



September 2020

The Final Lap

Tom Williamson, Joint Chair

The work of Orchards East continues apace, despite the ongoing disruption caused by Covid-19. Some further survey work has been undertaken by courageous volunteers, and we are pleased to say that, on average, across the counties covered by the project, over 50 per cent of the parishes have now been surveyed – well over 50% in some of the counties.

Well done and many thanks to all concerned: this is a fantastic result and will provide an unparalleled impression of the state of our orchards. Analysis of all this data is well under way and the historical research has now been largely completed and written up.

Examination of the records made, and samples taken for the biodiversity surveys, is also progressing well. One rather gruesome discovery has just been made amongst the insects trapped in one of the sample orchards in Norfolk: a specimen of the ant-decapitating fly *Pseudacteon*

which eventually severs the cord connecting the ant's head to its thorax... The fly is a tiny Phoridae, a humpback fly, which is closely related to fruitflies.

On a more cheery note, we have now finalised the arrangements for a new 'legacy body' which can continue and develop our work when funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund – kindly extended due to Covid – finally comes to an end at the close of the year.

Provisionally (and imaginatively) called 'Orchards East', this new body will function as a forum for all the orchard-related organisations in the eastern counties. Working closely with these partners, including the East of England Apples and Orchards Project, we will undertake a range of activities including, in particular, attempting to secure grant income for further research, especially into aspects of orchard biodiversity.

We will also act as a lobbying group, urging better protection for old orchards and encouraging the creation of new ones, as well as fighting for the preservation of threatened orchards of particular historical, biological or amenity importance. Our plans are still developing and we will be in touch with all our members to arrange for them to receive newsletters in the future from the new forum, if they wish – watch this space!



Langford and Ulling community orchard information board. The villages are on the Dengie peninsula in the Maldon area of Essex. The group planted 20 damsons, plums, apples and pears in 2019, including the apples Blenheim Orange and Pitmaston Pine Apple, the pears Caillac and Gorham, Merryweather damson and Yellow Pershore plum.



Swavesey Community Orchard information board in situ.



The Swavesey Community Orchard Group in Cambridgeshire was only set up in 2019, but the members have already planted 40 fruit trees on Church Green. The information board (designed by local resident Kate Hendry) gives the history and future aims of the project. The orchard project is supported by Orchards East and the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

Apple Day Events - Identification of Fruit Samples

Paul Read, Joint Chair

Sending fruit samples to Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group for identification

STOG has arranged identification sessions at Apple Day events throughout Suffolk, and around East Anglia, for many years, especially during the almost four years of the Orchards East project, funded by Heritage Lottery. It had been hoped that COVID restrictions might have relaxed sufficiently this autumn that normality would have returned and our attendance at Apple Days would have continued, but this isn't going to be possible.

Uncertainty over the actual restrictions in place by October this year, plus the age of many of our leading apple identifiers (for East Anglia it's been estimated by one of our number that the average age is 67!) have meant we need to make a change. For many years some specialist fruit identifiers have accepted samples through the post, or dropped off, at their homes, for example, early summer apples and pears, and plum and cobnuts in August. Meetings of identifiers have also regularly been convened for shared discussion and decision after the Apple Day season to review samples that had not, or could not, be identified.

This year, while some Apple Days have been cancelled entirely, we plan in Suffolk to adapt this process to the demands of the emergency. The organisers of an Apple Day at SWT Foxburrow Farm on 18th October and another at the Museum of East Anglian Life on the 24th October, will accept samples delivered to them at pre-arranged times and send them to STOG for identification at a single event (following COVID restrictions) after the Apple Days. This sadly omits the inevitable crush and excitement of normal Apple Days when everyone waits to hear the identifiers' decisions, but at least this will get the identifications made.

To this end, anyone wishing to have their apples identified should package them appropriately, see below, and send or deliver them to the addresses on the organiser's web sites. Click the relevant button to find the address.

SWT Foxburrow Farm

Museum of East Anglian Life

Packaging fruit samples for mailing or personal delivery to apple day organisers

Apples, Pears, Quince, Medlar, Japonica and other pome fruits.

1. Select 3-4 samples of fruit, all from one tree. Select examples typical of the fruit as a whole and not distorted or different in shape from the rest of the crop.
2. Avoid selecting unripe apples (or other fruit) well before the date they would naturally fall. Apples can change considerably in size and colour in the last weeks before being ready to pick. We will not make decisions about fruit that are very unripe, as they can be incorrect!
3. Select fruit that are unbruised or have no recent damage or patches of rot. Also try to select apples that have no black entry holes where codlin moth larvae have penetrated. Sometimes this will be difficult to see in the “eye” (the fruit apex where the sepals remain). Codlin moth alter or destroy the fruit core which can be important for identification of variety.
4. Place apples and similar fruits in paper bags and fold over, and pears in polythene bags and seal or tie. Pears, if close to being ripe, may quickly turn into mush and affect other samples. Apples generally do not decay so completely and benefit from contact with air. On the whole we have learned to prefer this separation of packaging!
5. In each bag of samples, place a paper label indicating the tree number as shown on the record sheet, 1,2 etc.
6. If mailing the parcel, place wrapped samples in a reasonably intact shoe box or card container and pack around with scrumpled newspaper. If dropping off samples with an organisation place the bag in a heavy duty paper bag, or a bag-for-life, and not a plastic bag if at all possible. Please note that bags can't be returned.
7. If you, the sample provider, have more than 4 samples please contact us first at paul@home-farm.myzen.co.uk, so that we can decide whether we have the capacity to take larger numbers of samples than the four listed on a single identification sheet. Once this process settles down, we will have a better idea of how many samples we can cope with.
8. Complete the Sample Identification Sheet, see below, and place it in the main bag. We have not requested that the site number in an orchard be provided. It is up to the sample provider to link to the identification.

SUFFOLK TRADITIONAL ORCHARD GROUP	
FRUIT SAMPLE/S FOR IDENTIFICATION RECORD SHEET (USE SEPARATE SHEET FOR EACH LOCATION)	
Address of tree/s location: _____ Post Code _____	
Location: garden, farm, open country, other. _____ Age of the house or site? _____	
CONTACT DETAILS: NAME _____ EMAIL _____	
Sample 1 (write or tick choices).	IDENTIFICATION _____
How old is the tree (if you know): _____ Diameter of trunk at chest height: _____ in or cm.	
Estimated height of tree: _____ ft or meters. Do you EAT the FRESH fruit? ____ COOK ____ or BOTH _____	
& when? Straight off the tree? _____. If not when? _____	
Do you know any name for it? ..or what did someone call it? Anything else you can tell us _____	

Sample 2 (write or tick choices).	IDENTIFICATION _____
How old is the tree (if you know): _____ Diameter of trunk at chest height: _____ in or cm.	
Estimated height of tree: _____ ft or meters. Do you EAT the FRESH fruit? ____ COOK ____ or BOTH _____	
& when? Straight off the tree? _____. If not when? _____	
Do you know any name for it? ..or what did someone call it? Anything else you can tell us _____	

Sample 3 (write or tick choices).	IDENTIFICATION _____
How old is the tree (if you know): _____ Diameter of trunk at chest height: _____ in or cm.	
Estimated height of tree: _____ ft or meters. Do you EAT the FRESH fruit? ____ COOK ____ or BOTH _____	
& when? Straight off the tree? _____. If not when? _____	
Do you know any name for it? ..or what did someone call it? Anything else you can tell us _____	

Sample 4 (write or tick choices).	IDENTIFICATION _____
How old is the tree (if you know): _____ Diameter of trunk at chest height: _____ in or cm.	
Estimated height of tree: _____ ft or meters. Do you EAT the FRESH fruit? ____ COOK ____ or BOTH _____	
& when? Straight off the tree? _____. If not when? _____	
Do you know any name for it? ..or what did someone call it? Anything else you can tell us _____	

Event, or Collector, or where presented for identification. _____	
DATE: _____ IDENTIFIER _____	

If you wish to download a Word version of the Record Sheet, please click the button below.

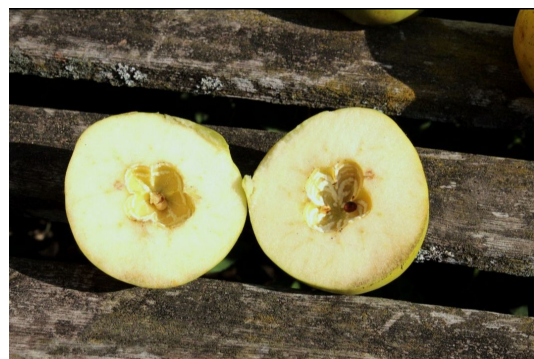
[Download Word version of Fruit Sample Record Sheet](#)

**Examples of apples sent to STOG for identification
discovered to be unrecorded**



This apple was sent to me in a box of apples and pears from a garden “beside the River Waveney at Brockdish, Norfolk”. It was a spectacular gold colour with numerous smart grey lenticels, but unexciting and soft to eat. I grafted a tree from wood later brought to me, for its appearance alone. We still have to establish precisely where the garden is located.

Largely un-regarded, this tree flowered and fruited a few years ago and the fruit was discovered to be ready in early to mid-September. This was much earlier than tasted before and was found to be very nice indeed, although short-lived, filling a gap in the range just after the apple Discovery. Its dazzling gold appearance, however, hasn’t been repeated, it’s just plain gold! Leaves were DNA fingerprinted and the clone is unique, so the variety has been submitted for registration in the Register of Local Cultivars. The name ***Brockdish Gold*** has been proposed.



This very elongated apple was sent to me by mail, following a meeting with an orchard owner at Nayland Suffolk, having met at an SWT Foxburrow Farm Apple Day in 2011. It was immediately recognisable; unmistakably elongate with a wide-open core cavity with some white woolly tissue, and small, round

seeds or no seeds at all. Its match had been collected many years earlier by John Tann of Crapes Fruit Farm, Aldham, Essex, who then propagated and grew a tree in his orchard. I saw the tree there and then propagated one for myself. John called it ***Rattle Pippin*** because it does 'rattle' when fully ripe in October! The flesh is pleasant, sweet, very smooth and not acid, but won't win many prizes as an eater!

I propagated from the Nayland tree and now have two identical trees. Leaves from one of these was sent for DNA fingerprinting and it turns out to be unique, matching no previous DNA samples. Since then, the variety has been registered on the Register of Local Cultivars (RLC).

Stay safe Everyone! To contact us email howard.jones@uea.ac.uk or g.broad@uea.ac.uk



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