

# CHILTERN'S THEATRE SOUR CHERRY SOUP

A play about the people and orchards in the Chilterns AONB



Open air theatre performances of a new one  
woman show in local Chilterns venues

7th - 17th June 2023

[www.chilternsaonb.org/SourCherrySoup](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/SourCherrySoup)

## PROGRAMME





# Welcome to our outdoor performances of Sour Cherry Soup!

We are delighted to present this new play, written specially for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Today, playwright Sara Clifford brings alive a vibrant tale of the Chilterns, transporting you back through time, from the formation of chalk to the Romans and then right through to the modern era, without ever losing sight of the bedrock of this place - the chalk, the cherries, the people and their lives.

Sour Cherry Soup is a celebration of all that is special in the Chilterns and so much more.

Sara has meticulously woven oral histories of the real bodgers, lace makers and cherry pie bakers of the Chilterns with a much broader history of agricultural England and its evolution. Her characters are people we can all relate to – a mother, a daughter, someone who is lost, someone who is found – all by a cherry tree where our story begins...

'The history of cherries is  
kind of the history of  
England'



# Chalk, Cherries and Chairs

Chalk, Cherries & Chairs is an ambitious five-year Landscape Partnership scheme which aims to connect local people to the wildlife and cultural heritage of the Central Chilterns. The Chilterns itself is one of the most accessible protected landscapes in the country, surrounded by large and diverse urban centres such as Luton, High Wycombe and Reading. The scheme is made up of a range of projects delivered by a range of delivery partners, operating under three themes – wildlife, heritage and people - all designed with the Chilterns landscape in mind.

Now four years into the five year programme, the partnership continues to deliver incredible conservation work, including establishing and supporting farmer cluster groups, habitat improvement works, farm management plans and much more. Much of our work on the heritage and history of women and crafts in the Chilterns is on display in our Hidden Hands exhibition, until September at Wycombe Museum, and we continue to run regular festivals to increase engagement with local people. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the scheme, working across the three themes whether river cleaning, researching oral histories or tracking bird life. Alongside our delivery work, we are working to secure a lasting legacy for what each project has achieved, and across the scheme.

[www.chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs)



# Our work in Chilterns orchards

Through our delivery partner BBOWT (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, [www.bbowt.org.uk](http://www.bbowt.org.uk)), we run a project supporting and enhancing local orchards. Katie Horgan, Rough Around the Edges & Chilterns Orchards Project Officer explains:

Berkshire  
Buckinghamshire  
Oxfordshire



"The Chilterns Orchards project has provided advice, practical training and resources to a number of Community Orchards across the Central Chilterns. We have helped Greening Chinnor with their ongoing management of Donkey Lane Orchard by providing management advice, tools and equipment, and support for events and open days. At Lindengate, we have been able to supply more than 60 local varieties of apple, pear, cherry and plum trees, as well as support to relandscape the site from a very large compost heap to a beautiful orchard with a willow fedge (fence-like hedge) and a wildlife pond.



Downley Community Orchard have started to rejuvenate their orchard with some new trees and new stakes and fencing for the older trees, while West Wycombe now have a brand new Community Orchard, planted with 10 local fruit tree varieties. We are also planning orchards in Aston Clinton and Chalfont St. Giles, and have given advice to other projects in Widmer End, Bradenham, Prestwood, and Aylesbury Vale. Volunteers from all these groups have also had training in pruning and grafting techniques. We have benefitted from expert advice and training from organisations such as Mid Shires Orchard Group and Bernwode Fruit Trees."

In other projects, Chalk, Cherries and Chairs has been working with Collings Hanger Farm in Prestwood to plant 10 new trees in the historic orchard there, where many old cherry varieties are present. They have also had community support from our delivery partner Chiltern Rangers to plant/put up tree guards to support the farm's school education sessions which the farmer runs regularly.

At Penn Street Farm we have provided an orchard management plan. We have also helped with orchard restoration (tree planting, scything) at Road Farm in Missenden, where in addition we have taken DNA samples and sent to a lab in Kent to get confirmation of the variety, as well as commissioned a full orchard management plan to support the restoration work.



[www.chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs/our-work/wildlife/chilterns-orchards](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs/our-work/wildlife/chilterns-orchards)

# Cherry talk

## Traditional local cherry varieties

- Prestwood Black (also colloquially and locally known as ‘chuggies’)
- Kingshill Black
- Prestwood White Heart
- Ronald’s Heart
- Frogmore Early
- Goblin
- Hertfordshire Black
- Honey cherry
- Nimble Dick
- Aylesbury Prune (not actually a cherry, but a prune)



Beautiful descriptions of these plants can be seen at  
[www.bernwodeplants.co.uk](http://www.bernwodeplants.co.uk)

"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces,  
I would still plant my apple tree" (Martin Luther)





# Cherry talk

## Local suppliers

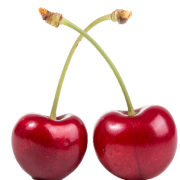
- Bernwode Fruit trees - fruit tree supplier - [bernwodeplants.co.uk](http://bernwodeplants.co.uk)
- Chiltern Ice cream co - Morello Cherry ice cream  
[chilternicecream.com/product/125ml-morello-cherry-iceolo](http://chilternicecream.com/product/125ml-morello-cherry-iceolo)
- Copas Farms Pick Your Own - [copasfarms.co.uk](http://copasfarms.co.uk)
- Horwood Cherries pick your own - [horwoodcherries.co.uk](http://horwoodcherries.co.uk)
- Cherry clafoutis recipe and lots more local tastiness in the Chiltern Recipe Book [chilternsrecipebook.co.uk](http://chilternsrecipebook.co.uk)
- Puddingstone Distillery PUDPUD Cherry Gin -  
[puddingstonedistillery.com/special-editions-gins](http://puddingstonedistillery.com/special-editions-gins)

## Orchard advice and support

- RHS Fruit Group [thefruitgroup.org.uk](http://thefruitgroup.org.uk)
- Mid Shires Orchard Group for advice and support on orchard varieties and planting -  
[tapatalk.com/groups/midshiresorchardgroup](http://tapatalk.com/groups/midshiresorchardgroup)
- The Heritage Fruit Tree Company - training courses in pruning, grafting and orchard management & tree supplier  
[heritageappletrees.com](http://heritageappletrees.com)
- The London based Orchard Project, which gives advice, training and resources [theorchardproject.org.uk](http://theorchardproject.org.uk)

## Did you know....

- It's national cherry day on 16th July 2023
- There are many cherry references in house & road names around Amersham, Missenden and High Wycombe





# Sour Cherry Soup: the recipe

Sour Cherry Soup was initially conceived in 2019 when Sara Clifford was the Writer in Residence for the South Downs National Park, and wrote Cherry Soup, True, and not so true, tales of the South Downs.

For this 2023 recommission and the closer focus on the local cherry heritage for the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Partnership, Sara undertook an extensive programme of desk research and public engagement, running creative writing and drama workshops across the Chilterns, working with a range of age groups in village halls, universities, schools and arts centres.

Through these workshops, people both engaged creatively through their own writing and/or contributed interviews and stories, some of which are reproduced, with permission, in the script.



The show is imagined with one actor taking the role of a woman who owns a house in one of the ‘cherry villages’ that has some surviving trees from the old orchard. She is hosting a garden Open Day and hears the different stories of the people who stop to talk, reflecting the wide variety of people who visit, work and live in the Chilterns.

The show links to the broader aims and themes of the CCC partnership in terms of the conservation of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, exploring how feeling connected to the landscape instils a sense of custodianship, in rural and urban settings. The local heritage is rich with stories of cherry pickers, lace-makers and ‘bodgers’ who turned the wooden legs for the Windsor chair industry, and the play aims to capture some of these histories.



# Our performance venues

## Wycombe Museum



Wycombe Museum is a key delivery partner and an independent local charity which aims to support our communities to tell their stories, build local identity and support community cohesion and placemaking. We are a family friendly museum that explores the history of High Wycombe and the surrounding areas, through hands-on galleries. Known to many as the chair museum, our collection not only spans Wycombe's furniture-making history, but also includes a significant art collection, local photography, and many varied artefacts relating to the area's rich social history. We are based in beautiful grounds which are a designated ancient monument, run a wide range of community engagement projects plus a hugely popular learning programme.

[www.wycombemuseum.org.uk](http://www.wycombemuseum.org.uk)

## Chiltern Open Air Museum



Chiltern Open Air Museum (COAM) is an independent open-air museum of vernacular buildings and a tourist attraction located near Chalfont St Peter and Chalfont St. Giles in the Chiltern Hills, Buckinghamshire. Its collection consists mainly of historic buildings at risk of demolition that have been dismantled and reconstructed in the museum grounds in a process of structure relocation. The site contains several orchards planted with a variety of apple trees.

[www.coam.org.uk/museum-buckinghamshire/gardens-and-orchards](http://www.coam.org.uk/museum-buckinghamshire/gardens-and-orchards)

# Our performance venues

## Donkey Lane Community Orchard



Donkey Lane orchard is situated on the eastern edge of Chinnor in Oxfordshire. It lies at the foot of the Chiltern Hills, on the south eastern side and adjacent to the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway line. Donkey Lane (also known as Keens Lane) leads, by way of a bridleway, to the Ridgeway long distance path. Greening Chinnor community group are working to bring the site from an unused, overgrown and much neglected historic orchard to a vibrant place for our community.

[www.greeningchinnor.blogspot.com/p/donkey-lane-community-orchard](http://www.greeningchinnor.blogspot.com/p/donkey-lane-community-orchard)

## Lindengate



Lindengate is a multi-award winning Nature based Health and Wellbeing Charity based in Wendover, Bucks, at the foot of the Chiltern Hills. Operating from a 6-acre site adjacent to Dobbies Garden Centre in Wendover, Lindengate offers a wide range of nature based activities to support people in a managed and calm and safe environment, either singly or in small groups, working towards building and maintaining resilience. Our 6 acre Green Flag Community Award winning site is in fact multiple gardens within one garden. With ponds, colourful borders, Kitchen Garden, Heritage Orchard, as well as our Nature Reserve full of biodiverse areas, it is the perfect place to relax and unwind or explore with colleagues, friends and family.

[www.lindengate.org.uk](http://www.lindengate.org.uk)

# Our performance venues

## Amersham Museum



Amersham Museum has been open to visitors since 1991. In July 2017, it reopened after a substantial redevelopment and expansion into the neighbouring Victorian building. The project enabled the museum to better reveal their medieval building, previously hidden to the High Street. The work also created a new, stunning glass reception space, new exhibition space, a wonderful activity space and new dedicated stores for the museum's collection. The displays focus on five key dates in the town's history: 1580, 1775, 1892, 1939 and 1964.

Visitors can find out about the people who lived in the town at the time, the buildings from that era and what daily life was like drawing on the collections, including maps and oral histories. The museum has a wonderful garden, full of plants with medicinal and domestic uses. Each is labelled to help you find out what they are and what they can be used for.

[www.amershammuseum.org](http://www.amershammuseum.org)

## Red Lion, Little Missenden

This historic Chilterns pub offers a warm welcome and tasty food and drink. The Red Lion has now been in the same family for the past 28 years with Alan, Marita and Paul providing some great home cooking, easy conversation, light entertainment and a warm bed for the night. It is very quaint with no gadgets or machines, but enjoys live music on Saturday nights and "open mic" nights on a Tuesday, with an attractive garden with a river running through it.

[www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057482797728](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057482797728)

# Credits

## **Sara Clifford - Inroads Productions - Writer/Creative Producer**

Sara has written over 40 plays including commissions for the Soho Theatre, York Theatre Royal and Nottingham Playhouse, and her work has been produced in France, Italy, Guadeloupe and Hong Kong. She has been Writer in Residence at Brighton University, Chichester Festival and the South Downs National Park; and her play *A Thousand Days*, was a Finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn award. As Writer/ Artistic Director of her company, Inroads, she works with local communities to create place-based work rooted in their stories and has developed 10 site specific participatory pieces since 2012, most recently *Two Pairs of Eyes* at Newhaven Fort in 2022. She also teaches writing and dramaturgy in Higher Education and for the Arvon Foundation.

[www.inroads.org.uk](http://www.inroads.org.uk) - [www.saraclifford.com](http://www.saraclifford.com)



**inroads**

## **Fiona Ross - Performance Director**

Fi is a theatre maker and performer and an Associate Artist with the Royal Shakespeare Company directing and leading on international projects and workshops. She has worked regularly at The Everyman Cheltenham, Salisbury Playhouse Oxford Playhouse, Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds, Theatre Royal Bath ,Oxford Stage Co, ACT, The English Speaking Theatre, Vienna and British Council tours into Europe and the Far East .She has also worked extensively as a choreographer and movement director. Recent productions include directing and producing immersive pieces for the National Trust at Croome Court and the Also festival, *When The Rain Stops Falling*, Red Dog Theatre , *Walking the Line* – Cheltenham Everyman, *Winters Tale* , Birmingham Conservatoire. She is delighted to collaborate on *Sour Cherry Soup*.



# Credits

## **Melody Brown - Performer**

Melody trained at Manchester School of Theatre. Recent credits include The Good Person of Szechwan for Sheffield Crucible and Lyric Hammersmith; Wind in the Wilton's at Wilton's Music Hall; the Olivier nominated Midsummer Mechanicals for Shakespeare's Globe; Two Pairs of Eyes for Inroads; The Taming of the Shrew and Measure for Measure for the Royal Shakespeare Company; Henry V for Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory; House and Garden and Bubbles at the Watermill; Tamburlaine for New Earth and The Arcola; Last Journey for Pentabus; The History Boys for Selladoor; Free Folk for Forest Forge. She recently played Ivy in Graeae's adaptation of The Chatterleys for BBC radio four. TV work includes Eastenders and One Foot in the Grave.



## **With thanks to....**

- Sara Clifford, for her brilliant play and for capturing the essence of the Chilterns AONB
- Stuart King, Sally Scagell and Sally Brocklehurst for their stories of the history of cherry-picking heritage in the Chilterns
- The workshop participants at Wycombe Arts Centre, Flackwell Heath, Oxford Brookes University, Lord Williams School, Bucks University and Queens Park Arts Centre
- All the staff and volunteers at our venues
- South Downs National Park, for whom this play was originally commissioned
- And, you, for coming along and keeping our heritage alive!

# Also of interest...

## Chilterns Stories

Chilterns Stories is a collection of tales inspired by the diverse cultural and natural heritage of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to provide new ways for people living and working in the area to appreciate the value of the landscape all around.

[www.chilternsaonb.org/ChilternsStories](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/ChilternsStories)

## Hidden Hands exhibition

Our Hidden Hands: Women and work in the Chilterns exhibition, which has been curated by the Woodlanders' Lives and Landscapes project team in partnership with Wycombe Museum & Buckinghamshire New University runs at Wycombe Museum until September 2023. A series of events are taking place alongside the exhibition.

[chilternsaonb.org/ChilternsWomenExhib](http://chilternsaonb.org/ChilternsWomenExhib)



## What's on

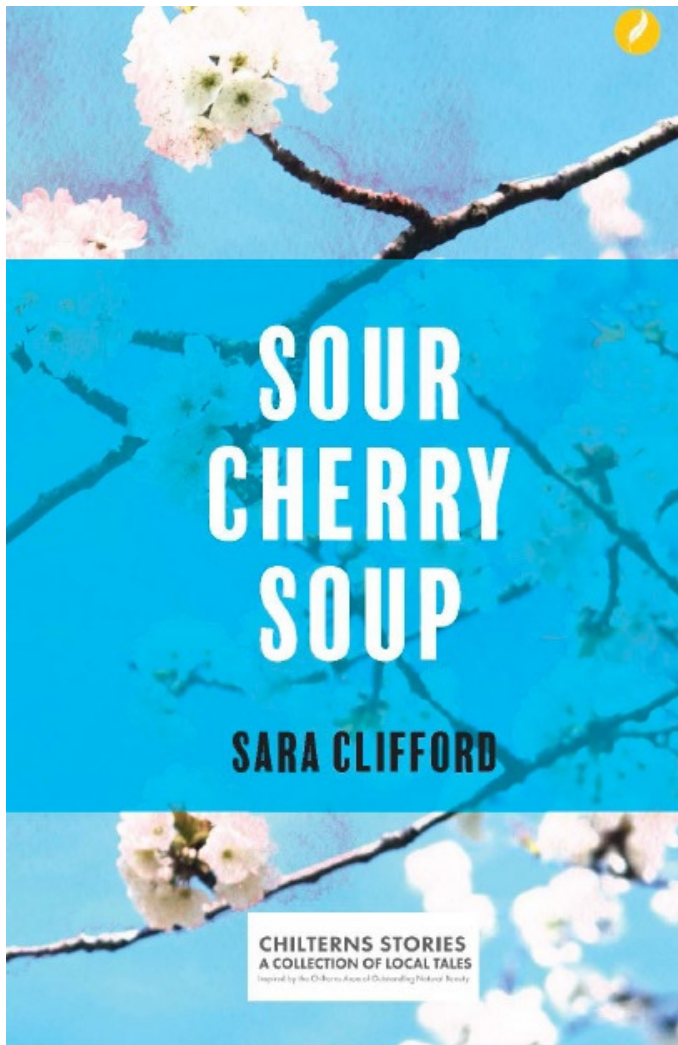
Chalk, Cherries and Chairs runs regular events and festivals - please check them out at

[chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs/events](http://chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs/events)

or register for our newsletter at

[chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs/keep-in-touch](http://chilternsaonb.org/chalkcherrieschairs/keep-in-touch)

**Buy the book!**



The book of the script is available to buy at the  
performance today, or at  
[chilternsaonb.org/ChilternsStories](http://chilternsaonb.org/ChilternsStories)





**Thank you for coming to our performance of Sour  
Cherry Soup.**

We hope you have been inspired by this original play  
and feel more connected to your local Chilterns  
landscape, having learnt more about the heritage and  
culture of the AONB.



**[www.chilternsaonb.org/SourCherrySoup](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/SourCherrySoup)**