

OGA award: John and Ruth Daltry

At an OGA committee meeting in Autumn 2009 we decided that it was about time that the OGA picked up the tradition of recognising those in our midst who have stood out for their work over the years. We decided that the first award should go to John and Ruth Daltry from Chevelsward, near Lutterworth in Leicestershire.

For Debra and me, John and Ruth are two growers who have always been there. At an OGA conference in the early Eighties, while we were still marvelling at the setting of the Tithebarn at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester, this older couple came over to see who the new kids were. They were very friendly towards us and showed us the ropes and we very quickly came to look upon them as friends. After the next conference (two years later) we arranged to visit them. Once again the welcome was friendly and time seemed not to matter too much as we wandered around the vegetables at Chevelsward while they explained the techniques they used to grow their crops.

So it seemed like an age between those first meetings and then me coming to the stage at the producer conference this January to make the presentation of a large salad bowl which we had commissioned from our local potter here in Pilling. Decorated with the OGA logo and inscribed with the words "To John and Ruth, for always being there and lighting the way for others" it was with great pleasure and joy that I made the presentation. Unfortunately Ruth had broken her leg between Christmas and New Year and could not make it to conference so the bowl was collected on their behalf by Francis Rayns from Garden Organic. The bowl got to them a week later at a meeting of the Mercia Organic Group and the very next morning I received a very emotional call from Ruth to say thank you.

After the presentation at conference a few people came over to me to comment upon the award and to tell me a little of how John and Ruth have touched their lives. I know for a fact that there are few countries in our world which have not been represented at Chevelsward in the guise of WWOOFers over the years.

I find it very reassuring that even in their eighties John and Ruth find the time and the energy to continue to run Chevelsward and to still welcome people who wish to learn our craft.

I hope our bowl serves their fresh-picked salad to many more nationalities over the coming years.

Alan Schofield



Photo: Alan Schofield



Photo: Phil Sumption

I am extremely grateful to John and Ruth for giving me my first job in organic growing back in 1988. We turned up one morning as willing WWOOFers and they took my family and I in to their home with open hearts. They even went so far, some would say foolishly, as to offer me a job and we spent an amazing year with them. They readily gave of their extensive knowledge and I learnt a great deal from them about the skills of growing fruits and vegetables organically, and much more.

I owe them an enormous debt of gratitude and am delighted that their contribution to the organic sector has been recognised with this award.

John and Ruth, many many thanks for all that you did for me and for the countless others that came your way. Your indomitable spirit, warmth, extensive knowledge and desire to share have been an example and help to so many of us.

Richard Jacobs,

CEO Organic Farmers & Growers Ltd

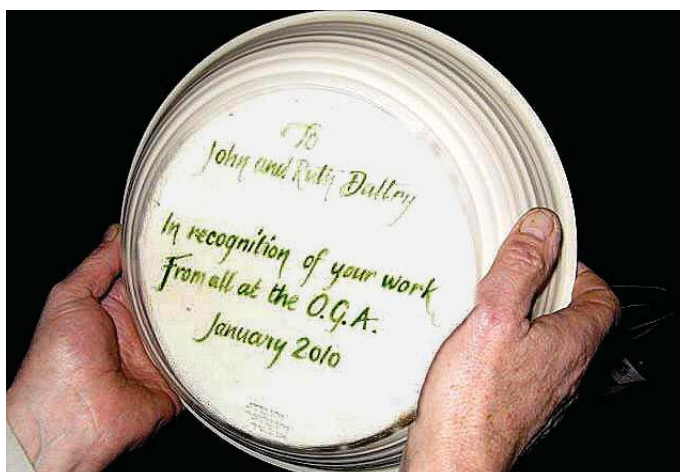


Photo: Alan Schofield

We first met John and Ruth in 1999, twelve weeks into setting up a veg growing enterprise at Pimhill Farm for the Mayall family. It was an old fashioned Soil Association event, one with loads of growers and farmers coming together to celebrate collectivity and to share ideas - simple stuff. Alice and I were joined by around 50 growers, as we conducted our first farm walk - the one you never forget. We were both terrified (and hungover) but after the

initial terror subsided we managed to enjoy it and had some really positive feedback .

John and Ruth were just so kind, warm and generous that day. They gave two inexperienced growers a huge sense of pride in what it was we were trying to achieve, and on each occasion since, they have always asked how we are and how things are going. We have never forgotten that first handshake and that look in their eyes and it is a massive privilege to have met them. If we manage achieve one fifth of what they have we will be chuffed to bits!

Mike Westrip and Alice Tite

I first met John and Ruth at a farm walk at John and Yvonne Roberts holding at Felindre in Wales, in the late 80's or early 90's when I was a fledgling organic grower at Radford Mill Farm, in Somerset. Little was I to know that many years later I would become a near neighbour of theirs (in organic terms) in Leicestershire. They have been stalwarts of the Mercia Organic Producers group for more years than anyone can recall, with Ruth's salads legendary at our gatherings at Ryton! Always welcoming and supportive, their energy and enthusiasm for all things organic has been an inspiration. They planted up a new vineyard and built a winery in the last few years, long after most would have settled for a cosy life in slippers in front of Countdown. Long-time members and supporters of HDRA (they came to look at the Ryton site with Alan and Jackie Gear) and one of the first Soil Association licensees, they have also fully embraced the OGA. Their reaction on receiving the award was typical of this modest and unassuming couple - they felt humbled and undeserving. The comments on these pages should be testament to the fact that it is indeed fully deserved.

Phil Sumption

For more , read The Story of the First Organic Vineyard – Chevelsward Organic Growers in OG3.



Photo: Phil Sumption

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