaffected by 'progress'. A wonderful convivial evening with unusual but delicious food, and excellent beer and wine – a truly Slow experience.

Ark and Presidia

Three Counties Perry, which can broadly be defined as perry made by traditional methods from perry pears in the counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire (and also Monmouthshire) was accepted into the international Ark of Taste following an application process which originated from our Convivium, and tastings which took place during the Slow Food International Congress in Naples in November 2003. The actual perries sampled by the international panels were produced by Martin Harris of Butford Farm, Bodenham, and Tom Oliver of Oliver's Cider and Perry, Ocle Pychard. It was subsequently decided by the International Ark Commission that because the prospects of the long-term survival of this traditional artisan-produced English drink are very uncertain, the product should be made a Presidium, currently one of four in Britain.

The steering group of the Presidium, which consists of John Fleming as co-ordinator, Martin Harris (producer), Peter Mitchell (technical expert and former producer) and Tom Oliver (producer), has met several times during the year. Considerable assistance and support has been received from other producers, especially James Marsden and Helen Woodman of Gregg's Pit, Much Marcle, and Charles Martell of Dymock, as well as the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association, and other members of Slow Food Ludlow Marches.

Work continues on producing a technical specification and quality assurance measures, but the most noticeable results of the Presidium's existence during 2004 were 'Perry 2004', a major initiative in the Slow Food marquee in September at Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival, where a stall manned by producers provided sales and tastings of perry from a large number of producers, and the taste workshops held each day introduced the delights of perry to many thousands of people from all over Britain and beyond.

This was followed – at what is the busiest time of the year for perry producers – by Slow Food's two major international events in Turin in October, the Salone del Gusto featuring the best in quality food and drink from all over the world, and the Terra Madre conference which was attended by 'food communities' worldwide. The Presidium had a stand in the International Presidia area at the Salone, and provided samples and information about perry, a drink hitherto unknown to most visitors. Considerable press and public attention, from both UK and overseas media, resulted from our presence there, encouraged by the Slow Food publicity machine, and this culminated in a visit to the stand by Prince Charles. The stand was staffed by Tom Oliver, Peter Mitchell, and Martin Harris, with help from Jean Nowell, John George, Sue and David Chantler and John and Rosemarie Fleming. An Italian translator was close at hand throughout the four days of the Salone.

At the same time as the Salone, just up the road, was the Terra Madre conference of food producers from all over the world which attracted considerable media attention, not least because of the impassioned final speech by Prince Charles praising all aspects of the Slow movement. The Gloucestershire food group who attended Terra Madre included several perry producers, who subsequently helped out on the Three Counties Perry Salone stand – a useful crossover.

Education

Graeme Perks, our education officer, has been working hard on several fronts, bringing together the resources and knowledge of Slow Food Ludlow Marches, Ludlow Marches Food & Drink Festival, and Ludlow Chamber of Trade's Skill Building programme, and Ludlow's well-known chefs. The After-school Club seeks to inspire children with enthusiasm for real food, whilst the Young Chefs contest at the Food and Drink Festival puts a bit of glamour into the reality of hard work for local young chefs who are keen to progress in their chosen career. Not content with just these two programmes, Graeme is also actively involved in bringing together catering colleges in Marches with their counterparts in our twin towns in Italy and France.

Cittaslow

This is a separate subject in itself! Cittaslow was born out of the Slow Food movement and there are close ties between the two organisations. Ludlow's status as the first UK town to be accepted into the Cittaslow network was confirmed early in 2004, followed by Aylsham later in the year. Other towns are either applying or expressing considerable interest. The

convivium has representation on the Cittaslow Ludlow committee, and vice-versa, whilst John Fleming is Slow Food UK's representative in dealing with Cittaslow UK matters.

Links with other Convivia

We maintain links with several other Convivia, especially Carmarthenshire and Manchester, where we supported their honey workshops at the Royal Horticultural Show at Tatton Park. We are also in close contact with our Welsh twin town of Narberth, who set up a food club and have recently inaugurated a Slow Food Convivium. We are hoping to encourage the setting up of a Birmingham convivium, and also possibly one in Shrewsbury. More will no doubt follow.

Links with other organisations

We have connections with, and continually liaise with, other local organisations who have connecting fields of interest, such as Ludlow 21 Food and Farming Group, Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival, and Ludlow & District Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

Slow Food UK

Fiona Richmond, from Edinburgh, has recently been appointed to the position of Executive Director of Slow Food UK. She begins with year at Bra, paid for by Slow Food International, during which time she will both familiarise herself with the Slow Food movement in all its aspects and also help to set up the UK national association which is to be inaugurated in August of this year. On her return to the UK she will set up a Slow Food UK national office. Her efforts will be considerably enhanced, we hope, by the appointment of three specialists in the fundraising and allied fields, two of whom, Alan Roe and Nick Weston are members of our Convivium.

Your Convivium Leader has been spending much time over the last year helping with the setting up of the charitable entity required for our national association, and he has recently been appointed as the second UK International Councillor for Slow Food, to work alongside Wendy Fogarty.

Conclusion

We have been very active during the year on a number of fronts. More help is needed, of course, but Slow Food generally is expanding fast, so fast that it is often difficult to keep up with all the enquiries and activities! My thanks to the Management Committee for all their hard work and support during the year, and also to the very hard-working perry people who have helped to get the Three Counties Perry Presidium of the ground.

John Fleming
February 2005