



SUFFOLK TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS GROUP

Newsletter and Workshop Programme Autumn 2013

EVENTS

Please note there is an **Orchard Surveyor's course on Saturday 12th April at Foxburrow Farm, Melton near Woodbridge**. There are still places available - contact Paul Read to book (see p.16). All STOG courses are free. **Do join us!**

DUNWICH HEATH and MINSMERE SEASIDE FRUIT TREES WALK

Sarah Day is one of STOG's volunteers who has surveyed the orchards in her own parish and elsewhere in north Suffolk. She, like others, is interested in the fruit trees growing so very close to Suffolk's sea. She has walked a regular route and has mapped these trees along a circular path round Dunwich Heath and Minsmere (p. 2) and here describes both the walk and the trees (p. 3). Her list is almost certainly incomplete; other apple and pear trees probably exist in the area, indeed we are both quite sure we have seen others over the years, but amongst the thick vegetation they can be difficult to re-locate unless in flower.

There are a number of alternative origins for the apple, pear and plum trees in open country and farmland. Some have undoubtedly been planted, but most seem to be feral seedlings. They may originate from recently discarded cores or may be many generations removed from the original discarded core. Apples were originally introduced several thousand years ago, pears may have been later. However, exactly why the Suffolk coast has so many fruit trees isn't clear. Suggestions include the presence of generations of picnickers, traditional human untidiness, high salt soils contributing to breaking the natural dormancy of seed (which is very pronounced in apples and pears) and that no one has looked diligently enough on other coasts!. Another suggestion is that many ancient hedges away from the coast once carried the same high numbers of feral fruit trees, but hedge removal, or selective felling for timber use (pear wood is known for its high value, and apple wood for mill cogwheels) has reduced their frequency.

We are aware that the Suffolk sandling coast has many interesting fruit trees - plum and gage trees have been discovered recently and some propagated. If you know of any such trees we would very much like to investigate. Outside Suffolk, as far as we know, only one fruit variety known to be from a salt sprayed site has been propagated. This is the variety Bardsey, currently still growing on the side of the wardens's house on Bardsey Island, off Wales.

Inside this issue:

Events	1
Dunwich Heath & Minsmere Seaside Fruit Trees Walk	1
Sarah's Seaside Fruit Trees Walk—map	2
Sarah's Seaside Fruit Trees Walk—text	3
And how did other seaside apple trees fare last winter?	6
Apple juice and apple juicing	7
My experience of juicing—Monica Askay	12
Plums—pollination, pruning and silver leaf	13
Recipe swaps 2013	15
Historical fruit recipes	16
Redgrave & Lopham Fen Plant sale	18
Contact us	18



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Sarah's Seaside Fruit Tree Walk



KEY

- Tree 1 Pear**, 5m tree, bears sweet, quite firm fruit, possibly a seedling from a discarded core. Not identified.
- Tree 2 Pear**, 4.5m tree, very similar but not the same, possibly a seedling from a discarded core. Not identified.
- Tree 3 Apple**, 2m, very poorly grown but may be much older than it appears because of the woolly aphid infection at the base. No fruit seen.
- Tree 4 Apple**, 5m+ substantial tree, bears medium/small red flushed apple with red tinged flesh that do not appear to be a known variety and does not appear to be grafted. Just possibly planted (perhaps as a crab apple, but isn't - pink flowers, too large & red fruit etc).
- Tree 5 Apple**, small shrub, partly buried in rose and brambles. No fruit seen.
- Tree 6 Apple**, probably an old tree with two separate recumbent trunks. No fruit seen.
- Tree 7 Pear**, a small tree washed out in Dec 2013, may now be gone. No fruit remembered.
- Bullice scrub**, recognized by its fruit in late autumn, some years very little.
- Tree 8 Apple**, small, possibly young tree, flowered but no fruit in 2013.
- Tree 9 Apple**, small, possibly young tree, flowered but no fruit in 2013.
- Tree 10 Pear**, 3m high, scrubby, here for many years. No fruit remembered. (Immediately to the north, also on the verge, is a large Holme Oak!)
- Tree 11 Apple**, "Dunwich Heath", large dessert apples on a large tree, well known and has been propagated, not identified as any previously known variety. Age uncertain, hence the relatively recent cultivar name. Some fruit almost every year. Makes a good garden or orchard tree.



Sarah's Seaside Fruit Tree Walk

This is an opportunity to visit the fruit trees on and near the Sole Bay coast in spring, summer and autumn. They tend to be short, stocky and wind-swept trees, the shoot tips regularly salt-seared and killed, but protected by the sea bank and brambles or sheltered by other trees. In summer/autumn 2013 some of them had been pollinated and bore fruit, but not all, perhaps because of the long hard winter with easterly and NE winds well into April.

Starting from the car park at the National Trust's Dunwich Heath Coast Guard Cottages (pay and display all year) pass through the barrier and walk down the gravel track towards the beach. After only 20m, on your right, you will see two pear trees (**TREES 1 and 2**) which were beginning to show flower buds in late March 2014. These trees are above the path on the higher ground with well-worn paths to them in fruiting times. *(These do produce an interesting small dessert fruit suggesting that they are seedlings of relatively modern dessert pears, possibly from discarded cores. Trees in this situation are very difficult to age as they grow slowly and with many set-backs and recovery in situations like these. Paul)*



TREE 2 Pear March 2014

From the deep path between the coastguard cottages to the beach



TREE 2 Pear March 2014

From the cliff top, above the path and looking out to sea

Just beyond these pear trees take a small path to your right going steeply downhill to a pond and another path. (Alternatively, you can continue to the bottom of the hill before turning right, then immediately right again using some steps over the sea bank. This path (beside Docwra's Ditch) leads inland (west) away from the sea and also takes you to the pond with its dipping platform. Take this westerly path along the base of the heath for about 75m where you will find two apple trees.

On the left hand side of the path is a small, thin apple tree (**TREE 3**), leaning and with a thick, distorted trunk base, the result of years of woolly aphid infestation. This tree did not bear fruit last summer, and is clearly suffering. *(Some apples are genetically prone to severe woolly aphid infection, and some seem not to be at all. Paul)*

In another 10m there is a much larger apple tree (**TREE 4**) on the right side of the path. It had lots of small apples last year. *(This is completely unaffected by woolly aphid. Fruit from this tree is small, red-flushed on a green background and with faintly red tinged flesh, suggesting a summer-ripe summer dessert apple. It is unlike the common hedgerow feral apples, usually small green-yellow and of very ancient origin. As far as we know this tree hasn't been propagated, suggesting its crop isn't very exciting to eat! It is just possible that this was intentionally planted years ago as a crab apple. There are oaks nearby that could have been planted. Paul)*



TREE 4 Apple March 2014
From path alongside Docwra's Ditch

There are no further fruit trees beyond Tree 4, so return to the dipping pond and continue over the sea wall steps to the sea wall path. Then turn south towards Sizewell along the top of the inner seawall path. Two more apple trees are growing on the inside edge of this bank after about 150m, both on the landward side.

The first (**TREE 5**) is down the slope behind some wild rose and brambles which can make it hard to find. It is almost on the edge of the reed beds and some of the surrounding vegetation has been cut down.



TREE 5 Apple August 2013
From the sea wall looking inland over the reed beds.

The height of the tree is governed in part by the wind and salt spray so it is fairly short, rising to about the top of the bank. Another apple (**TREE 6**) is a short way further south on the same side, again behind rose and other vegetation. The tree, partly recumbent and with two main stems, one of which is moss covered, is behind a fence with signs saying "NT No entry. Keep to the path". **Please do not approach the tree without the permission of NT!**

If you continue south down the coast there **was** a small pear tree growing in the dunes (**TREE 7**) but the tidal surge of December 2013 washed it out of the sand and it lies dead on the remnant of the dune.

This pear tree did leaf in 2013. but probably due to the summer drought did not fruit.

At this point you can continue south to the Eastbridge footpath, or return to Dunwich Heath.

If you continue south to the Minsmere sluice, there are some bushes just south of the sluice where migrating birds are often found resting where there are a few suckering **bullace** (***Prunus insititia***). This was possibly once a garden? In the RSPB Minsmere reserve, especially near the south hide, there are thickets of bullace which turn a range of pink and golden colours in autumn. *(These are very interesting; bullace are considered native to Britain, and in East Anglia are of one of two separate forms; the red-flushed green-fruited Shepherds Bullace, and the less common yellow fruited Essex Bullace. Bullace do reproduce from seedlings, but many large clumps, and long lengths in hedges are single sucker clonal shrubs. Around Minsmere both these two characteristic forms do exist together...Paul)*



TREE 9 Apple March 2014

From the Minsmere sluice to Eastbridge path

At the sluice turn right on the marked footpath to Eastbridge. There are the remains of a chapel after about 250m and a further similar distance will bring you to two more apple trees (**TREES 8 and 9**) both on the (northern) right hand side of the path, near the ditch, about 70m apart. These two did not seem to bear fruit last autumn though they did flower in May 2013.

The path continues into Eastbridge, where you meet the road. Turn right through the village past the Eel's Foot pub. Continue walking north crossing over Minsmere New Cut (dredged in 2013) and follow the road towards RSPB Minsmere turning right by a large house behind a high brick wall.

Follow the road towards RSPB Minsmere, then turn off left up a hill on a bridleway. This opens out into grassland on the left, fenced and with sheep grazing much of the year. When you reach a tarmac road cross over, through trees until the path forks, take the right hand path (left takes you on a longer walk around the edge of Dunwich Heath). This path leads you to a gate and a bench in a low spot near some standing water (though possibly dry in a drought). At this point you can walk straight on up a short hill to cross the heath back to the car park, or turn right and walk around Docwra's Ditch, the benches and the ponds with their dipping platforms back to the track from the National Trust car park.

The longer walk is about 2.5 to 3 hours depending on how much you stop, and is about 8.5 kms. The walk takes in two live pear trees (and one dead one) and six apple trees.

*Finally, as you drive out of the car park down the road to the exit (about 60 m from the car park), notice on the verge on your left a small multi-stemmed pear tree (**TREE 10**) that has never been observed to fruit. It is opposite a clump of willows on the right hand side.*

*Then, just before the old National Trust gate house at the exit from the Heath is a small car park on the left with a narrow entrance. You may park there and admire probably the largest of the seaside fruit trees in Suffolk (**TREE 11**). It stands in brambles on the left hand road bank immediately north of the car park, its upper branches regularly seared by the salt spray.*

*The tree is difficult to age, but has been known for at least 40 years. It fruits every year, producing a few excellent large oval eating apples, ripe in late September/ early October (and regularly scrumped). It is a seedling, as are probably all these seaside apples (and therefore unique). It has been propagated, perhaps many times, and exists as grafted trees in gardens locally. STOG too has propagated it and has made it available to several Suffolk collection orchards. We call it **Dunwich Heath** and will formally describe it under that name as, for perhaps decades, it has been known as the Dunwich Heath Apple.*



TREE 11 Apple "Dunwich Heath" in Feb 2009

AND HOW DID OTHER SEASIDE APPLE TREES FARE LAST WINTER?

In March 2014 Paul went to check on two other seaside apples to see if they survived the December 2013 tidal storm surge.



Apple Thorpeness, also known as Roger Deakin's Apple (see Roger Deakin's "Wildwood", 2007) and **Aldeburgh Beach Apple**
March 2014

This is the most exposed, and perhaps the oldest of the all Suffolk's seaside fruit trees. In December 2013, the sea level almost overtopped the shingle bank and the spray must have drenched the whole plant and also seeped through the bank extensively. However, although its top branches, especially on the seaward side, have died, the more protected branches on the landward side are just starting to bud and many flower buds are swelling.

The wind and waves clearly pushed more shingle onto the tree on the seaward side and this is now spreading into the matt of low branches. No doubt this salt spray damage and shingle incursion has happened many times before and will again. As usual after winter the tree has acquired yet more decoration of drink cans, plastic bags and this winter some lumps of concrete and a dead toaster!

*This well-known tree has very fine summer-ripe fruit, and is formally described as the variety **Thorpeness** (and regularly scrumped in August). It has always been described as "on Aldeburgh beach" but because it's called that many searchers have failed to find it. It is actually close to Thorpeness at **TM46875828**, on the seaward side*



of the abandoned house buried in sloe thickets, The Haven. The apple has been propagated for some years by STOG and will produce large trees in time (and away from the sea), and is also now well represented in Suffolk collection orchards. It is also available locally for sale as a garden tree on semi-dwarf rootstock. See also Paul's article from 2008 on [Fruit Forum](#) > It is also listed as a veteran tree on the [Ancient Tree Hunt website](#) >



Apple Thorpeness, also known as **Roger Deakin's Apple** or **Aldeburgh Beach Apple**. (An "apple tree" 1 m high by 12 m across)

Main photo: close up of salt damaged branches March 2013.

Lower Inset: flower buds swelling on the lower inland side shoots March 2014.

Upper inset left: the flowers in 2008

Upper inset right: the fruit in one of its best fruit years, 2008

I also visited the **Shingle Street** tree, mentioned in the January 2013 newsletter. This was in good condition despite its closeness to the SSSI shingle bank as it is relatively sheltered by houses and scrub. It had clearly been less salt spray damaged than many other seaside trees this year. Its identity is still in question – it may turn out to be a grafted tree planted in this location, although we think that is unlikely and that it's a seedling and therefore unique.

APPLE JUICE AND APPLE JUICING

The "traditional" Apple Day juicing project (i.e. as initiated by Common Ground in 1990) is a **four stage process**!



Stage I: washing and cutting up the apples and removing the bad bits



Stage II : crunching up the apple bits into small pieces in a scratter (or in a bucket with a wooden post!)



Stage III : operating the press. (By now there is only one chap left!)



Stage IV: everyone comes back when the work is done to pour the juice into cups.....and to drink it!

Many people drinking fresh apple juice from the first time are truly amazed at the strength of flavour. Others are just as impressed by the amount of effort that has to go into the process! Some are uneasy at the apparently casual and relaxed attitude to hygiene and food safety! A few think drinking the juice is a waste, when it could be made into cider!



Here are some thoughts gathered from many experienced choppers, crushers, pressers and connoisseur drinkers that may help to improve the quality of the experience and the juice, for both Apple Day events and home consumption.

- ◆ Apple juicing equipment comes in many makes and forms. The best designs are expensive, some cheap versions (possibly Chinese copies of the best) are not well made, are often unbalanced and not strong enough to withstand the pressures needed. These illustrations are of a 20LVigo press and associated scratter, that we at Home Farm, Thrandeston, are very happy with.
- ◆ Practice on the equipment you plan to use well in advance of the great day – you may need some basic farm carpentry to make the stand for a scratter.
- ◆ You would be surprised how much water is going to be needed to wash fruit, equipment and sticky hands! The team above had 3 20L water containers (and it wasn't really enough).
- ◆ Don't forget disposable cups for sampling fruit juice.
- ◆ A large heavy-duty plastic rubbish or rubble sack (or three) will be needed for the parts of apples that won't be going into the press, and an amount roughly equivalent to the original pile of apples ("the must") will be left over after the pressing (which our pigs think is wonderful!).
- ◆ Washing apples isn't essential if they are picked straight off the trees. Windfalls may need washing. They shouldn't be used if animals have been grazing below the trees less than 56 days (8 weeks) previously. This is not a regulation, but is a recognised period in some management schemes for commercial cider. See [Archive of Cider Pomology >](#)
- ◆ **Trees that are sprayed with pesticides or fungicides should not be harvested for fruit juicing.** Most pesticides and fungicides genuinely permitted for fruit tree spraying have specific no spray periods before harvesting, but best not to use fruit from known sprayed trees...just in case. In reality sprayed fruit trees in gardens or old farm orchards are now uncommon. In East Anglia there are now few commercial orchards that supply apple day juicers.
- ◆ **Apples are most easily crushed to juicing size if cut in half for small apples, and quarters for large ones.** Peeling and coring isn't necessary or beneficial.
- ◆ **All brown flesh and heavy bruising of any size should be cut out.** In many instances this won't be important, and the browning of flesh after cutting occurs due the oxidation of tannins are an important flavour component. However in some areas brown rot *mycotoxins* may be produced by fungi (especially *patulin* and more rarely, *aflatoxin*). Patulin is quite common and can have long term effects on humans, but is present in only very tiny amounts if sensible removal of brown rot and bruising is done. Other defects such as scab, bitter pit etc. aren't significant and don't need to be removed.
- ◆ **Pears can be treated exactly as apples** and, mixed with apples, adds considerable flavour interest. Modern dessert pears (Conference, Concorde etc.) on their own can make rather bland, sweet juice.
- ◆ **Plan the source of apples well in advance.** There have been many occasions when the apples have not arrived in enough quality to satisfy the demand. This is particularly been true for early apple days in September when the windfall are not significant yet.
- ◆ **Taste some of the apples you plan to juice before using them.** Hard long keeping apples will produce a thin unexciting bland juice and not much of it, for example **Norfolk Beefing** and some other bland cooking apples. Also remember that many traditional dessert apples are not ready to eat even in October and are really much better kept to juice months later - **Sturmer, D'Arcy Spice, Winston, Idared** especially.
- ◆ **In September these apples will produce the best juice; Discovery, Worcester Pearmain, James Grieve, Ellison's Orange** with the addition of early cooking apples like **Grenadier, Emneth Early** and even some **Bramley and Newton Wonder**. Acid flavours are important as well as sugars.



- ♦ **October juicing, especially late in the month, can take in a much wider range of crop**, again a mix of acid from cookers and sweet from desserts is best, and the juice from late October has far better aroma than earlier. Mainstays for us at this time are **Lord Derby**, **Lady Henniker**, various **Cox** forms, the mid-season and early **Laxton** varieties, plus russets like **Egremont**, **Golden** and **Brownlees** that have less juice, but lots of aroma and complexity.
- ♦ **Many experienced juicers say the best, most varied flavour, and most juice, are from November juicing.** Almost any apple still edible at this time can be used.
- ♦ **However some of most interesting flavours are from single variety juice, or discrete blends** of just two complementary varieties. Some of these need not, should not, be made until the variety is fully ripe, especially with the long keeping varieties. For example, single variety juice from Lady Henniker, Golden Noble, Laxton Superb (made in November) and Sturmer and Winston in January, and I recently tasted a delicious D'Arcy Spice made, I think, in February.
- ♦ **Pears, Quince and medlars can all be added to apple in the press (or by mixing the juices).** However be careful with quince which has a highly perfume-like flavour not appreciated in concentration by everyone.
- ♦ **Dessert pears on their own tend make juice sweet and lacking in character.** Slightly unripe fruit is better than fully ripe. Perry is made from a mix of pear varieties that includes sweet and juicy plus higher tannin varieties that are not eaten raw and only added to provide flavour. However two very interesting pear juices I tasted this winter were a single variety **Catillac**, the hard culinary pear that can be produced in quantity from large old trees in Suffolk, juice made I think in January, and the pear **Merton Pride** with added **Bramley**.
- ♦ **The crushing process is critical in ensuring the best juice yield;** pieces that are too large yield less than smaller fragments, but completely mashed apple doesn't press well and needs a great deal of pressure. Pieces about 1-2cm in diameter seem best. A professionally made scatterer is hard work but works well and if need be for hard apples, the crushed apple can be put through a second time.
- ♦ **An alternative crusher is a metal bucket with a 4" diameter wooden post** - banged up and down.
- ♦ **Some hand operated powered kitchen chopper/mixers with rotating blades work well...**and some just don't - try out first.
- ♦ **An effective method that requires advanced planning is to place the cut up fruit in a freezer for a few days.** This breaks down the cells and they can be easily crushed and may be placed directly in the press, when defrosted. We haven't done any comparative tasting so can't comment on the effect on flavour, but the juice tasted good.
- ♦ **Don't rush the pressing process.** Surprisingly a slow press with pauses between turns of the cree screw gives a higher yield, pauses between sessions of pressing give a higher yield than rushing and pressing as hard as possible."
- ♦ **Strain the pressed juice to return fragments of fruit flesh.** Muslin or wine straining mesh is sufficient.
- ♦ **The dark colour of apple juice is due to tannins that oxidise in air.** The slower the process the darker the colour, and some varieties with high tannin (e.g. Cox and Laxton's Superb) make darker juice than low tannin apples (e.g. Lord Derby). Also the dark colour is often concentrated in tiny pulp fragments and so can be filtered out with a very fine filter. Wine filter papers and filter pumps can be used. It's a very slow process, but to some extent the character and taste is then somewhat altered. Some people add ascorbic acid/Vitamin C at this pot which may reduce the browning of juice, or may not. We don't.



- ♦ **Apple and pear juice cannot be stored for long without beginning to ferment** (when yeast cells present on and in the fruit start to process the sugars to alcohol). Untreated apple juice allowed to slightly ferment to a slight “prickle” (one to three days in the fridge) can be a very pleasant, if short-lived drink. (It is a real favourite in the USA, and is called “**cider**”. Fully fermented to cider it is then called “**hard cider**”).
- ♦ **Fresh apple and pear juice can be frozen and defrosted to drink later.** We freeze almost all of ours in polyethylene milk bottles and they keep almost indefinitely, an ideal winter breakfast juice.
- ♦ **The alternative to freezing is pasteurizing.** This is the process of raising the temperature of the juice and holding it at 75°C for long enough to kill the microbes (usually about 20-25mins), but not cook or change the taste (much). You can do that with bottles sitting in a large, deep saucepan of water on a stove, and a good thermometer. Or you can buy a reliable pasteurizer; some can handle plastic wine bags for storage. Some pasteurizers are very flexible with fruit juice steaming attachments etc.
- ♦ **Frozen juice keeps almost indefinitely at -18°C**, but a year is safe. **Pasteurized bottles keep up to 2 years**, but in plastic only 6 months.

Apple juice is as safe as the apple it came from. Some apples may have developed low levels of the toxin Patulin in brown rot areas, which are usually bruises that have turned brown by fungal action. It is toxic but no more frequent than in other fruit and some cereal grain, shellfish, jams, processed fruit juices and cider. etc. In 2003 the European Union set a limit of 50 micrograms per kilogram ($\mu\text{g/kg}$) in both apple juice and cider, 25 $\mu\text{g/kg}$, in solid apple products, 10 $\mu\text{g/kg}$ in products for infants and young children. These limits came into force on 1 November and are considered to be the **Tolerable daily intake (TDI)** for Patulin. TDI refers to the daily amount of a chemical that has been assessed safe for human being on a long-term basis (usually whole lifetime). Most apple juice averages about 10–15 $\mu\text{g/Kg}$ of Patulin.

Of far greater concern in the USA very recently, in July 2013, was for arsenic compounds in apple juice. Lead Arsenate was widely used until the 1970's in the USA against codlin moth etc. and legislation banning its use was only brought in in 1988. Old commercial orchard sites **could** have residual arsenic compounds in their soils. The FDA had already set a limit of 10 parts per billion (ppb) for inorganic arsenic in apple juice, actually the same as in drinking water! The media hype and reaction especially online has been extensive, with a TV programme carrying out analyses of apple juice! And millions of hits to the words fruit and arsenic. The FDA has made a statement..... just go online to see....

By the way, lead arsenate spray was replaced by DDT! And there is very little information about when lead arsenate ceased to be used in the UK!

Watch this space! A full length **Advice Note: Making Apple and Pear Juice** is in preparation and will be published on our website by this summer.



MY EXPERIENCE OF JUICING

Monica Askay

My experience of juicing is, at present, rather limited!

Perhaps the most dramatic occasion was some years ago. I was at an Apple Day on behalf of The East of England Apples and Orchards Project with a stall of their leaflets and books. I had been positioned close to the apple press. The apple press had been found at the local dump and had been restored by its owner who was operating it. It had been oiled with engine oil and I did detect a slight tang of engine oil in the juice produced! The press had been in constant use throughout the event and had been tightened until the strain was audibly detectable. All of a sudden there was an almighty bang and the booklets and I were showered in hydraulic oil!! That was the end of the apple press!

I do not have access to an apple press. I do have a couple of apple trees in my garden - Egremont Russet and Discovery. I also source interesting apples for demos at Apple Days. One year I had a glut of Russets and decided to try juicing them in my Magimix, which has a juicing attachment. I was a little surprised at how many apples it took to yield a reasonable amount of juice. Despite my Magimix being fairly sturdy with a relatively powerful motor I found that it really struggled. In fact, for some time afterwards it seemed as if juicing had destroyed the Magimix. Luckily, however, it did eventually recover!

Some years ago I was given a Russell Hobbs electric juicer. I recently bought some Conference Pears so that I could experiment with the juicer, which I did last night. I found that I did not have an instruction book with the machine so there was a bit of trial and error. I decided to peel and core the pears first. The juice produced was rather thick. Approx 1kg (unpeeled, uncored weight) yielded approx 350ml of juice which oxidised rather quickly to an attractive amber colour. The taste for me was a little bland. The discarded pear flesh, a mixture of pear puree with small chunks of pear, did not go to waste. I ate it as a pudding. It would also have made a good breakfast mixed with Greek yoghurt.

I look forward to experimenting with other fruits when the new season starts!

April 2014



Left and right: Coe's golden drop plum (see following article on pruning plums)



PLUMS - POLLINATION, PRUNING AND SILVER-LEAF



These two plum or gage trees growing on the SE wall of Home Farm, Thrandeston were planted about 15 years ago. They are on St Julien rootstock and unless pruned occasionally would soon be far too large.

The tree on the right is **Coe's Golden Drop**, which is said to have originated in Jervase Coe's nursery in Bury St Edmunds in the 18th C. What its origin was isn't known (although there have been some wild guesses, notably a seedling greengage, but it looks like a cross between a plum and a gage). It is one of the most difficult varieties to grow well. It has very odd pollination requirements, is self-sterile, and very few gages or plums will pollinate it, but it will pollinate many plums. Most years it flowers well before almost any other plum, as early as February, especially on the wall which is where it gets the best sunshine to ripen the fruit properly....in October, far later than most other plums.

It does not do that well in England. We have another much older tree that produced a wonderful crop about 8 years ago...but little before or since! However it does well in California, Bavaria (where it is called Rotgefleckte Pflaume) and the south of France (Semis de Berry, i.e. Seedling of Bury!!). The fruit is large, oval, a dull buff to yellow, with a scatter of dark red dots, and a short "neck" at the stalk end. Its skin is thick and rather leathery, and several Victorian gardeners describe storing it as a cluster of fruit on a branch in water for several months – even to Christmas – but we have always eaten it long before that!

The tree on the left is one of the few plums that is known to have pollinated Coe's Golden Drop so that these two are best planted together. Its original name is **Imperial Gage**, an American seedling from New York state in the late 18th C, but it is always sold today under the incorrect name of **Denniston's Superb**. (This is a very different variety, no longer in existence. Exactly how the two became confused in mid 19th C England isn't known).



It is almost, but not quite, as delicious as Coe's Golden Drop, but very different; a late August pale green, rather transparent, oval gage, it too flowers early and is self-fertile, unlike most other greengages. They make a good combination.

In May I tidy them both up as growing on a wall, they tend to lean outwards unless pruned back. Then in August we get 10kgs of Imperial Gage, and in October about 15 Coe's Golden Drop!

PRUNING PLUMS AND SILVER-LEAF

This winter, and every winter for years, I have been asked how to prune fruit trees. I avoid the question as much as I can because we (at Home Farm, Thrandeston) have over 450 trees, almost all on vigorous rootstocks with the aim of making large traditional trees and so we hardly ever prune other to ensure the trees don't get too high. Of course the other reason we rarely prune is because 450 trees is just too many to get round each winter! However we do understand that not everyone is like us! And when we are asked about pruning plums in winter then some response is essential, **because plum trees are almost never pruned in winter!**

The best time to prune any plum is after flowering. Pruning in winter increases the risk of the fungus silver-leaf *Chondrostereum purpureum* whose spores are released from the bracket fungus fruiting bodies in late autumn and winter to be delivered to cut surfaces of many *Prunus* species (plums, cherries and apricots ready to germinate). I find it convenient (when I have to, to prune plums May – July. The picture shows two plums that will be lightly pruned back to the SE wall of Home Farm this year. I will also be able to see the fruits!

Of course not all plums are susceptible to silver-leaf. True damsons are said to be less susceptible, as are bullace and some gages that are the species *Prunus insititia*, and cherry plums *Prunus cerasifera* are also virtually immune. However, it is not at all easy to be sure of the species or genetic origin of many plums and many small plums look like damsons, are even called damsons by nurserymen but are actually just small plums—**that includes Merryweather – known to be affected by Silver-leaf. Some crosses between *domestica* plums and *insititia* plums are susceptible, while others aren't, so it is best to be safe rather than sorry and prune all plums after flowering in spring or summer.**



If you do see the silvery leaves that develop after mid-summer that characterize the disease, it is possible to stop its progress by cutting out the branches with silver leaves entirely. More often they are missed until the whole tree is infected.

Suffolk is not a stronghold for silver-leaf in general, but Cambridgeshire certainly is! However, I did see some really bad dying plum trees just west of Bury St Edmunds last year.

The fruiting body of silver-leaf fungus. It is often difficult to find, but they are the source of the spores that infect new pruning cuts and breaks in branches in winter.



RECIPE SWAPS 2013

Monica Askay

Last year STOG decided to hold recipe swaps at various orchard events and on-line. The initial response was rather slow, gaining momentum as the season progressed.

The idea of the recipe swaps at assorted orchard events was that people should bring in favourite / traditional dishes made with orchard fruits and nuts to share, and to pass on the recipes to others. I sought the advice of my Environmental Health Officer and wrote guidance notes to cover food safety concerns. I provided food safety sessions for the volunteers (see below).

The dishes brought in were mainly baked goods ----- puddings and cakes, as well as a savoury cheese and apple loaf ----- with some preserves. At the SWT events where I was also providing cookery demonstrations with tastings, the recipe swaps were ably and enthusiastically run by SWT volunteers. A big thank you to those volunteers, and to all those who brought in the tasty dishes and recipes!



A recipe swap event at SWT's Redgrave & Lopham Fen centre. The stand is looked after by an enthusiastic SWT volunteer!

We had Quince Jelly and Elderberry and Apple jelly, as well as recipes for Spiced Apple Jelly and Hedgerow Jam. Daphne Lloyd, the volunteer who ran the recipe swap at the Foxburrow Farm Apple Day, provided written instructions for Bottling Fruit, as well as a very useful recipe for a multi-purpose Home Made Baking Mix for crumbles / pastry / shortbread etc., an idea she came across in Canada.

She suggests rubbing small pieces of block margarine into plain flour (half fat to flour) and keeping the mixture in a lidded container in the fridge (or the freezer). To make pastry you would just need to add a little water to form a dough. To make crumble you would need to add a little more flour and some sugar. Puddings included a delicious Plum Crumble, a really moist Apple Bread Pudding, and a German Bramble and Apple Torte. There were 2 different recipes for Apple Sauce Cake (which incidentally can be modified using other fruit ---- the Sophie Grigson recipe I use, I have also used to make Gooseberry and Elderflower, and Rhubarb and Ginger Cakes).

The savoury unyeasted Old English Cheese and Apple Loaf was delicious. The recipe was from "Bread" by Eric Treuille and Ursula Ferrigno and they comment *"This Moist and flavourful loaf, with its superlatively crunchy, cheesy crust, is perfect for picnics and snacks"*. The recipe (from the American version of the book) can be found on-line. In my opinion it would also go really well with an apple and root vegetable soup, such as Celeriac and Apple Soup.



We had also asked for recipes to be sent in via email. Kate Grant sent in a recipe for Hot Berry Pudding, made with the black mulberries she grows, and modified from a strawberry recipe she had come across.

Here is Kate's recipe:

Put a layer of mulberries in the bottom of a casserole dish, cover with custard (made with 2oz butter, 2oz plain flour, approx ½ pint milk, 2 egg yolks and 2oz sugar ----- make a roux, add milk slowly, then add sugar, then add egg yolks and stir till thickened). Top with meringue made from 2 – 3 egg whites whisked with 2 – 3oz gradually added sugar. Bake at 190C / Gas 5 for 20-25 minutes.

Note: Try with different fruits such as cherries, plums or other soft fruits, or with stewed apples or lightly poached rhubarb.

Do please send us any favourite or traditional fruit or nut recipes. We look forward to hearing from you! We hope to continue with the recipe swaps this year and look forward to tasting your favourite orchard dishes, both savoury and sweet.

Historical Orchard Fruit Recipes

I have been researching historical orchard fruit recipes and have come across some rather interesting recipes I would like to share.

The oldest collection of written English recipes is "The Forme of Cury", from the Court of Richard II, and thought to date from around 1390. All the recipes here are for cooked fruit ----- raw fruit and vegetables were, for the most part, regarded with a great deal of suspicion. There are recipes for apples, pears, quince, cherries, plums, damsons and bullace. **Mulberries** are also used in recipes to add colour.

My favourite is, I think, Sawse madame, which should be served with goose. I tried it at Christmas, using Guinea fowl rather than goose. The bird is stuffed with sage, parsley, **hyssop** (the one ingredient I wasn't able to lay my hands on), savory (I used winter savory), quinces, pears (a use for the very hard warden type!), garlic **and grapes**. When the bird is cooked, you make a sauce from the meat juices, breadcrumbs to thicken, stuffing, wine, powdor douce (a mild medieval spice mix including white sugar, which was regarded as a spice) and ground galingale. Delicious!

A standing pottage is a thick dish (porridge would be regarded as a standing pottage). Such pottages made with fruit were popular and two interesting recipes are quoted, one made with cherries and ground almonds, and another with bullace and ground rice.

Tart de brymlent is a Lent pie of minced fish, dried fruit, apples and pears with spices. **Dates and stoned damson prunes** are placed on top of the filling and then covered with the pastry lid.

A rather later cookbook "The Closet of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelm Digby Opened" 1669 includes a couple of interesting recipes entitled "To Make Pear-Puddings". These are minced white meat with dried fruits and spices, bound with breadcrumbs and egg, shaped into pear shapes with added stalk and baked. Neither contains any pear!

Elinor Fettiplace in her receipt book dated from 1604, describes roasting apples and hard warden pears in parcels of brown paper in the embers of an open fire. Roasted pears were apparently also used medicinally as an ingredient in headache powders! She gives many recipes using orchard fruits, including several for "marmalades" (i.e. fruit pastes, as described in a previous newsletter). These include a pear marmalade and a cherry marmalade. Spanish Marmalad is date-based, but is worth a mention as among its ingredients are powdered seed pearls and gold leaf!



Paul's botanical notes.....

The best **mulberry** for colouring is the "Black", *Morus nigra*, with intense red juice. The black forms of the "White" mulberry, *M. alba* are not very juicy. Mulberries were grown in England well before 1390, but which species isn't clear, possibly both.

Hyssop, *Hyssopus officinalis*, a perennial herb from southern Europe, was once principally used as an expectorant, but has an acrid taste that becomes unpleasant when the herb is dry so must have been used fresh, in summer.

Certain **grape** varieties were widely kept fresh until Christmas, especially those called sweetwater grapes. They were kept on the bunch on a long stalk that dipped into a water bottle, in a dark cool place.

Galingale is normally seen for sale today as a strange root-ginger lookalike with a very distinctive aroma, is imported as a fresh root from SE Asia and mostly this will be *Kaempferia galangal* or another similar lily-like plant. In 1390 galingale was probably the root of a sedge, *Cyperis* sp, from southern Europe, a thinner root, with a less pungent flavour.

Tart de brymlent is a Lent pie, so the fruit available in Lent, the forty days before Easter, was either dried, prunes - which then included damsons and the green gage St Julien, dates, raisins and currants (which were not currants in the soft fruit sense, but were dried seedless grapes from Corinth!) or were varieties that would keep fresh until Lent and a small number of apple varieties and warden pears, similar to those still grown in Suffolk today. Interestingly, we have just recently been offered a stand in the Floral Marquee at the Suffolk Show this year. Sadly this winter has been very warm and it will be touch and go as to whether we will have any apples or pears still intact to show by the end of May. I have just popped a few possible warden pears into our STOG graft wood fridge in the hope....

(Note from Monica: Dried currants were indeed initially known as "Raisins of Corinth" as opposed to "Raisins of the Sun" (now just known as raisins). Both are types of dried grape.

We too have found that roast wardens is really the best way to make them edible.

(Note from Monica: What Elinor Fettiplace describes is really baking rather than roasting. Wardens are really good roasted in oil with root vegetables and served with sausages!)

Acrid flavoured herbs were widely prescribed for headaches in early herbals, Tannins are the most widely available acrid flavours in fruits and some apples used for cider and some pears have quite high tannin levels. Medaille d'Or, a tiny green apple (used by Aspalls in small quantities in their cider) is unbelievably bitter! Whether they worked is another matter...

Marmelada made with dates is still available in Spain – it is a local, almost black, sweet, rather runny jam made especially in Elche, south of Almeria, where "proper" date palms introduced by the Moors in 12th C still grow today.



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while stocks last – first come
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anything!**

Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group
will have small stand at this Plant
Sale and will be selling a few
volunteer grafted fruit trees in 3L
pots (including the traditional apples
Mere de Ménage, **Lady Henniker**,
Stoke Lump Lemon, even a very few
Langton Green all on large
growing M25 rootstocks, about
60-70cm high.

There are about 20 **St Julien** gages,
and 48 3L pots with the apple **Suffolk
Pink**, about 1.5m+, grafted onto
MM106, and suitable for gardens
rather than as orchard trees, and
very suitable as espaliers. And a few
pears, etc.

All these trees are £7.50 each.

Next newsletter due : summer 2014

Contact us

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