Spring 2013 Issue 5

SUFFOLK TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS GROUP

Newsletter and Workshop Programme Summer / Autumn 2013

Pear trees in flower

In the next week or two the big pear trees of Suffolk will be in full flower, and this is the best time to find them; the rest of the year they blend into the background and can be mistaken for a tall ash or oak.

Fig 1

Fig 2

Supported by The National Lottery® through the Heritage Lottery Fund
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Inside this issue:

Fig. 1 In early April this old pollarded cherry plum was just fading showing typical widely scattered small flowers. A huge pear behind the house is about to come into flower. Neither variety has been identified. It is believed that both trees were planted when the farm house was built in 1856.

Fig. 2 In late April to early May, a huge unidentified pear (looking like an oak in summer) bears small pears ripe in August; to the right is a walnut and on the far right, a Conference pear.

The following events and dates are correct at the time of publication. Details of times, location, any additional events and changes to the programme will be circulated separately.

Programme of events

All workshops are led by Paul Read, chair of Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group

Date	Event
Sat 13 July	**"*Planning and planting a traditional orchard*", ** a one day course for community groups and individuals that want to plant a traditional orchard. At Thrandeston Village Hall, near Eye with a visit to a newly planted traditional orchard.
Wed 24 July	**Holywells Park Wildlfe Day** , Ipswich 12pm-4pm (STOG is attending the opening of the newly planted orchard, and providing an advice centre.) Open to everyone.
Sat 10 Aug	***A visit to Kentish cobnut plats near Maidstone, Kent***. *Contact Paul Read*
Wed 14 Aug	***A tour of the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale***, Faversham Kent. *Contact Paul Read*
Sat 17 Aug	**Plums and Cobnuts Day, Orchard Barn, Ringshall, Suffolk. Open to everyone**
Wed 21 Aug	**"*An introduction to the identification of summer-ripe tree fruit varieties*"**, a one day course, at Thrandeston, Suffolk. *Contact Paul Read*
Sat 31 Aug	**Autumn Harvest Festival**, Wandlebury, Cambridgeshire (STOG providing fruit identification). Open to everyone.
Sat 7 Sep	***"Propagation of fruit trees by budding***", a one day course, at Home Farm, Thrandeston, Suffolk. *Contact Paul Read*
Sat 21 Sept	**Farnham Common Orchard Day**, Bucks, (STOG providing fruit identification) Open to everyone.
Sun 6 Oct	**SWT Foxburrow Farm Apple Day** (STOG providing fruit identification and other delights) Open to everyone.
Sat 12 Oct	"***An introduction to the identification of tree fruit varieties***", a one day course, at Thrandeston, Suffolk. *Contact Paul Read*
Sun 13 Oct	**SWT Redgrave & Lopham Fen Apple Day** (STOG providing fruit identification and other delights) Open to everyone.
TBA	**Little Ouse Headwaters Project Open Day**

Course arranged as required	**"*Surveying Traditional Orchards in Suffolk*"**, a one day course, arranged depending on demand, for new (and existing) surveyors that volunteer to survey the orchards in their parish. *Contact Paul Read*

DETAILS OF EVENTS

"Planning and planting a traditional orchard"

Saturday 13th July (Times to be advised)

Venue Thrandeston Village Hall, Little Green, near Eye IP21 4BX
Cost **FREE**

About the day
A one day course for community groups, and private individuals, who want to plant a traditional orchard. In particular this course is designed for those planning to plant in the coming winter 2013/14 and those who intend to buy bare root trees via the Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group Buying Scheme.

To book Please email paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk to book and we will send details of what to bring.

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A visit to Kentish cobnut plats near Maidstone, Kent

Saturday, 10th August 2013

Venue TBA
Cost **FREE**

About the day
This is a visit to Meg Game and John Cannon's cobnut plats, which are in production, and John's collection of many other cultivars. All these are grown in the uniquely pruned Kentish style unfamiliar to us in East Anglia. Picnic in the cobnuts.

We may also have an opportunity to see an old orchard of huge Kent cherry trees that probably resemble some of the lost cherry orchards once common in south Suffolk. More details later.

To book Please email paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk to book and we will send details before the day.

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A tour of the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale, Faversham, Kent

Saturday, 14th August 2013

About the day
The National Fruit Collection owned by DEFRA, is the largest fruit and nut collection in the world, with over 2,000 apple varieties and over 3,000 varieties overall. In August plums, sour cherries, cobnuts and some early apples will be ripe, sweet cherries mostly over, and most apples, pears and quince not yet ready. The planning of this visit will depend on the number of people that want to go; a small group may be permitted to be taken round by Paul Read, a larger one may require one of the NFC's guides, and we plan to concentrate of the early fruit and nuts, especially plums and cobnuts.

To book Please email paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk to book.

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DETAILS OF EVENTS

"An introduction to the identification of summer-ripe tree fruit varieties"

Wednesday, 21st August 2013

Venue Thrandeston Village Hall, near Eye
Cost Free

About the day

This course will look at all varieties of fruit ripe in summer, principally plums, sour cherries and cobnuts (and maybe early apples) and their identification. This will take place in Thrandeston Village Hall with a short excursion to a nearby farm orchard with a range of fruit.

To book Please email paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk

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"Propagation of fruit trees by budding"

Saturday, 7th September 2013

Venue Home Farm, Thrandeston , near Eye
Cost Free

About the day

This is a new course and has been arranged due to popular request. However, the weather will be critical as this is usually carried out with rootstocks previously planted out in the open. The course will take place at Home Farm where a range of rootstocks is already growing in the ground. The budded plants will stay there for another 15 months before being transferred to a final site, but we hope that those who attend will be able to eventually retrieve the plants they have budded. More details later.

To book Please email paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk

"An introduction to fruit tree varieties"

Saturday, 12th October 2013

Venue Thrandeston Village Hall, near Eye
Cost Free

About the day

This course will look at all varieties of fruit ripe in October and throughout the winter, principally apples, pears and quince (perhaps some late damsons and bullace) and their identification. This will take place in Thrandeston Village Hall (near Eye) with a short excursion to two local farm orchards with a range of traditional fruit trees.

To book Please email paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk

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Cobnuts in Suffolk and the Kentish Cobnut Association

Meg Game is the author of the following article published in Cobweb 72, the newsletter of the Kentish Cobnut Association. Meg is Secretary to the Kentish Cobnut Association and divides her time between Hampstead Heath, where she is ecologist for the City of London Corporation, and her family's traditional cobnut plats at Ightham on the greensand ridge near Maidstone in Kent where ancient commercial cobnut plantations are still in production. Meg is an important contact for STOG and has visited some of our cobnuts and realises, as we have only recently, that cobnuts were a significant component of Suffolk's (and probably Norfolk's) farm orchard tradition. There are a number of long standing myths regarding orchards and their fruit and the pollination of cobnuts is just one….. read on!

Photo: Kentish Cobnut Association

Two female flower buds or 'inflorescences', together with a non-flowering bud. Kentish Cob 3rd March 2013.

Each of the buds will grow into a shoot. The flower buds will grow into a short shoot with leaves and (if all goes well) a nut at the end.

The non-flowering bud will probably develop into a longer shoot, without any nuts.

Pollination and fertilisation

Meg Game, Kentish Cobnut Association

Pollination

I had a reasonable but not abundant supply of female flowers this spring, and the weather pollination was poor, promising only an average season this year.

The catkins on my Kent Cob came out at much the same times as the female flowers, just after the middle of February; usually there is a gap of a couple of weeks. But do not imagine this heralds perfect pollination, for hazel nut cultivars are self-sterile. This means that pollen from a given variety cannot pollinate the female flowers from the same variety, whether on the same bush or another. Among the very few exceptions are Tombul, an important Turkish variety, and Noccione, but these are only partly self fertile. If you don't believe me, try it yourself! I did, many years ago.

First, having removed catkin buds, I securely tied plastic bags over twigs on Kentish Cobs before the females emerged. Then, when the flowers were out, I pollinated those in some bags with Kentish Cob pollen, and others with pollen from seedling trees in the hedgerow. This I did by poking a washed then pollen-covered finger through a small hole in the bag, which I then closed up, removing the bags many weeks later. Only those flowers pollinated from the seedling trees produced nuts. In fact they produced as many nuts per twig as twigs which I had not covered up, suggesting that lack of pollination generally was not a problem in the year of my experiments.

The Pollination table on Page 6 shows which variety pollinates which, and *vice versa*, for some of the cultivars available in Britain, as far as I can discover from published literature.

It seems my Kentish Cobs are pollinated by seedling trees around the plat. I hope that grains of pollen from compatible trees will land on the threads of the tiny red female flowers. The end of these threads is called the stigma, and this is the part where the pollen grain must alight to pollinate the flower.

The stigmas are most receptive a couple of weeks after the flower is first visible, although they remain receptive for more than a month, until they wither away. I tested this too in my pollination experiments, and found it to be accurate.

Actually, what we call a female flower (and which should be called an inflorescence) is a collection of 4-16 individual flowers, each of which can develop into a nut. The inflorescence becomes the bunch of nuts.

Once on the stigma, the pollen grain germinates, and produces a tube. If from a compatible variety, this grows down to the base of the red thread, or 'style', of the female flower. It takes 4-10 days (France), depending on temperature, to reach the base of the style, where it stops. However, if the pollen is from an incompatible variety, the pollen tube cannot penetrate the surface of the stigma, and dies.

After pollination

If a flower has been successfully pollinated, its ovary grows and ovules form, usually two per ovule. However, the actual fertilisation of the ovary does not happen until much later.

Unpollinated fruiting buds drop off in May. In addition to this, many of the pollinated buds also fall off, typically 35% to 50%. A foliar spray containing a boron compound applied in May can significantly reduce the number of these. One of the major Kentish growers finds it worthwhile to apply Phosyn Bortrac at 1.5 litres per hectare, usually at the both the start and end of May. However, please note that the Association is not qualified to advise on sprays. According the researchers in Oregon, boron does not increase the number of nuts in a bunch, the number of blanks, nor the size of the kernels, only the set. Boron should not be applied to trees under 5 years of age nor when leaf analysis shows a boron reading of over 200 ppm as boron is toxic in large amounts.

After about four months of rest, the pollen tube starts to grow again, and eventually fertilises the ovule. Usually only one of the two ovules in each separate flower is fertilised. If both are, a nut with a double kernel develops. Fertilisation takes place in late June in Oregon. Kernel growth is rapid in the second half of July, and the kernel fills the shell by early August in Oregon, though a bit later in southern England. The shell has grown to its full size several weeks earlier, so in late July and early August here the shells only contain a tiny chit of a nut.

This deferred fertilisation and late development the kernel or seed is unusual among plants. Did it evolve this way because it reduces predation? In many plants, such as apples, the flesh rather than the seed is the part of interest to predators, so there is no advantage in the seeds developing particularly late. In nuts, it is the kernel rather than the shell which interests them, so there is benefit to this developing at the last minute.

Much of the information given here was taken from the authoritative book Le Noisetier (in French,) produced by Ctifl, Paris.

Pollination table, based on published material

Pollinator	Kent Cob	Gunslebert	Cosford	Merveille	Empress	Ennis	Butler
Pollinated							
Kent Cob	x	√√	√	√√	√	?	?
Gunslebert	√√	x	√	x	√√	?	?
Cosford	?	√√	x	√√	√	?	?
Merv. Boll.	√	x	√√	x	√	?	?
Emp Eugenie	x	√√	x	√	x	?	?
Ennis	?	?	?	√√	?	x	√√
Butler	?	?	?	√√	?	?	x

Beefings and Biffins!

Monica Askay

The Norfolk Beefing or Biffin is a very distinctive apple. It is flushed with a dark browny-purple red. It is a long keeping and extremely hard apple with dry flesh which is rather bland when eaten fresh (initially culinary, it is sweet enough to eat fresh by the Spring). There is some dispute as to whether the name comes from the French "Beaufin" or "Beefing" because of its resemblance to the meat when the apple is in its baked state ("The Fruit Manual" Hogg 5th Edition 1884). To me the colour of the skin when raw has a rather meaty appearance. It is a very old variety. It was recorded in a fruit list from Mannington Hall Estate (owned by the Walpole family) in 1698.

The hardness of the Norfolk Beefing makes it ideal for drying. It makes excellent dried apple rings. It is, however, perhaps best known for the Biffin (confusingly also another name for the variety). During the C19th Biffins were extremely popular and were a Christmas delicacy, described by Charles Dickens in "A Christmas Carol", as part of a Christmas display in a fruiterer's window. Biffins were a Norwich speciality, prepared by bakers in their cooling bread ovens after bread-baking. They were cooked whole and gradually flattened and dried. They were packed into boxes with sugar and sent to London fruiterers or sent by post as gifts. They are best dried in brick bread ovens and so changes in commercial oven technology presumably led to their waning popularity and demise. They were still available commercially until the 1950s.

A number of books give descriptions and instructions. Esther Copley, in "The Housekeeper's Guide or a plain and practical system of domestic cookery" 1838 gives a recipe for "Dried Apples or Pears". She states that Norfolk biffins are the best apples to use, followed by Suffolk biffins (! Perhaps she means Norfolk Biffins growing in Suffolk?!). Blenheim Orange are also recommended. For pears she suggests "the large baking pears". The method she describes is as follows:

Place some clean straw on a wire rack, place the fruit on it, and cover with more straw. Place in a cool oven for 4 or 5 hours. Then remove them and squash them gently with your hand, taking care not to break the skins. Put them back in the oven. She suggests repeating this process 3 or 4 times so that they "become as flat and dry as those which are sold at a high price in the pastry-cook's shop. To do them properly, requires 2 or 3 days."

She even tells us that fancy bread bakers sell them "*at three-halfpence or two-pence a dozen",* reminding us that a baker's dozen at that period is always 14.

Eliza Acton (incidentally brought up in Ipswich) gives a recipe for Norfolk Biffins in "*Modern Cookery for Private Families*" 1845, extended edition 1855. She makes the distinction between biffins commercially prepared and domestically prepared and says that biffins are "*much finer ..... left more juicy but partially flattened"*. She gives instructions similar to Esther Copley's.

Mary Norwak wrote for East Anglian newspapers and magazines and collected old recipes from the region. In "*East Anglian Recipes – 300 years of housewife's choice*" she describes biffins and gives instructions for Cottage Biffins and Commercial Biffins. My attempt was a combination of these two!

It was the end of April when I tried preparing Biffins. The apples were therefore coming to the end of their storage period. They were still extremely hard! I placed a wire cake rack over a baking sheet and then placed a layer of clean barley straw (Mary Norwak specifies wheat straw) over the cake rack. On the straw I arranged the washed, whole, unpeeled Norfolk Beefings. Unfortunately I possess neither a brick bread oven, nor an Aga type range. My oven is electric. I was unsure re the temperature so erred on the side of caution. The lowest setting on my oven is 50C so that was the temperature I started with. After several hours the apples still felt rather hard so over time I gradually increased the temperature to around 100C. (Laura Mason in "*Traditional Foods of Britain: An Inventory*" suggests a temperature of 105C). After 5 hours I removed the

apples from the oven as instructed and pressed them gently to flatten them slightly taking care not to break the skins. I put them back in the oven and covered them with more straw. After another hour I flattened them a bit more. At this stage I decided to weight them. This I did by placing a heavy iron baking tray over the top layer of straw and then placing assorted 1lb and 2lb weights on top, totalling 6lb initially. I eventually added more weights totalling 9 lb. The apples stayed in the slow oven with occasional removal and flattening for a total of 12 hours! At this stage I turned the oven off but left them in the residual heat overnight, still weighted. The result was not quite what I was expecting. I had expected something dried and chewy, and totally flat. The apples were still very moist, the flesh a creamy texture with a concentrated flavour. Joan Morgan suggests that they taste almost of raisins and cinnamon. They were not totally flat although they were flattened, brown and wrinkly.

With the new crop I intend experimenting further. To replicate a cooling bread oven perhaps the initial temperature has to be higher. I wondered what would happen if the apples were cored first. The ideal would be to try them in a brick or clay bread oven.

I did experiment further with another way of cooking Norfolk Beefing.

Eliza Acton gives a recipe for "BLACK CAPS PAR EXCELLENCE". In her own words "The receipt is an admirable one". She is right ---- it is absolutely delicious! Hannah Glasse in "The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy" 1747 has another recipe for Black Caps. Jane Grigson in her "Fruit Book" 1982 also has a recipe for Black Caps. Both these latter are more subtly flavoured with Orange-flower Water or Rosewater, and again will be subject to experimentation with the new crop! Eliza Acton's

My attempt at Biffins April 2013

Here is my version of Eliza Acton's recipe. I do urge you to try it. From the recipe it sounds as if it would be oversweet. The sweetness is, however, beautifully balanced with acidity from the apples and combined peels.

6 Norfolk Beefing apples (other hard varieties could be used such as Northern Greening or Blenheim Orange. Do NOT try this with Bramleys, which will not hold their shape)

12 heaped tsps chopped candied orange peel. This can be purchased whole. Chopped mixed peel would also work.
Thin strips of peel from 1 lemon, cut with a canelle knife and cut into approx 1 cm lengths
Approx 4-8 oz / 100-200g soft light brown sugar
¼ bottle / approx 18cl sweet raisin wine. I used an Australian Liqueur Sauvignon Blanc. Liqueur Muscats would also work well
Approx 2 oz / 50g caster sugar

Eliza Acton's Black Caps May 2013

Preheat the oven to Gas 7 / 220C.
Choose a wide shallow ovenproof dish. Place the brown sugar in a thick layer over the base of the dish.
Wash the apples. Cut them in half horizontally and carefully scoop out the cores (I used a grapefruit spoon).
Fill the cavities with a mixture of the candied peel and lemon peel, and press the two halves of each apple together again.
Sit the apples on the bed of brown sugar.
Pour the wine over the apples, moistening the tops of all the apples, to a depth of about 1" / 2.5 cm.
Sift caster sugar over the tops of the apples.
Place the dish in the oven. I baked them for 10 mins at 220C, and then dropped the temperature to Gas 6 / 200C. How long they will take will depend on the size, type and ripeness of the apples.

I used Norfolk Beefings at the end of their storage period. I baked them at the lower temperature for around another 40 mins, but do keep checking them. They are ready when the tops are shiny and "black" (i.e. caramelised, but not burnt!), and the flesh is tender.

The apples are delicious hot, when they sit in a well-flavoured syrup. They are also good cold when the syrup becomes jellied. According to Eliza Acton, they will keep for 10-14 days (if you can resist eating them!).

I am looking forward to the next season's crop and the opportunity to continue with the experimentation. Watch this space…..

What's in a name?"

Paul Read

The "unidentified" apples some call Coalman, Colman, Norfolk *Coleman,* Black Jack….. *or should that be the many almost uniformly dark red apple varieties called something like that, or even something else…*was mentioned in our last newsletter.

Two interesting follow ups have occurred since our last newsletter. Gen showed a photograph of one at an evening event for Suffolk Wildlife Trust local group in Southwold and a member of the audience said he always wondered what an apple was that he remembered from his youth. Then one was photographed during a survey of Elmswell last autumn. Finally, I have been asked (twice) what's so great about having a black apple!

A more complete story is this. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I will begin and keep a complex story as simple as possible.

The first record of an apple called Norfolk Colman was in 1820.

Victorian England produced two fruit specialists who were ready to write down what they found, but who didn't seem to like each other much. John Scott, a Somerset nurseryman, who grew over 1,200 different apples, was frequently very rude about the other, Dr Hogg, who didn't grow any fruit, and who never mentioned John Scot, ever. They both wrote monumental tomes on tree fruit in England, Scott in 1878, Dr Robert Hogg in various editions until 1884 that provided us with the most detailed descriptions of apples of that period… and in many cases they don't agree. They did agree that Winter Bury, Norfolk Colman and Black Jack are one and the same, a dark black-red to dark purple apple that is best cooked from December to April. Today, there does not appear to be any apple that fits their, slightly different, descriptions, so it has been lost – perhaps because it just didn't shape up to the apples that came later.

This photograph was taken by surveyor Mary Feeney at a site in Elmswell. It has many similarities with **Coalman** and/or **Norfolk Colman (False).** This is a large apple, it's at the tip of a branch, and is black-red. Whether it's the same is another matter; maybe later this year we will know.

Of course there are others that might match, one of which is the dark form of **Gravenstein** sometimes called **Bloodred** (or **Morkrød** in Danish where it probably originated), or even a dark form of **Blenheim Orange**.

Why Coleman or Colman? Colman is a surname as in mustard, a first name in Ireland originating from Colman/Colm/Colum/Columbine and many Irish saints, and 'cole' is an early word for cabbage, mustard (again!), and all things cabbagy, colza being the lamp oil from rape seed, aka coleseed. But what has all that to do with apples?

By the 1930's it was widely considered that many names including Winter Bury, Norfolk Storing, Norfolk Bearer, Colman's Winter, and …..Coalman, Colman, Norfolk Coleman, and Black Jack (as many as 50 different synonyms) were really that they were one and the same and this was endorsed by apples being sent in to the slowly growing National Fruit Trials described under these names, and which turned out to be the same as the famous apple Norfolk Beefing.

Then in 1945, Philip Morton Shand, a writer, architect, fruit enthusiast, serial bridegroom and bon viveur grandfather of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, sent an apple and some graft wood (from Bath where he lived) to the National Fruit Trials which he said was **Norfolk Coleman**. He did not say where it came from or why he thought that was the name, unfortunately a common problem. The curator of the collection could see that its fruit wasn't the same as any other apple sent in and the tree remained in the collection (with that name) until just a few years ago. For some while it was called **Norfolk Coleman (false).** Then, a decision was made by the then curators that because it didn't match any description received for Norfolk Coleman it should be "de-registered", the NFC term for extermination. It was duly discarded, grubbed out of the National Collection in the winter of 2001/2, and it is no longer there. The implication was that we should expunge Norfolk Colman from our collective memory!

However, by that time a new champion had taken Morton Shand's Norfolk Colman in hand. In the early 1990's Neil Thomas of Ranworth Trees, a Norfolk apple enthusiast, requested some graft wood from Brogdale's tree (available to anyone for £5 a piece) and propagated trees for sale. As a "new" local apple variety with Norfolk in the name it generated considerable interest and clearly sold well, and by the time it was deleted from Brogdale its possible that a considerable numbers of trees had been planted – not only in Norfolk, but also in Suffolk and Cambridge in private collections. I have one of Neil's trees here in Thrandeston—it is already a 4-5m tree.

I quickly discovered that the apple is striking in colour and appearance but, taken off the tree when it appears to be ripe at the end of October, it is insipid and uninteresting, with strange slightly metallic flavour, and by mid-October most are over and rotting. It's very different from the descriptions of a long keeping hard cooker, so my tree, very vigorous and strong growing, has been largely ignored until about 5 years ago (except as a very attractive apple.. for a very short time).

However one year some of my family were sampling everything they could find, straight off the tree in September, for a party. To my surprise Norfolk Colman was actually quite nice, very firm, slightly green flesh, complex and different flavour, not very sweet – definitely interesting – an acquired taste! We had been missing its season, picking too earl. Perhaps this was what Morton Shand discovered.

This was a specimen of the apple brought to STOG from an old tree in a Suffolk site last autumn, and said by the tree owner to have called by her family **Coalman.**

Here the last two specimens were cut transversely to look at the core. To our surprise, instead of five seed locules, one has four and the other three.

Time passed and more recently some of these trees re-emerged and no doubt they originated from Ranworth Trees sales….or did they? Some years ago, and again last year, at Suffolk Apple Days I have been brought apples that appear similar, or the same; last year's was from a tree that was clearly far too old to be sold by Ranworth Trees 20 years ago, and was called by the owner's family **Coalman** (they assumed it referred to the man who brought the coal!). That was when we asked about it on our last Newsletter.

STOG volunteers grafted some new trees last February from the large tree in Suffolk, and they will be distributed to Suffolk collection orchards when large enough.

Well, we can't put this genie back in its lamp – Philip Morton Shand's apple is out there, and it is possible it's been out their all the time, and it is possible that there's another apple that's similar. Obviously we can't call either of them Norfolk Colman, or Winter Colman (that's another name for Norfolk Beefing) so we had better find it a name…or two.

STOG's orchard tree buying scheme

When STOG initially decided to promote and assist the planting of new traditional orchards it was considered that trees would be available on the right rootstocks, and that apart from providing advice, STOG's role would be to teach grafting and to propagate some of the less common and local varieties which might not be available from nurseries. We quickly discovered that fruit trees, especially apples and pears, were **not** available locally on the tree producing rootstocks M25 for apples or on Wild Pear (aka *Pyrus* or *Pyrus communis*), the seedling stock for pears. Local nurseries that did propagate their own trees considered that the demand was too limited to justify their production and intended to continue with garden semi-dwarfing stocks, despite an interest in our project. Other nurseries that bought in their fruit trees from Holland and other suppliers in England expressed no interest at all.

During the winter of 2011/12, we set up a small test scheme to buy trees on these rootstocks from a west country supplier of known successful varieties (while STOG grafted local varieties) to three community orchard groups. Apart from successfully achieving the supply, several other benefits resulted. Large, high quality, budded bare root maiden trees could be selected from over 250 different fruit varieties and delivered to the orchard group representative at more affordable prices than any group could buy on their own. As a result, during the winter 2012/13, the scheme was extended to supply over 400 trees to 14 separate organizations, two of which were members of STOG in Norfolk!

The project takes some management time and incurs some financial risk, which we think is sufficiently contained, and so the scheme will continue next winter 2013/4. As in the previous year, it is intended to assist community orchard groups, associations and trusts, and to include orchard projects for Higher Level Stewardship agreements and for some new private plantings. A small donation to STOG is requested to cover administration of each order. Last winter decisions about variety were generally made quite late, which reduced choice. These decisions should be made by summer, for winter delivery.

The benefits of the buying scheme are:

Acquisition of high quality bare root trees on specified rootstocks.

A wide range of fruit and nuts of all species, far in excess of that available locally.

Delivery to a specified address on a planned date and time.

Prices significantly better than those that can be achieved by conventional retail purchase.

Details of the scheme, which is somewhat like an allotment association's buying scheme for seeds, is available direct from Paul Read's farm partnership Home Farm.

Local Foods Suffolk has updated their ***Funding New Community Orchards Factsheet***. Along with advice on options for finding land, some examples of Suffolk orchards they've funded, and how to plan amenities on an orchard site, the factsheet also gives a list of public and private funders to approach, at national and county level. The factsheet is on the Community Action for Suffolk website > (previously Suffolk Acre and 9 other organisations). For more information about Local Foods Suffolk,

Opportunities to graft fruit trees

Now we have trained so many grafters where will they obtain graft wood of interesting varieties to propagate? The answer has to be from existing orchard trees in Suffolk.

Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group keeps records of orchard locations as a result of its surveys, but most are privately owned and as a result may not want to act as a supplier of graft wood or buds for propagation, even if the owner is fully confident that the trees are correctly named. STOG does request propagation wood from private orchards and gardens, especially where the varieties have not been identified and where we think the variety may not be in general propagation, such as undescribed cultivars. (A "cultivar" is a plant variety that has been intentionally cultivated for its crop, or for sale.) We then propagate these varieties. There is then an issue as to whether these cultivars are unique, and if anyone has a right to their "ownership".

Paul Read's orchards in Suffolk have more than 400 different fruit varieties in orchards which range from the remaining part of an old traditional farmhouse orchard (house built in 1650), restored with additional planting after the 1987 hurricane, to orchards planted since 1990 and still being added to today. It has been decided to make the graft wood available for propagation in small quantities, for a donation to STOG's coffers, to collectors and nurseries to enable some of these varieties to be more widely distributed. These trees are almost all on vigorous rootstocks and many are relatively young and do not yet produce much wood for grafting and so a degree of "rationing" will be needed initially. A list will be made available on request by the end of this summer.

If any other orchard owners wish to do the same we would be very happy to hold their lists and put grafters in touch.

We have a special relationship with those orchards that are hosting Suffolk Collections of fruit where we have records of the varieties they hold and to whom we will continue to supply local varieties. These will not automatically become donors of graft wood, but will decide themselves whether to or not. Our purpose in providing these collections with trees is to ensure a wide distribution of living trees of locally important and historic varieties supported by good documentation of the scion wood origins.

The People Trust for Endangered Species (who already manage a national database of traditional orchards) is considering holding a similar nation-wide database of orchards with records of the varieties they grow, maintained as a reference document rather than as a source list for graft wood.

Common cobnuts in Suffolk

As we find more cobnuts in Suffolk orchards we need to identify the varieties if possible. The National Fruit (and nut) Collection at Brogdale in Kent has 42 varieties, but many are not found here and were sent in by European growers especially from Germany. Some are very distinctive, especially in the size and shape of the involucre, but most are not. So far, we have found three very distinct varieties which seem to be quite common, and several that we haven't identified for certain yet. Our more detailed Advice Note No 6 Cobnuts in Suffolk is now available for download from STOG's website >

Kent Cob

We think Kent Cob is the most frequently planted cobnut in recent years (in France it is called Langue d'Espagne). It is characterized by the long flattish involucre segments coming together well beyond the nut, and hiding it.

White Filbert

White Filbert is one of the oldest varieties of cobnut. It has a long, more or less tubular, extension of the involucre constricted beyond the hidden, often rather small, nut.

Frizzle or Frizzled Filbert

Possibly the most common variety is Frizzle or Frizzled Filbert. This variety has the nut exposed and is surrounded by stiff pointed and very jagged involucre segments.

Turkish Filbert

The least common variety is the Turkish Filbert, with extremely long spiky involucres almost hiding the nut. It has only been found in one old nuttery, at Thornham Hall, but it occurs as a single stemmed tree in some large gardens. Its leaves have a characteristic double serration.

Cosford

Cosford is said to be a Suffolk variety. It has a split involucre that exposes the nut at the top and is usually down one side, but this also true of several other varieties and is not diagnostic.

Thornham nuttery, located on one of the Thornham Walks, and just outside Thornham Walled Garden, is a good place to visit in mid-August, preferably just before the bonanza for the squirrels, jays and jackdaws that descend on the ripe fruit. There you will see Kent Cob, Frizzled Filbert, Cosford and a number of unnamed varieties. In 2013, it is hoped to photograph all the varieties of cobnut commonly grown and to be able to provide a photo-identification method on the website **www.fruitid.com.**

Sour cherries, Morellos and Dukes

Orchard discoveries in Suffolk in 2012 included a number of sour cherry trees, as well as an orchard dedicated to them, and we would very much like to know of any other examples. We hope to have more information in this autumn's Newsletter but here is a brief description of what to look for.

Trees are small, often with a very short stem and branches are often long and straggly, with cherries in rows along last year's growth. The fruit is usually dark red, although there also pale red varieties, but never yellow. In July they will be quite sharp and are not eaten by birds, so they hang on the tree until August, becoming sweeter and luscious, sometimes almost black, and excellent eaten off the tree. The birds think that too!. There are many varieties with names like Morello, Carnations, or Kent Reds; in general, a cherry still on a tree in August, is one of these. They are a quite different species to the sweet cherry, and the source of glace cherries, Kirsch, cherry brandy and fabulous cherry pies!

There are also hybrids between sour cherries and sweet cherries called Dukes (or Amarelles but rarely here), but they could all be much bigger trees fruiting at the same time as sweet cherries. If you know of cherry trees that are called Dukes we would very much like to know of these too. As you can see from the picture of a Suffolk sour cherry because the cherries grow from the long previous years growth the trees look as if they are having a bad hair day!

A Morello orchard in south Suffolk which was once commercial. It is difficult to estimate the age of the trees as they are naturally small. As Morello is often used as general, not a specific, term, we have still to identify them. This is not an easy task, especially as almost no fruit was produced in 2012.

You can have any colour you like as long as its white….the sequence of tree blossom in spring!

There are excellent records from the National Fruit Collection in Kent listing the dates that plum, pear and apple varieties flower each year. This year everything is far later than usual and it seems flowering will be shortened into a much shorter period. As I write this, on the last day of April, sloes, cherry plums, damsons, gages and other plums are all out together, and are just being joined by the earliest pear blossom. In past years I have used this sequence of white flowers to locate specific tree species in hedges and orchards. The usual sequence is as shown on the following pages.

Cherry plums – *Prunus cerasifera* of all sorts, rarely flower densely, often a ghostly scatter of well-spaced flowers, making it difficult to believe the heavy crops some of these trees produce in summer.

Then the earliest plums – in Suffolk Coe's Golden Drop, which is often called a gage, but is much earlier to flower than most gages. Indeed, another early flowering "gage" is usually used as its pollinator: Imperial Gage (usually sold under the incorrect name Denniston's Superb, both of which are American in origin).

The sloes come next overlapping these early plums, and easily recognized by the very small size of the flowers arranged in clouds on very short stalks so that some branches appear to a wreath of tiny white dots.

Sloes, *Prunus spinosa*, on Wortham Ling – one of the most reliable places to collect sloes for sloe gin in October. Some bushes here have fewer spines and much larger fruit on slightly longer stalks and are sometimes called var *macrocarpa.*

As the sloes fade, the main plum flowers begin and a long period of flowering that includes the gages; probably an indication of the complicated multispecies hybridization that has produced these diverse fruit. Plum flowers vary in size and shape and even colour too. Yellow Egg has solid opaque creamy white clumps of flowers like lump of clotted cream; Marjorie's Seedling has delicate, chalk-white flowers, each petal with a narrow stalked base so that they appear fragile, and indeed the petals are quickly blown off.

Marjorie's Seedling, a *domestica* plum. These generally have longer flower stalks and shorter stamen filaments than both cherry plums and the *Prunus instiita* plums.

Shropshire Prune, a *Prunus institia,* includes both bullace (sometimes called white damsons) and this damson. Generally shorter flower stalks and longer stamen filaments than most other plums, and tends to flower later in normal years, even into May.

Gages are thought by many botanists to have originated as crosses between P. *domestica* and P. *institia* and their flowers and flowering dates tend to be intermediate .

Towards the end of the plum blossom, pear flowers overlap.

Pear flowers overlap in season, early with plums and later in May with apples. Pears always have white flowers and red stamens and the leaves unfurl while the flowers are out. Pear flowers vary from the so-called primitive form of the wild, old and culinary pears, with petals well-spaced apart and very open, to the clumped dense flower heads, often with concave petals of the "more modern" beurré pears. A few pears don't fit into either flower form.

The older, wilder, form of pear flower. This is a very large, late, unknown cooking pear culinary pear of the type that's known in England as St Germain. A Dr Uvedale in the 18th century gave his name to Uvedale's St Germain, but perhaps all large pears were called that. The origin of the name or place St Germain and Germain are so muddled and confused that it is probably no longer possible to disentangle fact with fiction (just look up Francis Bacon and St Germain and you will see what I mean). In both England and France, several quite unrelated pears have been called St Germain, exactly why is not known. The pears from this tree are just now becoming edible!

This is Williams Bon Chrétien, one of the first beurré pears to be widely grown in England from the late 18th Century. "Bon Chrétien" (Good Christian) is named after Francis of Paola, a Spanish holy man who King Louis XI of France called to his deathbed as a healer in 1483. Francis offered the king a pear seed from his home with instructions to plant it. Since then pear trees in France have been called " "Bon Chrétiens" and many other pear varieties were called Chrétien. The original tree is said have been discovered by a schoolmaster at Aldermaston in his garden, and Williams was a nurseryman who later sold it widely in England. In the USA, it is still called **Bartlett** after the garden owner who had it without knowing its original name and gave it his own. Its actual origination and date is probably lost in time.

Usually following the plums and pears and sometimes overlapping , especially this year, are sweet cherries, *Prunus avium*. Like pears, the flowers are out as the leaves emerge, so the serrated leaves, quite often reddish as they emerge, are the best identification guide. Some wild cherries have a faint pink flush, especially as they fade, but generally it is the non-native oriental cherry species that are pink.

Later flowering quince and medlars, with by far the largest wild fruit tree flowers, come out in May and flower at the same time as the normally pink apple flowers.

A tall erect pear tree in spring just before flowering. At the time, it was 22m high, but it has since been shortened to reduce the risk of wind blow.

A St Germain pear in October, will last until June the following year. Best cooked by roasting or baking.

Apology: please note that the Portugal quince photograph on page 9 of our last newsletter was courtesy of Orange Pippin—visit http://www.orangepippin.com/

Next newsletter due : summer 2013

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