



SUFFOLK TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS GROUP

Newsletter Summer 2015

“New and Old Orchards for Suffolk”

Heritage Lottery Fund Project

Nov 2011-Feb 2015

The first volunteer surveyors, almost all parish based, many of them Tree Wardens, were already in place when the “New and Old Orchards” for Suffolk project began in November 2011. We had already devised the parish map production system that showed both the historic orchard sites on the 2nd Ed OS 6” to the mile maps dated 1905 to approximately 1925, plus the sites the Peoples’ Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) had identified from aerial surveys. That winter was largely spent recruiting more surveyors, running orchard surveyor training days and sending out more parish maps ready for the arrival of spring.

By summer and autumn 2012, a few surveys were completed, but the rush was really in 2013, by which time many interesting or unexpected sites were being visited by Paul and Gen with the local surveyor. By then the news had got round the county and orchard owners were contacting us from parishes where there was, as yet, no surveyor.

It was never expected that we would have a surveyor visit every site on our map. There are over 6,200 sites spread over 470 parishes, an average of 13 per parish! By the end of the project we had 140 parish based surveyors on our list who had visited over 1,200 sites. They had found that just over 500 sites were still traditional orchards with large trees in permanent grassland.

The data is still to this day being entered into a database; the most recent data entered being the sites that were notified to us largely by their owners and are in parishes where there was no local surveyor. Also many surveyors started later in the programme and have still to finish their parish. It is hoped that by the end of 2015 a detailed paper describing and analysing the whole process will be available together with the database itself listing every parish surveyed and its orchards.

There are already some very interesting discoveries that we hope will be confirmed in the final report:

- **The 2nd Ed OS 6” maps are an excellent basis to use for orchard surveys**, because a large proportion of rural sites shown (in some parishes as high as 25%) still possess old fruit trees, although a considerable proportion appear now to be incorporated into gardens. Sadly the 54 sites in Mildenhall in 1918 have all vanished.
- **The major losses are in towns and village centres and are largely to housing**. In rural situations losses are far less and to a range of land use, perhaps principally to horse grazing and then to arable.
- **Many orchards were not shown on any of our maps** and we relied on our surveyor’s curiosity to discover these. In some parishes in north Suffolk unexpectedly large numbers of orchard sites not on any map were found.

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- **The PTES sites are almost always found to be existing orchards.** There were rare cases where the PTES sites were plantations of other trees, mostly cricket bat willows or poplars. A small proportion of PTES sites were of dwarf trees and not traditional trees, especially on abandoned commercial sites. In some areas where traditional farmstead orchards were, and still are, very common (e.g. the claylands of north and central Suffolk) PTES under-recorded sites, often for reasons of lost line structure by repeated replanting. Some of these were the oldest and most intact sites of all. If PTES sites were used alone many of these old sites would have been missed.
- **Some surveyors said they found it useful to look at the age of a house as a guide to whether there might be an orchard** on the basis that almost every old farmhouse, rectory, manor and many farm-owned farm worker's cottages once had an orchard, or at least some traditional fruit trees.



Viewed from a road in Thornham Magna... and yes, it has had an orchard possibly for centuries and still has, although not recorded on any map. The surveyor realised an orchard would probably be present simply because of the age of the house.



Proud owner of an old *Lady Henniker* apple tree, at the back of a cottage in Thornham Magna, this is one of two large Lady Henniker trees still in Thornham. Larger Lady Henniker trees grow by the tennis courts in Girton College, Cambridge! The graft scar can be seen about 1.2m above ground level, a pole graft more typical of south Suffolk trees than the claylands.



The Lady Henniker variety was “discovered” in a hedge where it grew where waste apple pulp from cider making was spread, probably initially about 1800-1820. It was noticed by the Thornham Hall gardener, Mr Perkins, propagated for the Hall gardens, and named by him after the Lady of the house about 1840. The apple was shown in a Royal Horticultural Society event and became well known after that.



These and other suppositions will be checked out and given some numerical support for our report. However, we don't propose that the survey process ends there. There are many parishes with surveyors still working and some surveyors are on the second, third and even fifth, parish! We could not have successfully completed this project without a lot of help and effort – from Heritage Lottery Fund of course, but mainly from all you orchard surveyors out there... you can all look forward to a copy of the final report!

The '**New and Old orchards for Suffolk Project**' finished in February 2015 and was celebrated at a quiet and relaxed tea party in May at Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Foxburrow Farm in Melton, after a walk in the orchard. We were able to thank Heritage Lottery fund for their support as Phil Rothwell from HLF joined us and met some of the surveyors and STOG Advisory Board members. Phil also attended our Conference at Horringer, near Bury St Edmunds in February 2015.



Celebrating the completion of New and Old Orchards for Suffolk at SWT Foxburrow Farm's orchard in May 2015

A Red Cobnut



The red cobnut, with dark red-black leaves in full sun, is a selected ornamental filbert cultivar that has been found again and again in old sites. It is the red filbert or red hazel, *Corylus maxima* "Fuscorubra". It was probably not, or rarely, planted as a crop. There are several red forms and this one does produce a small, but nice, nut covered with red "skin" beneath a dark brown shell. This one was found in a circle of filberts in a cherry orchard in Polstead.



EVENTS

This autumn there is the usual mix of apple day events across Suffolk and East Anglia. There will be apple and pear identification services (and any other fruit you care to bring us) at the events below.

Where	When	Address	Notes
ElmsWild's Lukeswood	Sat 26 th Sep 2015	off Church Road, Elmswell, Bury Saint Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9DY	Roger Fouracre will be there to take samples for identification
Audley End House Apple Festival	Sat 26 th & Sun 27 th Sep 2015 10am to 5pm	Off London Rd Saffron Walden, CB11 4JF	<p>Audley End has run Apple Days for many years. This year Paul and Monica will be there with a display and identification service.</p> <p>See Audley End website for details inc times and cost of entry (which includes entry to the house) ></p> <p>NB Audley End is easier and closer to get to from south and south west Suffolk than Melton in the east and Redgrave in the north of the county.</p>
Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Foxburrow Farm	Sun 11 th Oct 2015 12 noon to 4pm	Saddlemaker's Lane, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1NA	With Monica Askay talking fruit cooking; Roger with walking tours of the Foxburrow orchard; and Paul identifying fruit.
Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Redgrave and Lopham Fen	Sun 18 th Oct 2015 10am to 4pm	Low Common Road, South Lopham, Diss IP22 2HX	<p>With Monica, Anna, Roger and Paul.</p> <p>See SWT website for further details ></p>



Polstead Black cherries....again

Polstead Black cherries have been the subject of an investigation for several years. We ran an article on the variety in a 2013 newsletter. As a result, in July this year Richard Cowell of Leavenheath took Paul to talk to owners and visit several trees cropped for their Polstead Black cherries by local enthusiasts and growers. Eight trees were visited, seven old and one younger tree, and fruit and leaves collected from them all. Polstead Black cherries were made famous, or infamous, for the cherry vendor's street cry ***"Polstead cherries, Polstead cherries, Red as Maria Marten's blood!"*** 'celebrating' her murder in the Red Barn at Polstead in 1878, although Polstead's cherries were described in literature from about 1840. Of course many other conventional cherries, black and "white", varieties have long been grown in the area.

The source of the two trees in the National Fruit Collection (NFC) archives were grafted from wood sent to them from a tree at Cherry Tree Farm, Polsted in 1992 and was reported fruiting in 2002. It seems that the staff of NFC were not very impressed by this fruit. The report says: ***"Limited published description for a very nondescript small black cherry. No real flavour, very juicy and dark. Crops very heavily. (Looks like typical rootstock fruit). Stone quite large for size of fruit."***

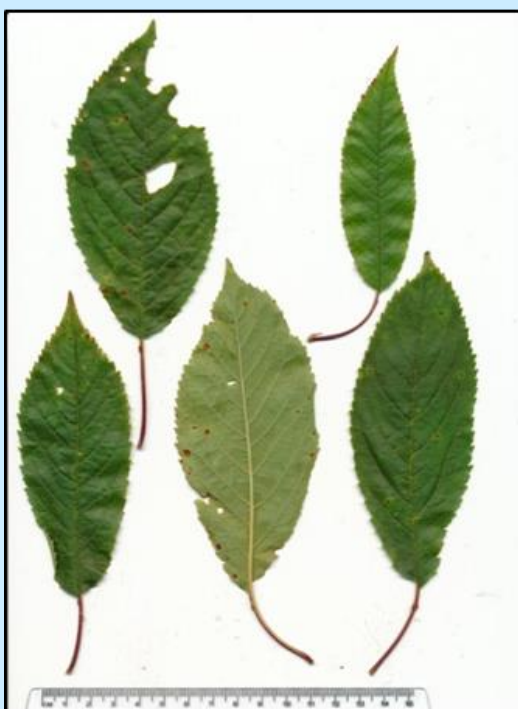
Our immediate thought was to find out more... is this tree still in existence, what is the fruit used for, eaten raw or cooked, and how etc? Richard took me to two trees at Cherry Tree Farm, Polstead, from one of which wood was sent to the NFC in Kent to produce the two trees growing there now. Then we visited other local Polstead Black trees. All these trees are cropped annually and the cherries sold as Polstead Black.

All except one are large old trees, with girths 2m or more at 1.5m above ground level. The fruits are small, jet black with purple-black juice and not all the same, but varying in size, ripeness, general appearance and stone size. We tasted them all, and indeed as mentioned by the NFC pomologist, they did not have the taste of a typical black sweet cherry, nor were they sharp like unripe fruit, but varied from very slightly bitter to very bitter. Although not unpleasant, I would not wish to eat very many of them fresh! I was informed that everyone who bought them used them to make a cherry brandy by infusion, in the same way as sloe gin, with added sugar to taste. Most were only picked from the trees to order because picking such tiny cherries from standing on a ladder took so much time, and all these particular small black cherries were not normally eaten raw or cooked.

It was clear that all the Polstead Black cherry trees we saw were likely to be seedling trees; no graft scars were apparent, except on a single small tree; the crop characters varied as well as tree bark colour and (to a lesser extent) leaf character too, from tree to tree. We will need to check, using DNA fingerprinting, if these trees are different. We hope this process might be available sometime in 2016. If they are different, they are not a single clonal variety, like other cherries and most other fruit, but a "land race". This is a population of trees whose seeds produce similar, near identical crops, but with small differences in fruit size, ripeness period, and, in particular, taste, and this should show up during genetic fingerprinting. There is reason to think that many old trees of local sweet and sour cherries are grafted onto these seedlings (also known as Small Black Mazzard) as rootstocks, and we can check that by DNA because some grown-out rootstock suckers from sweet cherry and Morello (sour cherry) trees still exist in nearby commercial sites.

Land races of local fruit are found in other fruit species; Catshead apples in England, for example, may be a land race of different, but closely related forms. Elsewhere in Europe land races of plums are known from Germany and Holland, and in Yugoslavia where plums are used to make the spirit slivovitz.

Polsted Black cherries have been propagated for some 15 or more years from graft and bud wood supplied by the NFC from their two identical trees, and several of these young trees exist in the area. These trees do not represent the range of the population in and around Polstead, and more importantly if grown in isolation will not fruit. Almost all sweet cherries are self-sterile requiring pollination by a different sweet cherry individual. In the area around Polstead there are many other cherries, but also there are other members of the same population too.



The fruit and leaves of all trees considered to be the cherry **Polstead Black** were collected and recorded during Paul's visit. It is clear that these are not exactly the same and are not clones of a single original tree. In these three samples, picked on the same day only a few miles apart, the degree of ripeness is different.

TOP Tree 7

The sample is clearly unripe, at least a week before its cropping date, and all the fruit will be smaller than the two trees below.

MIDDLE Tree 1

The example is from the tree from which the graft wood was sent to the National Fruit Collection, and was collected in perfect condition for picking. Also the stalk is shorter than the other two examples.

BOTTOM Tree 4

The sample is fruit from another tree and is clearly somewhat over-ripe by several days.

These three trees, just a mile or so apart, produce ripe fruit spread over a 2 week period.

Other comparisons are being made between the stones, the leaves and the trees themselves.

TOP

A sample of some cleaned stones. These are scanned on a flat-bed scanner at 600 dots per inch.

BOTTOM

The leaves are scanned on the same scanner at 300 dots per inch. Notice that these leaves are quite long and narrow. Not all sweet cherry leaves are the same although they are all of the same species, *Prunus avium*. Also, the fruit colour varies from pale flushed with red (known as whiteheart cherries), to scarlet, or to black, and even uniform bright yellow, and the colour of the fruit skin, flesh and juice also varies.

These narrow leaves are typical of a wild form of black fruited, purple-juiced cherry that used to be called **mazzard** by the nurserymen who grafted cherries. In Suffolk, Devon and Kent seedlings of a particular form called **Small Black Mazzard** were used as rootstocks.

It seems likely that **Polstead Black** is not a clonal cultivar, but a local race of **Small Black Mazzard**.



There are several **Polstead Black** cherries on this bank. Two were sampled and recorded. One of these, probably the single-stemmed one, was the tree from which graft wood was sent to the National Fruit Collection in 1992, and is therefore the origin of, and is identical to, all the **Polstead Black** cherry trees propagated since then from that tree.

The multi-stemmed tree to the left was also sampled and recorded. The site is not a garden or conventional orchard, but a cluster of cherry trees on a steep semi-wooded bank by a farm track. This is not unusual in south Suffolk where farmstead orchards were commonly planted on sites unsuited to conventional agriculture.



Richard Cowell picking a fruit sample from another Polstead Black tree in a cropped Polstead orchard. The orchard had two Polstead Blacks, several other cherry varieties, cobnuts and walnuts.



Ancient Tree Forum meeting

Rummer's Lane, Wisbech St Mary

On 18th and 19th June 2015, Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group (STOG) was host to the Ancient Tree Forum's (ATF) annual conference, the third such event to be held in East Anglia and the first that has included an orchard visit. Several STOG members are also members of ATF and over 20 STOG members attended.

The usual programme is a half day of papers, and a half day visit to an ancient tree site. On Day 1 we visited the old oaks at Aspal Close near Mildenhall; on Day 2 we visited Rummer's Lane orchard at Wisbech St Mary in Cambridgeshire, probably the only orchard site in the region capable of parking over 50 cars with over 100 delegates.

Rummer's Lane orchard is an apple orchard planted from about 1908 with huge half standard old Bramley's Seedlings, and tiny, but equally ancient, other apple trees. For many arborists and ecologists present this was the first time they would have seen such a large number of veteran orchard trees. This site was used as a study site in the early 2000's to evaluate the Traditional Orchard UK Priority Habitat (see [Natural England Report NERR025 >](#)).

This is a typical fenland orchard with a limited variety range, once heavily managed to maximize fruit production, then largely abandoned until restored about 15 years ago. It is in many ways very different from the relaxed management and wide crop diversity of the small farmstead clayland or sandling sites in Suffolk.

Discussions with the STOG members present made us realize that we should arrange more visits to interesting old orchards for STOG members, including visits to key regional sites like Rummer's Lane. A major issue with many old orchards is their small size and considerable vulnerability (and not least the lack of suitable parking) making group visiting a delicate matter.

As it happens one of the decisions that came out of the conference was to establish an **East Anglian branch of ATF**. Anyone who is interested is encouraged to contact Reg Harris at reg@urbanforestry.info for more details.

With a number of active STOG members also ATF members, orchard visits could be joint events.



Keith Alexander, orchard invertebrate specialist, running an impromptu seminar on saprophilic beetle frass!



When these apple trees were much younger, soft fruit was probably grown between the rows and then removed as the trees shaded them out. This seedling gooseberry growing in the rot hole of a large Bramley is probably a seedling of this past crop.



The group listening to Bob Lever in Rummer's Lane Orchard. Bob, once a fenland orchard maintenance contractor, is now a traditional orchard specialist, running training courses on tree management and restoration, an apple identifier and managing editor of the apple content on www.fruitid.com. He is also active in surveying traditional orchards in Cambridgeshire.



Bramley's Seedling apple trees approx. 100 years old in Rummer's Lane orchard in April. The orchard is managed in a traditional fenland manner. The trunks branch only 60cm above the ground level, with wide-spread tiered branches that permitted picking the lowest tiers from the ground. Originally there were two or three tiers, now reduced. The heavy pruning management needed to maintain this structure has resulted in rot holes and many widespread branches are now hollow over much of their length. Sheep grazing is a recent practice. This fenland system is also used in scattered orchards across East Anglia, and into parts of the lighter soils south of Bury St Edmunds where trees in this form can be found, for example, in Denham and Horringer.



Orchards East update

Orchards East is a coming together of many county and smaller orchard groups from across six East Anglian counties, to apply for a three year grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in order to survey the traditional orchards of the region.

Traditional orchard groups can be found across the UK. Some are county groups, some comprise several communities, while others are just centred on a single community site, such as the 'Friends of Rivers Orchard' in Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire and Trumpington Orchard in Cambridgeshire. Other groups cover a wider area and have joined together in a grant aided project, such as the Three-counties Orchard Project. This successfully brought many groups from Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire into a single grant aided project.

In East Anglia, STOG is one of the most recent, created originally as Suffolk Traditional Orchard Survey by Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership. It then became Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group with a formal structure, articles of association and a bank account in order to run the "**New and Orchards for Suffolk Project**" in 2010/11.

Elsewhere in East Anglia, the oldest county group is Hertfordshire Orchard Initiative, which began the earliest mapping of a county back in the last century. Norfolk Apples and Orchard Project, originally operating within Norfolk, became the East of England Apples and Orchard Project in 2003/4 and is the only registered charity orchard group in the region. Cambridge Orchard Group was formed to carry out orchard mapping about 2008.

Orchards East was mentioned in a previous newsletter; its main partners are UEA Landscape Group, who are the applicant, and STOG. It proposes to extend the technique used for locating and surveying orchards in Suffolk throughout Norfolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, with associated training, events and services to promote, restore and create traditional orchards. Most of these counties have 'orchard groups' and most have already done some survey work. Some, like Hertfordshire, have been doing it for many more years than Suffolk.

The method used in Suffolk combines the current OS map with the 6" OS maps of the early 20th century and the Peoples' Trust for Endangered Species aerial mapping, in order to supply surveyors with parish maps. The main purpose is to locate and record old traditional orchards (i.e. those with a proportion of old and large trees on traditional or vigorous rootstocks), but also any new plantings. These are valuable for their wildlife as well as their cultural crop diversity and still constitute 'Traditional Orchards'.

HLF approved the initial application in Dec 2014. However, a delay occurred when an objection to the application was made to HLF by the trustees of the East of England Apples and Orchards Project (EEAOP). They stated (amongst other objections) that they had already surveyed the region's orchards and that doing so again is unnecessary. They also claimed that the promotion of new traditional orchards and new planting of traditional trees on large growing rootstocks would affect their sales, even though they sell only semi-dwarf fruit trees.

It had always been intended to include EEAOP as a component in the project. However meetings between the OE partners and EEAOP trustees, which also involved members of two other county orchard groups, were not successful. EEAOP maintain that they have already adequately surveyed the orchards in the region and refuse to be associated with the promotion and planting of new traditional orchard trees since, they claim, there is no demand, and this activity would encroach on their sales.

The partners of OE believe that the two EEAOP county reports seen are incomplete, and that work is needed to restore and re-plant traditional orchards using large rootstocks. Traditional orchards, as defined by JNCC*, are designated as a [UK Priority Habitat](#). Government and EU funding is available to support such work and HLF widely supports such projects across England. Under these circumstances, the UEA Landscape Group, the OE partners and STOG have regretfully decided to continue the project application without EEAOP's involvement.

If anyone wishes to see details of correspondence on this matter, it can be made available.

* JNCC—Joint Nature Conservation Committee, a statutory adviser to the UK government.



STOG Buying Scheme 2014/2015

The difficulty of obtaining trees grafted onto large growing rootstocks for planting in traditional orchards continues. In East Anglia just a handful of apple trees are grafted onto M25 each year for local commercial sale, by, we believe, just two retail nurseries. No pears or cherries are grafted onto large growing rootstocks in the region at all. A few specialist retail nurseries elsewhere in England do graft apple and pears on large stocks and they are available online and most tend to be expensive.

The most commonly available rootstocks from nurseries and garden centres are MM106 for apples, Quince A for pears, and Colt for cherries, which are suitable for garden cultivation, but unsuitable for traditional orchards. Some large-growing triploid apple varieties on MM106 (Bramley's seedling, Lady Henniker, Blenheim Orange etc.) tolerate growing with grass around their trunks and can make good trees. These semi-dwarf rootstocks are not permitted for schemes that are grant aided plantings under the old Higher Level or new Higher Tier Stewardship agreements, which specify M25 for apple, pear seedling stock for pears, and cherry F12/1 for cherries.

The East of England Apples and Orchards Project tell us they have no plans to sell trees on these large rootstocks.

We have been advised by several community orchards that planted apples and pears on dwarf garden stocks that they now regret this.

Plums, gages, bullace, damsons and mirabelles are in a slightly different situation. Traditionally plum were either grown from suckers on their own roots, or grafted on a range of rootstocks including seedlings or suckers of cherry plums, and on plum suckers especially from the Yellow Egg plum (once found everywhere in East

Anglia). The almost universal rootstock used in the UK today is St Julien A, a clonally propagated greengage that makes large trees in time, and does well in a traditional grass orchard. It is not normally permitted for Stewardship funded orchards (the rarely available Brompton is), but in eastern England it is widely given special consent by Natural England. As a result plum trees for traditional orchards are available from local nurseries, although the range of varieties is rather limited.

Currently STOG has propagated and will give away (and will accept donations for) about 300 trees this winter, mostly of unusual varieties, grafted by volunteers trained on our courses, and all on large growing stocks.

For these reasons, the STOG Buying Scheme begun three years ago has made available more than 2,000 trees. It operates as a single buyer purchasing from (generally) wholesale propagation nurseries that supply trees (mostly bare root in winter) on large rootstocks. Wholesale prices plus carriage are paid by the purchaser to the Scheme organization, delivery is direct to the purchaser and STOG requests a 10% donation in exchange for the service. In essence it is a version of an allotment society's bulk seed purchase.

The Buying Scheme will continue this winter, and lists of available bare root trees on varieties rootstocks are available about now, with delivery usually in January. This is not scheme for planting just a few trees – we think if you are buying 15 or more trees for a traditional grass orchard, especially under Higher Level Stewardship or its successor Higher Tier Stewardship, then it may be of value. You can request a more detailed description of how the scheme and delivery works as an email attachment from Paul at paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk.



Healthy (BITTER) Fruit

The 1 August 2015 edition of New Scientist has a cover story by Marta Zaraska, “**Bitter Truth, fruit and veg are getting tastier at the expense of our health**”. Her point is that by “tastier”, breeders mean “sweeter”, and not just sweeter, but less bitter and so food manufacturers are now removing natural bitter flavours from food.

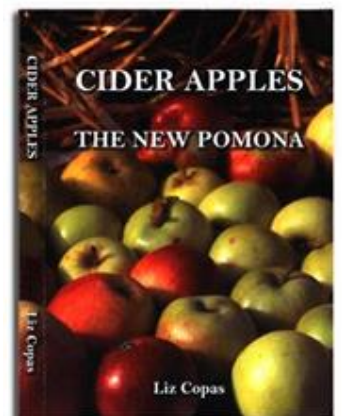
She quotes a health specialist’s statement “**you could survive on de-bittered fruits and vegetables, and they would help maintain life, but not good health.**” The bitter tastes are usually from compounds loosely called *phytonutrients*, not essential for life (like vitamins) but necessary for health, reducing cancers and cancer risk, acting as antioxidants and having many complex positive effects on health, principally because they are natural toxins, the very reason they are present in plants - as built-in pesticides. Examples are yellow grapefruits (distinct from the sweeter pink ones, less bitter due to low *naranjin*, the bitter flavour), Seville oranges, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, chicories like radicchio, green tea, red wine, hops, cabbage, green peppers.

Prepared foods are being subjected to techniques by manufacturers to remove and filter out the bitter flavours. However....once we get used to bitter flavours (apparently as children we have to try repeatedly to achieve this!) a large proportion of us desire bitterness.... Coffee, chocolate, cider made with specially selected bitter-sweet and bitter-sharp apples, perry made with bitter perry pears, best bitter, tomatoes, marmalade, aubergines and sweet green peppers, **and the Polstead Black cherry brandy**.... all with “that real flavour”.

There are of course limits - the bitterness of some fruit is completely impossible, lip-curlingly awful. Aspall’s, the Suffolk cider company, still grows (on ancient trees by the River Deben) the tiny yellow-green apple **Medaille d’Or**. It is inedible, almost foul, and very few are needed to add some agreeable bitterness to cider. To experience this level of bitterness, taste an unripe hard damson, a small pear just a few inches long on a grown-out large pear tree rootstock, a ripe red rowan berry, or the orange sea buckthorn berry...and, especially the last, you will see what I mean. These bitter, sometimes astringent, fruit compounds are generically termed tannins, but are a vast array of different organic chemicals and vary from fruit to fruit.

Some years ago I tasted a new bitter-sweet cider apple called **Hannah** (bred in Somerset by Liz Copas and her team) as an early apple to take to the cider press well in advance of the usual varieties. This is described in Liz’s book *Cider Apples, The new Pomona*. Hannah was very much to my taste excellent *as a dessert apple*, strongly apple favoured, but with distinct bitter taste (with just 0.34% tannin in the juice), and I would still like to grow this beautiful conical mahogany red-brown apple, named after one of the research project team.

According to Marta Zaraska’s article. food manufacturers actively remove these bitter compounds from many foods, and breeders, by selecting fruit with low tannins, are now “**turning bitter fruit and veg into the junk foods of the fresh produce aisle**”. Drinkers of Polstead Black cherry brandy please continue!



At the tasting session, the apple specialist beside me said it was just a normal sweet apple to him, as he was one of the 15% of the population that could not taste bitterness! It still did him some good though! I have also noticed that despite bitter compounds being considered pest-resisting toxins, we are not alone in liking bitter tastes....our pigs love banana skins and acorns...or perhaps they can’t taste bitterness either!



To Preserve and Pickle Codlings

Monica Askay

I recently acquired some interesting cookery books. Among them was one called “**Old-time Recipes AD 1720 – 1780: Wines, Bitters, Preserves, Confections of Two Hundred Years Ago**”. The recipes came from original manuscripts “collected by a well-known lady of title” (no information is given as to her identity) and the C20th editor comments that “*Alteration has, however, been absolutely necessary in many instances, or some of our readers of to-day would be quite at a loss to understand many of the names of ingredients, measures and proportions*”. This seems to me to be a great shame. I wonder if the instructions given below have been amended but with little understanding of the culinary processes of the period. Old manuscript recipes are often confusing, often appearing to be written down as dictated, sometimes in the wrong order or with repetitions. They assume a lot of knowledge of cooking processes.

“To Preserve Codlings

Scald them and take off the skins, then green them in sugar and water ---- this is done by scalding them every day when green. Make your syrup with 2 lbs sugar to 1 pt water with ginger to your taste, let them have a boil in this syrup and then tie them down.

They should be done in a silver or tin saucepan, and should be picked before they are full grown, when they are about the size of a walnut. They will keep for years and will be scarcely known by the taste from preserved ginger.”

I found this recipe interesting, but rather muddled and confusing, so was keen to research printed cookbooks of the period for similar recipes. I was aware that during the C18th there was a fashion for green preserves. This was achieved by cooking in copper or brass pans, basically producing toxic verdigris. NOT to be recommended, although I do remember many years ago pickling sliced cucumber in a brass preserving pan inherited from my grandmother. The result was definitely green (a sort of lime green). I did eat it (the taste did not seem to be affected) and am luckily still here to tell the tale!

For the uninitiated, in culinary terms a codling, codlin, or quodling is a type of apple. It is basically a culinary apple which collapses when cooked ripe, and the name still persists in the names of some old apple varieties, and of the codling moth. The instruction to coddle, refers to boiling in water. Apples in old cookery texts are referred to either as codlings, or as pippins. Botanically speaking a pipkin is an apple grown from a pip. In culinary terms it appears to mean what we would describe as a dessert apple, which holds its shape when cooked, and which has a crisp texture and a certain amount of acidity (ie similar to a Cox’s Orange Pippin).

Fruit has been preserved with sugar or honey for millennia. Pickles and chutneys as we know them today were a fashionable C18th introduction, influenced by our relationship with India and the East India Company.

Although I came across various recipes for preserving a whole range of fruits in syrup, I only really found one for codlings in the books I looked at. This was from “*The Experienced English Housekeeper*” by Elizabeth Raffald 8th Ed. 1782. This recipe was entitled “*To Preserve GREEN CODLINGS that will keep all the Year*”. Immature unripe codlings should be used, about the size of a walnut (only a very immature, unripe codling would hold its shape when cooked for a long time in water, no matter how gently). Starting with a layer of vine leaves, the walnut-sized codlings, with stalks and some leaves, are layered with vine leaves in a brass pan of spring water. They are covered tightly and cooked gently until soft enough to peel off their skins. They are then replaced in the same pan with the same water (when totally cold to avoid the codlings cracking) and vine leaves. Roach allum is added. The codlings are then cooked very slowly for 3 – 4 hours until they are green. They are then boiled gently once a day for 3 days before being put into jars.



I did come across several recipes for preserved pippins, including one where they were coloured red with “cochineal”.

There were more recipes for pickled, rather than preserved, codlings. Elizabeth Raffald’s involved layering the codlings with vine leaves, as in her preserved codling recipe above. Allum appears in various recipes; according to *“The Whole Duty of a Woman”* 1737, the piece should be the size of a horse bean (like a large broad or butter bean). The pan is stipulated as brass. Vinegar and various spices are used. In *“A New and Easy Method of Cookery”* by Elizabeth Cleland 1755 ed, the recipe is entitled *“to pickle Codlins like Mangoes”*. Mangoes were another East India Company import, picked and starting the sea voyage unripe and ripening en route. Fully grown but unripe codlins are used. After brining, the stalk is removed, the core scooped out, and the eye left intact. (It is interesting to note that the terminology used is the same as that used today. An older recipe from Robert May in *“The Accomplish’t Cook”* 1660 refers to this part of the apple as the “nose”. Perhaps he is imagining using a variety such as Sheep’s Nose? Robert May also refers to the fruit as Quodlings, giving a recipe for Quodling Pie. He does not give a recipe for Preserved Quodlings but does give a recipe for Preserved Green Fruits, which includes Pippins). The hollowed-out core in Elizabeth Cleland’s recipe is filled with whole mustard seed, garlic, pepper, mace and cloves. The stalk is replaced and the codling tied. Vinegar spiced with peppercorns, cloves, mace and sliced ginger is then poured boiling over the codlins every day for a fortnight, before placing them and the vinegar in jars.

It is probably now getting a bit late to try preserving or pickling codlings this year, but it could certainly be attempted using pippins. I look forward to experimenting and tasting the finished results. It would be interesting to hear from any of you who try the recipes. Please contact me if you would like me to send any of the recipes referred to above (although it would be best to omit the greening part!).

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People’s Trust for Endangered Species Traditional Orchards Project

Steve Oram

The Orchards East project’s principle objective is to locate, visit and survey traditional orchard sites in the six counties of East Anglia, to make this data available to county groups, the UEA and particularly PTES for inclusion in the Traditional Orchard national inventory. This work is already well under way in Suffolk. Here Steve Oram, People’s Trust for Endangered Species’ Orchard Biodiversity Officer, writes about their activities.

Orchard owners’ advice and grants programme

The People’s Trust for Endangered Species have been fighting the traditional orchard corner for nearly a decade since becoming involved with the noble chafer beetle in the mid 00s. With the amateur fruit gardener in mind we are developing literature and videos for our new look website which blends practical advice with biodiversity-friendly management of small and hobby orchards. Alongside this is the Orchard Network section with a focus on... exactly what it says on the tin. The Orchard Network is a national steering body for the traditional orchard habitat (formerly known as a HAP – Habitat Action Plan – group). This body includes many organisations in addition to PTES, from local orchard groups to industry and the UK statutory bodies, and its section on the website will continue to



provide a place to post and find orchard events and a gazetteer of services and local varieties, alongside various technical information, training courses across the country, and a newsfeed for important orchard related announcements.

Database of varieties

We are now on a new mission to locate and document the entire canon of UK raised or grown top-fruit varieties still in existence. Across the country there are regional and specialist collections, some public, others held by enthusiasts, but information regarding their whereabouts is fragmented and patchy, and such knowledge is often transient. Moreover, no single collection is complete or exhaustive, not even the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale. Our database will not only keep a record of all known collections in a single place, we will also identify those critically endangered varieties with current records at only one or two sites. We aim to repropagate them to additional collections and, working in partnership with the National Trust, we are creating new regional heritage collections and duplicating existing ones to secure their future. This network of mother orchards will enable specialist, regional and rare material to be sourced by growers, researchers, professionals and enthusiasts.

And the best news of all...

We are introducing a small grants fund to help people improve the condition of their orchards. An important part of our survey work involves the assessment and reporting (to Government) of the overall condition of the traditional orchard Priority Habitat. By making small changes to their orchards, especially planting new trees in or near old orchards, a condition assessment can go from 'declining' to 'good' or even leapfrog directly to 'excellent'. The grants should be launching in time for the planting season in early winter so check the PTES website for details where an expression of interest can be made.

Volunteers

The traditional orchard map (available from the links below) remains largely unverified and some orchards have been missed off entirely so, if you have any spare time to survey orchards, please download our surveying app or get in touch with Lauren (email address below).

Links etc.

www.Ptes.org/orchardmaps / www.orchardnetwork.org.uk

Events, news, services: Please submit your events, news, and orchard and cider related services for listing in the gazetteer. There will be an online form for events and news. Service providers can email OrchardContact@ptes.org for inclusion in the regional listings.

Survey volunteers: contact Lauren.Alexander@ptes.org or download the 'PTES Orchard Mapper' app. available for Apple or Android devices.

Office volunteers: We are slowly going over the historic Ordnance Survey maps to help us find potential relict or existing sites we have missed and to record a digital history of where all the orchards used to be. If you enjoy this sort of work and can get to Battersea Park once a week or so, please get in touch with Steve@ptes.org. Most of the country is still left to do, and four editions to cover!



Orchard crop biodiversity is continuously increasing by introductions from the traditions of other countries; two unusual varieties now grow in Suffolk.

These pears are traditionally the first pears sent to market in Italy, on St John's Day 27th July, and are called *San Giovanni*. They are not soft sweet and juicy like Conference but crisp and juicy like an apple, with a strong pear flavour.

In England *Jargonelle*, an early crisp pear has been grown for centuries and is shown here as the spectacular large petalled white flowers. *San Giovanni* is also known in Italy for its large flowers in March.



These cherries originate in Germany, and are a form of cherry barely known in England called Knoppelkirsche, literally "gristle cherry", from their crisp and crunchy texture, unlike our usual taste in cherries. These are *Donnisens Gelbe*, here slightly unripe when eaten – bright yellow when fully ripe. Also now grown in Suffolk.



Apple Pressing Equipment available to borrow

from

Waldringfield Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association

This equipment was bought in August 2010 with a grant from the Suffolk Foundation and is being promoted by Transition Woodbridge. We hope its use will encourage the revival of traditional skills.

What's available

There are three suites of equipment available: a 20 litre press together with a scratter and all the necessary buckets etc.; equipment for pasteurising juice, making cordial or bottling fruit; and equipment for dehydrating or drying fruit or vegetables.

The equipment is available for borrowing by community groups (e.g. school, WI, allotment or small-holding association etc.) through <http://www.onesuffolk.co.uk/communitygroups>. We want to encourage multiple use for all this equipment rather than have it sit in a store for most of its life – thereby reducing consumption (and thus resource depletion and landfill) and encouraging community co-operation. Individuals may also borrow it on the same terms.

Charges

Deposit: £50; £10 if you take only the drier.

Borrowing fee: £10 for all three suites and for pressing or pasteurising suites alone; £5 for drier.

That's for 24 hours.

Borrowers may, with WALGA's agreement, collect from the previous user or hand over to the next to save on transport costs.

Apple pressing is a good fun community event!

Contact : Betsy Reid Chairman WALGA
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www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/orchards.aspx