



**NEWSLETTER**

**No 88 October 2019**

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Please note that in this list, and the rest of this archived version of the Newsletter, contact details have been removed for data protection. This may occasionally disrupt the pagination, for which we apologise

## OFFICERS

### **Chairman**

Hilary Dodson,

### **Treasurer**

Peter Robinson,

## MEMBERS

**Membership:** Sharan Packer,

**Minutes:** Peter Nichol,

**Newsletter:** Jean Richards,

**Apple Events:** Margaret Drury,

**Show Volunteer Co-ordinator:** Rachel Benson,

**York Area Representative:** Jo Murphy,

**Cumbria & NW Area Representative:** Philip Rainford,

**Ryedale Area Representative:** Chris Simmonds,

## LOCAL CONTACTS

Local contacts are an informal network of volunteer members who may offer a range of services from organising occasional events in their area, to swapping seedlings, or simply providing information to visitors and newcomers. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you think they can help you.

James Ellson: Hayfield (and area) (SK22 2LJ),  
Bridget Evans: South Yorks,  
Melanie Fryer: Skipton/Gisburn,  
Ken Haigh: Darlington, tel 01325 259479  
Ann Hindley: Crowle, Scunthorpe,  
Jo Murphy: York area,  
Peter Nichol: Manchester area,  
Philip Rainford: Cumbria & North West,  
Chris Simmonds: Ryedale & North York Moors

As you can see, the list isn't complete, so if your area isn't included, would you like to volunteer? Simply get your name and contact details in the Newsletter, and you take it from there, doing as much or as little as you wish.

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It is with sadness that we record the death at the age of 96 of Jim Daltry, one of the founder members of the Northern Fruit Group. For many years he was a very active member, contributing fruit to all our shows and always ready with help and advice for our less experienced members.

## DIARY

Dates for your diary for the next few months: please see the Programme and Events sections below for further information, and visit our Facebook page for updates and last minute changes to the programme.

### OCTOBER

Thursday 3: Otley teaching garden

Wednesday 9: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

Thursday 17: Otley teaching garden

Wednesday 23: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

Monday - Tuesday 28 - 29: Setting up for the Apple Event

Wednesday 30: Apple Event opens, runs to November 3.

Thursday 31: Otley teaching garden

## NOVEMBER

Sunday 3: Last day of Apple Event

Wednesday 6: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

Saturday 9: Annual General Meeting, and talk by Paul Cook

Last date for ordering rootstock for 2020

Thursday 14: Otley teaching garden

Wednesday 20: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

Thursday 28: Otley teaching garden

## DECEMBER

Wednesday 4: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

## JANUARY

Wednesday 1: Most NFG memberships expire, renew now

Thursday 9: Otley teaching garden resumes after winter break

Wednesday 15: Dewhurst Road teaching garden resumes after winter break

Thursday 23: Otley teaching garden

Wednesday 29: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

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## EDITORIAL

Looking back on last October's Newsletter, I see that I began with "welcome, at the end of that long, hot and curious summer..". Well, this summer has certainly been hotter - visiting friends in the south, we clocked up 38 degrees in their garden and the conservatory was uninhabitable. At times, however, the weather was colder, and certainly wetter than many recent summers. In short, "curiouser and curiouser", as Alice\* said.

And our contents for this autumn issue are perhaps a little curious too in that we have less to say about the actual process of growing fruit than some more peripheral matters: composting, replacements for plastic pots, little flying beasties, cordials and Christmas presents. James Ellson is looking at apple varieties local to his Derbyshire home, Anne Lee lets us

into some secrets of her hero's early life, Raymond Bush is busy with (now) banned chemicals, and member Caroline Nettle tells us about setting up her 'Wild Nettle Garden'.

Before you get to the good bits, however, please don't skip all that apparently dull stuff about the Annual General Meeting. Do come if you can, this is our most important meeting of the year, and a good turnout is a sign of a flourishing society. We need others to join the active members of the Group, so please consider how you can help. Your committee would also welcome ideas for topics that you would like to be addressed at our meetings.

The atmosphere at the AGM is very relaxed, this is a chance to meet your committee, and (if you wish) suggest improvements to the Newsletter. I promise you that no-one ever says "on a point of order, Mr Chairman..." or anything of that kind that can make an AGM so tedious. The meeting is usually over quite quickly and then we can get down to the more interesting part of the day, Paul Cook's talk, which promises to be most informative.

Finally, our annual nag about renewing your membership. The membership year begins on January 1, so you have plenty of time, but why not do it now, while you still have the form (enclosed) handy.

*\* "Curiouser and curiouser!" cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English)." Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and Through the Looking Glass, by Lewis Carroll*

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## **PROGRAMME**

### **Fruit Group Events**

*Executive Committee members please note that the next meeting is scheduled for 10.00am on Saturday November 9 immediately preceding the AGM.*

## **Annual General Meeting**

### **Arrangements**

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 1.30pm on Saturday November 9, 2019, in the Jubilee Room at Harlow Carr Garden, and will be followed by a talk by Paul Cook.

You will find the minutes of the 2018 AGM enclosed with this Newsletter. Please treat this as the ‘calling notice’. No further papers will be circulated; the agenda and other documents will be tabled at the meeting.

If you are attending, please bring with you your membership card or this Newsletter, or wear your NFG sweat shirt, to get free admission to the Garden. There should be time after the meeting to have a look round.

The Constitution allows for 13 members on the Executive Committee and we have only 10, so three more would be welcome. Why not nominate someone you think would do a good job, or consider standing yourself (in which case please contact our Chairman to discuss it)? You don’t have to be an expert, your Newsletter Editor has proved this! Our society covers a whole range of expertise, and sometimes we need someone to speak up for beginners.

## **Speaker**

Our speaker this year is Paul Cook, at present curator of Harlow Carr and previously curator of Ness Garden on the Wirral, originally the University of Liverpool Botanic Garden. These are two very different garden situations, the Wirral being a relatively warm site but exposed to sea winds from Liverpool Bay whilst we know the cool and normally damp situation at Harlow Carr.

We will be interested to hear what he thinks about Harlow Carr, which is the topic of his talk.



## **Shows**

### **Harrogate Autumn Flower Show**

*Jo Murphy led the team which prepared our display for the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show, on the theme of fruit through the ages, related to major historical events. Here’s her report:*

Fruit has played an integral part in human health since we first walked the planet, so I thought it would be a good idea to do a time line showing how fruit in the diet has changed through the years. I tried to tie significant historical dates to apples, pears and other fruit, creating the time

line. Remains of Cro Magnon man (Hunter gatherer/early human) were discovered along with evidence of the fruit eaten at this early time and the display began with fruit that was indigenous to Britain. The Romans came along and brought with them grapes, figs, dates, pears, medlars, bullaces, plums and mulberries. They found that by fertilising the vines with urine they could grow crops suitable for wine making. They also wrote about grafting apples and how to care for the trees and fruit. The Romans also created a good infrastructure to ensure the distribution of food and cultivated crops.

The Dark Ages followed as the Romans retreated and the populations returned to the land, recognising that large centres of population acted as a natural magnet for invaders (Angles, Saxons, Vikings,). The infrastructure was lost as well as the skills to grow certain foods, so seasonal fruit gathering also formed part of the diet. Monasteries tried to organise food production but this was short lived due to the Viking invasions. Grain became contaminated by ergot causing thousands of deaths and there were 15 waves of plague between AD 541 and 750. Barberry was also introduced to Europe bringing with it black stem rust, devastating crops and causing famine. There was such a large scale shortage of food that cannibalism followed.

Things improved in Medieval times as the cultivated land of England was divided into two categories, that which formed part of the lands of the great manors and that which the common people, still bound by serfdom to the manor, were entitled to work for their own benefit. Agricultural practice was little more advanced than the Roman Times, but the manors and monasteries had herb gardens and orchards with the monasteries also having vines and producing wine, cider and perry. Many villagers had an enclosed plot (curtilage) adjoining their primitive homes and grew what herbs, fruit and vegetables they could obtain. Growing food was made more difficult because of hunting, chivalry, war, crusades to the Holy Land and expeditions to the continent, but mostly because of the civil war between the Houses of York and Lancaster. There were also successive droughts and the black death. So once again the foraged fruits were crucial to the health and well being of the population.

In Tudor England the pomegranate figured prominently during the early reign of King Henry VIII of England when he was married to Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. To represent this union Henry had the couple's emblems – the pomegranate of Granada, the arrow-sheaf of Aragon, and the Tudor Rose – merged together adorning every royal palace. Gilded pomegranates were used during the

festivities surrounding the wedding ceremony and the Queen's coronation. It is also said that Henry planted the first pomegranate tree in Britain.

Vineyards ceased with the dissolution of the monasteries as those with the skills to grow grapes were dispersed. The infrastructure of feeding the villagers near the monastery who were the main workforce, also collapsed and once again food shortages became an issue.

Henry VIII instructed his fruiterer Richard Harris to bring over the best varieties from France, so he imported numerous grafts and developed new orchards and market gardens especially in the south.

It was not uncommon to import fruit, often at considerable expense from Holland. Dried fruits were also imported such as raisins, prunes, dates and figs. At Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn's coronation, lemons were available for six silver pennies each.

Prices began to increase, but not wages and the poorest wage earners could no longer afford meat and fish and had to rely on corn distributed by the civil authorities and once again what could be foraged. This was now becoming more difficult as people were living in towns of varying sizes and distribution of food was quite difficult because of transport. Ale, cider and Perry were made on the manor estates and villagers made what they could for their own consumption.

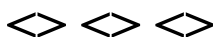
The nobility and higher levels of the Church however, still maintained a plentiful supply of food, eating in excess. The Church then stepped in to try and regulate the amount of food consumed.

As fruit varieties were coming in from Europe the large landowners were tasked with growing them and new cultivars began to emerge. In the 1700s, exploration became successful with James Cook reaching New Zealand. Also the Pilgrim Fathers emigrated to America taking with them fruit that successfully grew in Britain. Fruit became more wide spread and new varieties were introduced, supporting the health of the nation. The time line continued with an event in history and a correlating apple or pear that was first documented on that date.

The public loved the theme so we are going to try and do a split of new and old cultivars for the spring flower show.

*Jo Murphy*

*The judges loved it too, and it won GOLD. Well done Jo and all her team.*







## 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Fruit Show 7<sup>th</sup> September 2019

### Show Organiser's Report

This year we were again at Harlow Carr in the Sunley Room for the Fruit Show which is very suitable as we use the foyer for booking in. The number of members exhibiting and number of exhibits were down on last year but there were several members who entered who had not shown before or not shown for a few years which was very welcome. Harlow Carr staff had promoted the show at the gardens entrance resulting in a significantly greater number of members of the public visiting. There were some very favourable comments from them.

As regards the exhibits themselves, despite the weather earlier in the year there was some good quality fruit on display. However the number of exhibits in some classes was well down on previous years, notably plums and berries, presumably because of the vagaries of the weather.

Dick Tresize who has been our judge for many years notified me early in 2019 that he has had to withdraw from judging completely. I am very grateful for all the support he has given to the show over the years and he will be greatly missed. All local judges were unavailable as they had

already been booked to judge at other venues so I had to judge again this year.

The winners of the highest points in the novice classes were Tony Chalcraft and Jane Thurlow who were exhibiting for the first time so very well done to them. The prize for the most points overall in the show was won by Pete Nichol who put in 21 entries which was 20% of the total entries. Well done to everyone who entered and won prizes.

I do want to say a very big thank you to all the members, including the new volunteers, who helped out in any way with the show, especially in taking over some of the roles I usually fulfil but could not this year because I was judging. Thank you to Gill Haigh who again volunteered to complete the prize cards and did so very professionally. Without all those who helped it would have been extremely hard to run the show.

All in all the show was a success. I hope everyone who exhibited, helped in any way or visited enjoyed it.

Next year I shall not be able to run the show but I am sure that, based on all the help this year, there will be plenty of people who can take over and make it a success. I have already booked a judge, David Allison, and will do all the preparation work beforehand. However I shall need someone to volunteer to co-ordinate the show on the day. Let's hope next year is a good growing season and there will be plenty of entries for the show.

*Sharan Packer, Show Organiser.*



## **NFG Apple Event**

Our annual Apple Event will take place at Harlow Car Gardens in late October. Please support this event by helping if you can, and/or coming along to see us.

We will be setting up on Monday and Tuesday October 28 and 29. The Apple Display will be in the greenhouse and Identification in The Lodge.

The event will be open to public from Wednesday October 30 to Sunday November 3, until close of the gardens. Both areas need to be cleared by 11.00am on Monday the 4th.

Please if anyone can help with setting up, taking down, registering apples, answering questions, in fact anything and everything from making

drinks to guarding apples from small (or large) fingers! please get in touch with me. Thank you.

*Margaret Drury*



## **Teaching Gardens**

*Dates for meeting at the two teaching gardens are in the Diary. Please note that both will have a short winter break.*

### **Otley Teaching Garden**

At last we seem to be winning over the creeping thistle and the blackcurrant bed looks good. The raspberries are fruiting well in spite of only being planted in late spring. The area between the trees has now started to grow grass and some has been mown, it looks much better.

Cabbages are doing well as are climbing beans. Members of the marrow family are covering the ground effectively and are even producing some fruits. We wait to see if the sweet corn is any good.

An interesting crop is lupin, a short growing variety with pretty blue flowers and seeds used as you would pulses. When enough seed has been collected for growing next year we will test their edibility.

The budding workshop went well in spite of the heat. A range of apples, plums and pears have been done and we will await the spring to see if the work has been successful.

A busy winter is ahead with many interesting trees waiting to be planted.

*Hilary Dodson*

### **Dewhurst Road Teaching Garden, Huddersfield**

This is now a mature garden and we are able to harvest a wide range of fruits although the level of crop is somewhat erratic. Plums are still struggling after the very wet then very dry season last year. Again a tree has died, when in full fruit, for no obvious reason. The pears suffered from pear midge early in the season so we spent several sessions picking off the damaged fruits complete with many tiny wiggly grubs inside. Not all varieties were affected so there are some good pears for harvesting. Most

of the apple collection has fruit, but it is mainly the ones that flower late that lack apples. The cider apples have a very fine crop. The grapes have a large number of bunches on each variety and we wait to see if they ripen before the frosts start. Any bare ground will be planted with either vegetables or winter rye grass to protect the soil.

We will be doing the summer pruning of the cordon fruit in the next few sessions. The free standing trees will also be summer pruned as we do not want them to become too large.

*Hilary Dodson*



## **Orders for fruit trees, fruit plants and rootstock**

The Group is able to benefit from a discount on rootstock and other items by making a bulk order from Frank P. Matthews. The bulk purchase enables us to buy at very favourable prices, although the exact price will depend on the numbers ordered.

As stated in the last Newsletter, administration of the NFG order will be handled by Robin Clark this year. Items from the Frank P. Matthews catalogue can be ordered, as well as rootstocks. The very last date for orders will be at the AGM on Saturday 9th November 2019. Please be aware that stocks are limited and you may not be able to obtain what you wish. Please e-mail your order to Robin Clark.

If you wish to order raspberry or strawberry plants, please send your order to Hilary Dodson, as these come from a different supplier.

Basically the arrangements for collection will be the same as in previous years. The expected date for delivery is 20th January 2020, but this depends on weather etc. Delivery will be to Paul Yashpon's home in Leeds, and members are asked to collect larger orders from there as soon as possible after the delivery date, and to pay for orders by cheque on collection. Smaller orders will be taken to the first Group meeting in February, again with payment on collection.

An on-line catalogue is already available, and a paper catalogue should be available soon. We can order trees etc as well as just rootstock.

### **Contact details:**

**Frank Matthews catalogue:** <https://www.frankpmatthews.com>

**Robin Clark:**

If you copy your email to Robin's personal address it will ensure that the order is picked up immediately rather than waiting till he logs on to the site.

**Hilary Dodson:**

**Paul Yashpon:**

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## **Non Fruit Group Events**

There are still some Apple Days taking place in the late autumn. Here's a reminder of a few that we featured in the July Newsletter

### **Saturday 12 October**

1. Apple Day at Acorn Bank
2. Apple Day at Jesmond Community Orchard
3. Apple Day at Ripon Walled Garden

### **Sunday 13 October**

Apple Day at Bradford: Bowling Park Community Orchard

To this we can add **Apple Week at Beningborough Hall** near York, from Sunday October 6. Discover the many varieties of apple the Hall has to offer, choose your favourite with apple tasting, experience the art of apple pressing, pick apples straight from the tree and have a go at the games.

**The exhibition** "Pears & Apples: the botanical illustration of Elisabeth Dowle" runs until November 3 at Cannon Hall, details in the July Newsletter.

*We are happy to include details of any non-profit making events which members think may be of interest to readers: please send information to me by the usual closing date. Ed.*

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your membership of the Northern Fruit Group will expire on January 1st 2020. A renewal form is enclosed: why not deal with it now, before it gets lost in the welter of Christmas post?

## CONFESSIONS OF A FRUIT NOVICE



Sometimes over the summer I am able to persuade The Constant Gardener (aka the Husband) to have lunch in the garden without him fretting too much about what needs to be done. Instead he frets about the little flying creatures who try to share our meal, doing that arms flailing, windmill, thing that I think merely annoys them. So for his benefit - and that of any readers who share his phobia - here's a piece that's been doing the rounds of Facebook, attributed to the unlikely named Angie Agapanthus.

What's the point of wasps? The answer may surprise you.

Did you know that there are approximately 9,000 species of wasp here in the UK? These include the parasitic wasps, some of which are so diminutive they are like pin heads. Of the 250 larger wasps which have a stinger, the majority are solitary and cause no upset to humans.

However, when we talk about wasps, we're almost certainly referring to the our nation's nemesis, the Common wasp (*Vespula vulgaris*). To understand why these wasps become really annoying this time of year, you first need to understand their life cycle.

Common wasps live socially like bees but, unlike honey bees, they haven't evolved a way of storing food to allow the colony to survive the winter. In fact the only survivors are the young, fertilised queens who hibernate over winter. They emerge in the spring to build little walnut sized nests where they they lay around 20 eggs.

The queen feeds the resulting larvae until around May, when they mature and become workers. Then she focuses on more egg-laying and the workers get on with feeding them, enlarging the nest as they go along. By



late summer the nest has grown to around 40cm in diameter, often larger, and that nest can contains up to 10,000 wasps!

Then, in August/September, a dramatic change takes place. The queen quits her egg laying (save a few that will go on to be future queens and males to fertilise them) and no longer releases the pheromone that causes the workers to work. Basically, these workers are made redundant, and are left jobless and disorientated. And the problem for us is that, although adult wasps are insect predators, that meat is to feed the larvae not themselves. In their adult state wasps are not able to digest solid food and need sugary liquid to survive. Now, with fewer or no larvae to feed, they become uncontrollably and insatiably hungry.

Wasps love easy food such as over ripe fruit and your fizzy drinks. Towards the end of their brief lives, their hunger drives them to search for easy sugar at exactly the time when we are more likely to be using our gardens and outdoor spaces for eating sweet things. The timing couldn't be better for them or worse for us.

So why are those who panic and try to swat them away more likely to be stung than those who remain calm? Well the problem is that these redundant workers have their own pheromone, which helps protect the nest from attack earlier in the year, and that's essentially a chemical rallying cry to other workers that the nest is under attack.

So when you swat that annoying wasp and it feels under attack, that rallying cry will go out. Suddenly it all kicks off, and loads more wasps will start arriving in aggressive 'red-mist' mode, fired up and ready to defend their nest. This is why the best advice is to stay calm.

Think of it this way, from May that wasp has been working its socks off helping to keep things nice on planet earth. Now it's going to die. So why not give it a break, save your swats, put a bowl of sugary drink somewhere out of your way, and let it go out on a nice sugar rush. At the very least don't kill it.

What's the point of wasps? Without them it's likely that human life would not survive because, in the absence of their role as predators, our planet would be overrun by even more damaging insects such as aphids, ants and caterpillars.

Well, who'd have thought it? The humble wasp, saviour of the planet.

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**GOOSEBERRY WINS TITLE BY 0.07GMS**

It is the "Holy Grail" of gooseberry growing, according to the man who has broken a world record for the heaviest gooseberry.

Graeme Watson's prize-winning fruit weighed in at 64.56g, beating the previous record set in 2013 of 64.49g. The 59-year-old, from Ainthorpe, North Yorkshire, is a member of the Egton Bridge Old Gooseberry Society. He was crowned champion at their annual show beating about 30 other competitors.

Mr Watson said the fruits lose weight from the moment they are picked and it was a "race against time" to get it to the show, at Egton Bridge, near Whitby.

"It was picked last night, it was a little bit of a surprise. I got my hands on it and thought, 'this is a good one'," he said. "I have been trying a long, long time. It's probably a once-in-a-lifetime gooseberry for most growers. It's the Holy Grail of gooseberry growing."

To ensure the gooseberry - a yellow variety called Millennium - arrived in top condition, Mr Watson said he created a special box to carry it in. "A mini carrying box, padded out inside and lined in egg trays," he said. "I had it on my knee in the car just in case we hit any potholes or cattle grids."

He said growing gooseberries where he lives was a "bit testing". "We have to keep the bushes healthy, keep pests off them, get the fertiliser requirements right. "It's just paying attention to detail."

The Egton Bridge Old Gooseberry Society, established in 1800, claims to be the oldest surviving show in the country. It runs the show annually on the first Tuesday of August.

*From the local Yorkshire BBC news web site*

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## **COMPOST – THE FUTURE?**

Back in 2011 the government published its Natural Environment White Paper which contained the ambitious target of phasing out peat from all home growing media (compost to you and me) by 2020. A quick glance around the garden centre will tell you that this is very unlikely to happen. Yes there are some 'peat free' alternatives and many brands mention 'reduced peat' but let's face it, none of the alternatives have really fired the imagination. A dilemma for all environmentally conscious gardeners.



But now some clever people in Seattle have come up with a new, innovative and entirely sustainable source of compost that is full of all sorts of micronutrients and has the potential for a never ending supply. The company, which specialises in 'above ground decomposition,' has been granted a licence from May next year to start composting dead people. They claim that they can turn your deceased loved one into a bag of nutritious compost in just 4 weeks using an entirely natural process of tumbling them in a container stuffed with a mix of wood chips and straw and bathed in a flow of microbe laden warm air.

Disposing of the dead has become a problem in many of our built up areas so this would appear to be the solution to two of our human dilemmas at the same time! Of course there is a down side, apart from the fact that Seattle is an awful long way from Northern England. The company say that the cost per person is likely to be around \$5000 which apparently is cheaper than many American burials but still a bit eye watering for a bag of compost. Never fear though, there is a group of architects and urban planners working at an organisation called the Deathlab (honest, I am not making this up, they have a website) looking at new ways of - well making human compost to put it bluntly. Hopefully prices should come down eventually.

So at some point in the future if the Northern Fruit Group has a sign on the stand at a show saying 'all compost created by our members' ..... it might mean exactly that.

*Chris Simmonds*

*I can see that this idea won't appeal to everyone, but we're all for it, and hoping that it becomes available in the UK before we need it! A whole new take on 'pushing up the daisies'. Ed*

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## **POTS OLD AND NEW**

Every newspaper or magazine that you look at these days is exhorting you to use less plastic, from bottles of water to supermarket carrier bags to shrink-wrapped fruit, and that old favourite, plant pots. Apparently we get through about 500 million each year and most of them are still out there.

The plant pot problem is two fold: not only what to replace them with, but what to do with the existing shedload (in this case the word is literally correct as well as slang for a lot) that most of us have.

For the shedload, the prospect looks bleak. Black plastic does not re-cycle. Some garden centres will take pots for re-use but you need to be going there anyway to make it worthwhile. You can re-use some yourself of course, but eventually they crack or break, scattering plastic fragments into the environment, and still ending up in landfill.

For substitutes, however, there is some hope. Sally Nex, writing in the RHS magazine *The Garden*, offers some suggestions.

Clay pots look better, but are heavy, and firing new ones takes an a huge amount of energy.

‘Vipots’ made from rice hulls are sturdy and lightweight, look like plastic, come in a range of jolly colours, and will last for more than five years if they remain unbroken. Once broken they will fully biodegrade in 9 to 18 months. However, they are made in China so entail shipping. There is more information on the manufacturer’s website, [www.greentechpots.com](http://www.greentechpots.com), and various suppliers can also be found on line.

Coir (coconut fibre), so-called ‘hairy pots’ now in use in English Heritage plant stalls and no doubt other places, tick the compostable box but can be slow to decay: Sally reports digging them up almost intact a year later. It’s also hard to justify the cost of shipping the raw material from wherever the coconuts are grown.

Fibre pots made of pulped cardboard, however, got her seal of approval, but instead of buying them, she made her own from cardboard boxes held together with paper masking tape. “They’re not pretty,” she reports, but they make workable pots, staying intact long enough to get the plant from potted-on seedling into the ground. Then they rot away, no plastic, no carbon emission, in fact no trace at all - just as gardening should be.”

*Jean Richards*

*We’d love to hear from members who have tried these or other plastic substitutes, and with what level of success. Ed*

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## **WILD NETTLE GARDENS**

**A New Fruit & Veg Project in the North East UK**

Despite always having had a keen interest in other people's gardens, growing fruit and other food stuffs was not something I had ever considered. I come from a long line of gardeners- great grand father was the head gardener at Mompesson House in Salisbury and both my grand father and my mother derived a lot of what was eaten in the family from their own gardens and allotments.

My memories of this are sitting in the garden with a pair of nail scissors and topping and tailing dustbins full of gooseberries, & currants, and shelling vast quantities of peas. One thing that must have been frustrating to those that fed me as a child is that I did not like any fruit except stewed apple. If I am honest, I am not a huge fan to this day, but feel that if I am growing it myself this could finally change?

In early 2018, after years of not even having a garden due to travelling, I decided to follow my heart, and set up a market garden. I had never grown anything to eat before but something in me wanted to try to see if I could. I found a piece of land on a farm just outside Carmarthen and set to making beds, planting seeds and buying in a few plants. No experience, and no funds just a lot of passion. That was January.

In February, a fire ripped through the place where I was staying and I lost everything except the clothes I was standing up in. I was most saddened to have burnt a rather large collection of seedlings, indoor plants and 7 fruit trees that I had just bought to start my collection- blood orange, apricot, and cherries.

It was a big shock and took some time to come to terms with, but I found out first hand how amazingly healing it is to be able to spend time in a garden after a shock. This led me to care farming and it is something that I am now keen to pursue. More of that later.

So the year continued on, and I attempted my first year growing food for market. The land had no soil, it was horrendously windy, and being Wales, it rained all the time. Despite this, I found the hard work, damp conditions and some huge failures - not really knowing what I was doing- rewarding. What had started out as an idea had, over the course of the year, turned me into a convert.

Notable successes were salads, root veg, herbs, asparagus and monkey puzzle trees. Whilst I really enjoyed eating tasty veg, and growing plants for sale, what surprised me the most was just how much I loved growing .....fruit!

By the time I had decided to leave the farm to find somewhere with soil, near my family, and hopefully where the sun shines occasionally, my fruit collection had grown to include:

Black currants- was given around 50 cuttings of which around 35 looked very promising at the end of the first year

Red Currants - as above with around 5 cuttings.

Honey berries- around 35 plants, none of which had fruited in 2018

White currants- 3

Raspberries - 30 + plants

Gooseberries- around 10 very small plants.

Josta berries- 3

Tayberries - around 20 new plants from cuttings

Blackberries- 2 thornless

Strawberries

Physalis - lots but they did not survive the move/ winter.

Kiwi - 5

Passion fruit

Trees: Apricot, Cherry, Apple, Peach, Lemon, Lime, Orange, and Blood orange.

I had decided that I wanted to have a market garden, and the fire made me want to be nearer to family, so I moved up to Darlington. The Shaw Trust are very kindly allowing me to park the plants at their Stockton branch whilst I look for land.

This is proving a lot harder than I had considered. I am an optimist as I said before and I am sure that some land will appear soon, but in the mean time, if you know of any land to rent- around an acre- please get in touch.

One weekend this year I attended the Harrogate Flower Show with the Northern Fruit Group and had the pleasure of meeting several members, all of whom were very patient with my hundreds of questions. I was thrilled that I could answer some the the questions the public had!

I also was grateful to be able to attend the apple grafting workshop also run by the group and am delighted to say 2 out of my 3 grafts are going to turn into apple trees. Super pleased about that! Thank you Ken and Gill Haigh and others for helping me with the grafting!

I was also pleased that the honey berries fruited this year and also had a good crop of black, white and red currants, as well as tay berries.

If you have not heard of Care Farming before, it is where individuals are offered the opportunity to spend healing time in nature working on the land. It is called Horticultural Therapy and is growing in popularity in the UK as more alternative solutions are sought to help those with mental health issues.

I know that I have a mountain of information to learn and am just accepting that I will improve each year as I gather more and more experience. For this eternal traveller, it is interesting that the thing that I end up wanting to do more than anything else is grow plants that put roots down.

If you want to find out more, or get involved, or have experience and just feel like imparting knowledge, please do get in touch. Thank you for reading this and I am excited to get this going so that I can provide nourishing food and help others in the garden.

*Caroline Nettle, Wild Nettle Gardens*

*If you have a personal fruit story to tell, we'd love to hear from you. Ed*

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## **A FRUIT GROWER'S DIARY**

More from Raymond Bush, 'our little ray of sunshine', courtesy of Stuart Denton who has been reading his diaries.

After last year's glut and poor prices things must surely change for the better. However, reading between the lines I get the feeling that things are rather more lucrative for our diarist than he would care to admit. Incidentally I will not be providing any further conversions into the modern idiom: you've all had enough practice by now.

**1937**

**May 12.** Coronation Day spoilt by rain in the afternoon. This seems a good year for dandelions and I feel that this plant would rate as a choice perennial if only it came from Peru or Yucatan.

**May 28.** Stayed the night at Idbury Manor and had to share the bathroom with a young South African couple - a pair of swallows nesting for the second season above the looking glass.

**May 29.** Birds are now realizing car speed and direction. Cows never will.

**June 1.** At East Malling Research Station over 200 growers present. We saw how the presence of virus disease in an apparently healthy strawberry plant could be determined by runner grafting on to a wild woodland strawberry plant, which latter soon exhibits the virus symptoms if the strain be infected. The Minister of Agriculture addressed the growers at lunch. Said the first jigsaw puzzle was invented by an Aberdeen butcher - he dropped a ten shilling note in his mincing machine.

**June 2.** Capsid bug getting busy. Only hope to reduce the numbers is a heavy dose of nicotine dust on a hot day. Survival of bug or man dusting is decided by which gets the first mouthful.

**June 14.** Practice night for our village band. A scientist once remarked that a dozen monkeys typewriting at random for a million years must eventually write all the works of Shakespeare. I wonder if the same applies to village bands and popular tunes.

**June 18.** Pleasant to find old superstitions upheld. Evidence from the Research Station shows that driving iron nails into the trunk of an apple tree suffering from chlorosis (pale leaf due to shortage of iron) may cure it.

**June 22.** Perfect morning. My garden boy has longed to apply a second dose of lawn sand. Backing his meteorological convictions to the extent of two pence he bet me that it would be fine for a week. I gave way and he sowed lawn sand - several hundredweights of it - from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. At 6.30 we had a very local thunderstorm and rain which lasted 3 hours. Never again. But I deduct two pence from his wages to discourage his gambling instincts.

**June 27.** The birds have started on my one big cherry tree. Have tied on end of a string to the top of the tree and threaded it with stones at intervals. The other end is in my office to be pulled as required. Am offering hospitality to a sick aunt as I myself am too busy to pull the string at three-minute intervals from 4 a.m. to 9.30 p.m.

**July 1.** Amateur growers will be glad to hear of a new insecticide. All they need ask for is Betabutoxy-betathiocyano-diethyl-ether. They will be regarded with awe by the local chemist but will probably not be supplied. *(Another boon to mankind, no doubt).*

**July 7.** My host has famous oaks in his garden. I measured one with a spread around the foliage of 136 yds. At over 70 he is still running a big fruit farm. From a few local damsons his firm has now developed orchards of over 10,000 trees. So prolific is this strain that a single tree has produced 32 sieves of fruit - 768 lb.

**July 12.** A research entomologist and a bio-chemist over today. Identified a large green bug spoiling my roses as a capsid. At lunch they decided that watercress was taboo as the possible host of the sheep liver fluke. Entomologists are notoriously hard to feed.

**July 19.** Down into Hampshire in answer to an S.O.S. One variety of apple, Charles Ross, in a standard orchard is dying out, others all look well so the trouble is most probably the reaction of that variety to the wet of last winter and spring. *(I had the same problem a few years ago).*

**July 26.** Tried to get our local dentist to take a tooth out for me, but he is a great cricketer and regrets he will be too busy as cricket week starts to-day. To draw stumps on the opening day would, of course, be out of the question. *(Oh, the halcyon days, pre-NHS).*

**Aug. 1.** Sunday's cream ration arrived solid, not for the first time. Under pressure the milkman confessed that owing to shortage he had substituted Cow and Gate! Yet he had charged us full price for fresh cream.

**Aug. 13.** On to Port Wrinkle on the Cornish coast for three days' bathing. My friends there clear the beach of litter and burn it every evening. The visitors, appreciating this, leave as much as possible to be collected. *(Nothing ever changes)*

**Aug. 16.** At 9 p.m. in the best hotel of a town with 23,000 inhabitants all I could get was boiled eggs, bread and butter and tea. Both eggs were stamped Danish and one was bad.

**Sep. 5.** I read that German scientists have valued the titmouse at £7 per nest. Each hatch of young birds is estimated to eat 4,800 caterpillars, thus saving 4,800 apples valued at 2d a lb. at £7. I think we should go back further. If a bee pollinizes 10 flowers a minute in a 10-hour season of suitable weather, a hive of 5,000 free working bees might visit and set 3,000,000 flowers, thus providing over 600 times as many apples for caterpillars to bite or titmouse to save. Should we therefore value a hive of bees at £34,200? Figures are very deceptive.

**Sep. 8.** A friend brought me a dish of sapolitos. Tiny round marrows, grown from Argentinian seed. Stuffed with meat and tomato they are delicious. Spent the afternoon in Covent Garden with the fruit and also hired a suit nearby for my son's wedding. The firm made 40,000 such hires last year. Forty thousand guineas sacrificed annually to the great god Swank! Incredible!

**Sep. 10.** Am invited to invest in mushroom products with interest at 45% and money back at the year's end. 'Them as has money and no brains are made for them as has brains and no money'.

**Sep. 19.** Sat round a dinner table with five growers. Apples, pears and a Dutch melon came in for desert and we all five ate melon. Our apple pickers are out on strike for more money. (*He doesn't mention the outcome in his published diary*).

**Sep. 22.** Usually a yellow-leafed tree carries a highly coloured apple as an indication of nitrogen starvation, but this year even the trees with the darkest leaf show a red Bramley.

**Oct. 6.** Of all apples Lane's Prince Albert takes the most marvellous polish. It's skin doesn't even need the proverbial spit. Coming through Yalding the stench of lime sulphur in the making must have given the inhabitants fine practice with their new gas masks.

**Nov. 3.** I wonder how many housewives know that 'Pure English Jam' may be made of Czechoslovakian fruit as long as it 'undergoes a process of manufacture' (ie. boiling) in this country.



**Nov. 7.** My wife refused to lay out our walnut crop to dry in the sun, shelled them wet and put them in a glass jar. Now they are all mouldy. Another time she will know better but I shall get no credit.

**Nov. 13.** Influenza, which is Asiatic in origin as a rule, is stated to spread when the dust begins to blow from the mud deposited by the Yangtse floods in China.

**Nov. 18.** Chatting with Mr. Middleton, the B.B.C. Gardening expert, was told that he found hanging blue paper in his cherry trees kept the starlings away at fruiting time.

**Nov. 30.** Travelling to London with a friend in high quarters I learned that 40,000 acres of the best agricultural land in the country is going over annually to aerodromes and golf links. *(My own father, married in 1939, was a builder and was sent from Sheffield to build aerodromes in North Yorkshire in the war. He was discharged in February 1944: I was born in November - nuff said.)*

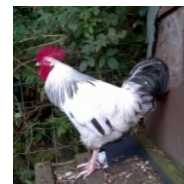
*More from Stuart, and Raymond Bush, in the next issue.*

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## **A Smallholder Writes . . .**

## **No 14**

NFG member James Ellson runs a smallholding in Hayfield, Derbyshire. He gives tours, runs courses, and gives talks on self-sufficiency and apples.



## **Do You Know Your Local Apples?**

When I go on holiday one of the things I like to do is walk from the door, ideally up the nearest hill, in order to get a feel for where I am staying. A sense of place. Woods, farmland, crops, civilisation – if we can still call it that – and, of course, the local orchards.

At home we're self-sufficient (the odd banana sneaks in) in fruit and veg, so on holiday I like to supplement our diet with whatever I can forage from the hedgerows. Nuts, berries, bullaces, sloes, wild pears, and apples, both wildings and crabs. As my wife and I ramble about, I drag her to and sometimes through local orchards, noting the cultivars, and season depending, avail myself of the odd windfall.

All this got me to thinking – did I know my own local apple varieties? And the shameful truth was, I didn't.

I have now put that right.

Derbyshire has five local varieties of which, I am further embarrassed to admit, in my collection of 70, I only grow two: Newton Wonder and New Bess Pool. I will be grafting the missing three in March, and would be delighted if anyone could send me graftwood.

**Belledge Pippin** Received by the National Fruit Trials from Derbyshire in 1818. Dessert apple. 'Fruits have coarse, soft flesh with an acid flavour' (National Fruit Collection).

**New Bess Pool** Believed to be a seedling of Bess Pool, a Nottinghamshire variety. Raised by J. Stevens of Stanton-by-dale, south east Derbyshire (*not* Yorkshire as attributed by Morgan & Richards) sometime before 1850. Dessert apple. 'Quite sweet, light flavour' (M&R).

**Lambs Seedling** Raised c1866 by the Head gardener Joseph Lamb at Meynell Langley, Derby. Seedling of Northern Greening. Dual purpose. 'Slightly sharp but prized for its tender flesh in New Year' (M&R).

**Newton Wonder** Found c1870 growing in thatch of Hardinge Arms by innkeeper Taylor of King's Newton, Melbourne (South Derbyshire). Thought to be Blenheim Orange X Dumelow's Seedling and received a RHS First Class Certificate in 1887. Has a good acid flavour and holds its shape when cooked. Culinary. Cooks to 'a yellow fluff' (Sanders) but 'mild compared to Bramley' (M&R). Becomes a brisk dessert apple. Still popular.

**Beeley Pippin** Raised c1880 by the Reverend C. Scunthorpe of Beeley, a village near Bakewell and part of the Chatsworth Estate. Dessert apple. 'Dusky pink and russet; aromatic flavour' (M&R).

Arguably, there is a sixth apple, too:

**Lord Derby** Raised in Stockport in 1862 by B. W. Witham, a nurseryman in Stockport, Cheshire – just over the Derbyshire county border and connected by name. Catshead a possible parent. Ribbed angular in shape. Large green/yellow culinary apple. ‘Best used early, green, strong, sharp taste, keeps little form’ (M&R).

Please note, that if you are tempted to avail yourself of apples from any Derbyshire collection, it is still a hanging offence.

*James Ellson*

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## FRUIT CORDIALS

Those of you who have been following my series on making fruit cordials have probably got the hang of things by now. The method is pretty much the same for all fruit - cook down to a pulp, strain off juice, add 600g sugar and 10 – 15g citric acid per litre of juice, heat back up to dissolve sugar and kill off any bugs then bottle and store. Simple and delicious.

As we approach the end of season, it is time for my final suggestion, a cocktail using raspberry cordial, and as a treat, an old folk recipe from the hedgerows. If you don't have a glut of autumn raspberries then feel free to throw in a few brambles to bulk out your cordial. Strangely brambles on their own don't really make a very tasty drink.

### **Raspberry Collins**

50ml gin

25ml raspberry cordial

20ml lemon juice

15ml lemonade

Place ice in a tumbler and stir in the gin, cordial and lemon juice. Add a splash of lemonade to taste then serve.

### **Elder Rob**

This very simple old folk recipe was traditionally used for soothing winter coughs, colds and sore throats, with a couple of spoonfuls taken in

warm water, but it is equally good mixed with sparkling water as a cool summer drink or warmed and poured over ice cream as a sauce.

Strip fresh ripe elderberries from their stalks and place in a pan with just a little water. Cook gently till soft then strain through a jelly bag and to each 500ml liquid add 400g sugar. Return to the pan and boil for 5 to 10 minutes until a rich syrup. Bottle and seal in sterilised bottles.

*Chris Simmonds*

*Regular readers know that I like to slip in the occasional word origin, A 'rob' was new to me, so I looked it up and discovered that it's not in any way connected with crime, it's derived from Arabic and simply means a fruit spirit. Ed*



## **FRUIT PRESENTS FOR CHRISTMAS**

Christmas may seem a long way off, but it's never too early to start thinking about your gift giving. With lots of time to prepare, you could impress your friends and family with the fruit of your garden, and no, I don't mean a bag of apples, which will probably have shrivelled by then anyway. Apply a little more thought! Here are some examples:

- A bottle or three of apple juice: not just any old juice that can be had from the supermarket but either home made if you have the skill and equipment, or bought at a local "Apple Day". Here in Kirkbymoorside we have a group that makes and sells juice, and emphasises that you can't buy it anywhere outside the town. So it makes a unique gift.
- All those thoughts apply similarly to bottles of cider.
- Home made jam, chutney or bottled fruit.
- Home made cordial: Chris Simmonds has given us some lovely recipes above and in recent issues of the Newsletter.
- Home made wine: we make rhubarb every year, and blackberry and gooseberry when quantities allow but many other options are possible.
- Home made spirits: well, the spirit isn't home made, but the flavouring can come straight from your garden: blackberry whisky, raspberry gin, loganberry vodka, etc. Or from the nearby countryside, if you hurry you could start now and still have sloe gin ready by Christmas. A perfect gift when doubled with a bottle of prosecco.

In all cases, presentation is really important. The contents of an old jam jar, labelled with a black marker pen, may taste pretty good, but to impress the recipient even before they have opened the bottle, it needs to look good.

If you are giving more than one jar or bottle, the containers should match: odd surplus from your re-cycling box will not do. There are many websites where you can buy bottles, jars, or just replacement lids. For example, a dozen gingham patterned jam jar lids from Lakeland cost a mere £2.99.

Next buy some self adhesive labels of the appropriate size (packets are clearly labelled) from any stationer. If you use Microsoft Word, you can find ready made label layout pages, just look for the one compatible with the Avery number on your packet. If not, make labels of an appropriate size on plain paper, cut them out carefully - a guillotine assures a good finish - and stick to the bottle or jar.

No artistic flair? Give your product a name, even as simple as “Jean’s Jam”, use big letters and bright colours, maybe add a picture of the fruit - any internet search will throw up literally dozens - then do a few trial runs on old paper to see what looks best. If you want to be a bit more adventurous, you can use one of your own photos as background, overprinted with your wording. Or get the kids to design something, and be sure to credit them on the label. Be light-hearted. My sloe gin gives a list of ingredients: “made with commercial gin, wild sloes, a little sugar, some time and lots of love”.

The other important aspect of an impressive gift is wrapping. Our fruit group makes presentation boxes from old cardboard lined with brown paper and filled with paper shredding - all very eco-friendly. Pop in a couple of jars, wrap with clear plastic film (if you must), tie on a pretty ribbon and bingo, looks great. Wicker baskets are an easier bet, get one about the right size, crumple up some coloured paper and pop in your jars. Add a bow and a festive card.

And if all that sounds too much trouble, or you simply haven’t the time, there’s always gift membership of the Northern Fruit Group, a snip at £10 single or £12 for a couple. We don’t produce a fancy gift card, but you could do that yourself....

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# **OLD ORCHARDS: SOME DETECTIVE STORIES**

**Anne Lee looks at  
FARFIELD HALL, ADDINGHAM  
Ernest Oddy's Fruitful Early Years**

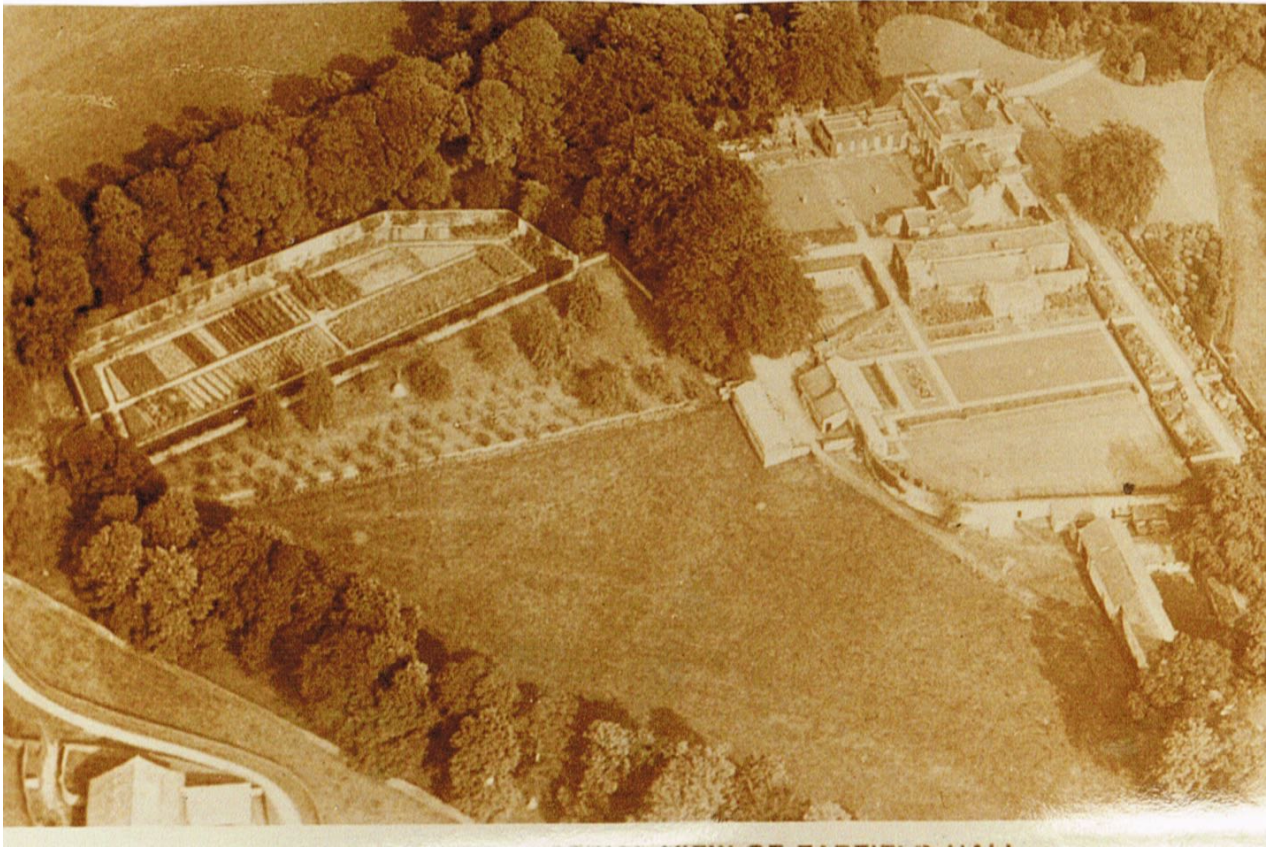
## **Recollections of a Gardener's Work in a Walled Garden and Orchard Part 1**

Ernest Oddy's father, also called Ernest, was head gardener at Farfield Hall, on the outskirts of Addingham (1). The hall was owned by George Douglas, Chairman of the Bradford Dyers' Association (one of Bradford's 'Wool Barons'), who purchased it in 1910. After George Douglas assured Ernest Snr: 'If you stay with me, you and your family will never want for anything,' he turned down the offer of a lecturer's post at Leeds University.

Farfield Hall is a typical country house where the needs of the owner's family and servants were mainly supplied by produce from its estate. Dairy products from the farm were supplemented with vegetables, salads and soft fruit grown in the walled garden. Top fruit such as plums, apricots, pears and cherries were trained on the brick walls; apples and pears came from the orchard; grapes, melons, cucumbers and flowers were grown in the glasshouses. The vegetable and fruit gardens would have been in production, presumably for a year, before the Douglas family and the indoor staff were able to move into the hall. Prof Apple told me that his father travelled from Douglas's Bingley house to supervise the garden work at Farfield, but I omitted to ask what transport he used. He could have caught a train via Skipton to Addingham Station, or ridden on horseback over Ilkley Moor. Usually, when visiting his friend George Dugood, the head gardener at Parcevall Hall, he would cycle.

People look back on the pre-World War 1 period as 'the Golden Age', but that is descriptive more of the standard of living of rural landowning families - their tenant farmers and outdoor servants enjoyed little of 'the good life'. The image of rosy-cheeked yokels happily harvesting baskets of sun-warmed apples and drinking cider from earthenware flagons, belies the fact that work on the land was back-breaking hard labour; outdoors in all weathers, wet in rain and cold in frost and snow; pay was low and little improved since the Tolpuddle Martyrs; a gardener's status was menial; there was no job security or retirement pension, and they were expected to be servile. From a surviving letter we know that the owner addressed his head gardener as 'Oddy', without a 'Mr' honorific and certainly never by his





first name. In turn 'Oddy' addressed his employer as 'sir'. Only once, while employed there as a gardener, was young Ernest ever permitted to step inside the hall through the main door. After WWII Keith Douglas, the then owner, wanted to hear about his RAF experiences and invited him in. Ernest Snr would never have crossed that threshold. Cook and head gardener would confer about the availability of fruit, vegetables and flowers in season and these would be delivered early morning to the kitchen. By the time Prof Apple was born in 1920 the recession was starting to bite and conditions for manual workers in 'the land fit for heroes' got worse during the Depression. Farfield's gardeners were not given any pay rises. Eventually the head gardener was supporting a wife and five children on what his wife, Rowena, called 'a pittance'.

Staff in large houses lived in a closed community, organised in a strictly hierarchical pecking order with butler and housekeeper at the apex. Indoor staff considered themselves 'family', thus superior to outdoor staff. Indoor servants occupied the upper floors of the house and the outdoor staff either lived in tied cottages on the estate or in the village and walked two miles or so to work. People said they could set their clocks according to the time under-gardener, 'Owd' Barker, walked past. (That indicates that he did not earn enough to afford a bicycle.) The next door neighbours to the Oddy family were the Dicksons. Mr Dickson was head chauffeur and

handyman. Because he chopped the kindling, took in the coal buckets and laid the fires, he regarded himself as 'indoor staff' and therefore Mrs Dickson thought herself a cut above Mrs Oddy, even though the head gardener was in charge of eight under-gardeners and had authority for hiring and firing.

*Historic photographs showing walled vegetable and fruit gardens in production are rare and two aerial photographs taken of Farfield Hall and the gardens may be unique (the one taken from the front of the hall at an angle of 90 degrees to this, does not show the back gardens as clearly). They are undated, but must pre-date 1926, because by that time the cottages positioned at the bottom of the orchard slope (on the extreme left) were under construction. From the apparent young age of the orchard trees planted by Ernest Snr in 1910, the photographs were taken before or during World War I. Judging by the shadows it was a sunny afternoon. They may have been for survey purposes, to show a plan view of the layout of the grounds. George Douglas had commissioned Thomas Mawson, the famous 'Arts and Crafts' garden architect to redesign Farfield's. The 1889 Ordnance Survey map reveals that the walled garden and older orchard trees existed in Victorian times. The photograph does not show the topography: the hall stands at the highest point and the orchard and walled garden slope downhill roughly from east to west. They are sheltered on three sides with the open aspect to the south. The full sun can be seen on the south-facing wall with its trained fruit trees.*

The walled garden has a curious architectural feature; the east, west and north (i.e. south-facing) walls are the typical high, brick-faced walls topped with flat coping stones, but the fourth side is a ha-ha, a sunken stone wall with a ditch, bordering the orchard. (I do not know of any other walled garden incorporating this design.) The aerial photo shows a low hedge shelter-belt above the ha-ha, which has now grown into a row of woodland trees containing damsons. Inside this boundary hedge stand two cast-iron stanchions, one at the top and the other at the bottom, which must have held training wires (for espalier apples?). The ha-ha terminates at the lower end at a stone building that abuts the west wall, with its double doors facing the orchard. I looked inside and noted that it was not a fruit store. The two high cast-iron mangers across the far corners suggest that it was stable and cart space for two garden horses. (As Prof Apple never mentioned them, they must have pre-dated his time. He kept his motorbike in it and it is now used at lambing time.)

The ground level inside the walled garden is about two metres higher than the orchard - presumably the result of adding compost over the years. Wood battens are still attached to the bottom (east-facing) wall alongside



the double gates. Two pears, three vines and four plums grow alongside the south-facing wall, but have outgrown their fixtures and lean out. Two ancient large stone troughs stand in the middle (and can be seen on Google Earth). They appear older than the circular dipping ponds that are the usual Victorian feature.

Another architectural anomaly is that the glasshouses (now demolished) were not located inside the garden, but in the yard above it. They and the potting shed, tool store, etc, (now all in ruin) were accessed from the orchard by a flight of stone steps leading up through a high, buttressed stone wall.

The head gardener's decision of what varieties to introduce into his extended and restored orchard would have been made in consultation with the cook and the nurseryman supplier. Prof Apple said his father always dealt with Kershaw's Nursery, at Brighouse and would visit them once a year for discussions and to place his orders. Farfield Hall's orchard could thus be a living relic from their 1910 catalogue. He opted for half-standards, as this meant he could plant more trees to the acre and lower branches made harvesting easier. He appears to have planted a pair of each variety, but during the past 100+ years the ravages of gales, over-heavy cropping, lightning strikes and even an earthquake have brought down most of them. (2)

The scientific knowledge and technical skill of the old gardeners is legendary and the quality and size of the produce grown by Ernest Snr was renowned. Farfield's soil is fertile loam and composting for fertiliser was regarded as top priority. In the Autumn all the gardeners (including young Ernest, while still a boy) 'had to go into the woods and collect up every single leaf'. Cartloads of horse manure, to be mixed with the leaves, were sent over from the Bradford Dyers' stables (much transport was by horse and cart) and delivered through the back gate near the chapel.

But there was no question of organic growing: Prof Apple recounted how his father used fearsome-sounding toxic fungicides and pesticides. He would climb a ladder leaning up against the fruit walls and walk along the flat top (3) to paint or spray the fruit trees with poisonous chemicals such as Paris Green (copper aceto-arsenate), lead arsenate, Jeyes Fluid (coal tar extract) and Bordeaux Mixture (copper sulphate and slaked lime - that if inhaled turned the user's skin blue). Rat poison and slug pellets were used in the vegetable garden and nicotine in the glasshouses, which were also liberally dusted with flowers of sulphur to prevent mildew. Ernest Snr reputedly grew magnificent and unblemished fruit and vegetables - 'blanched celery a yard long, leeks as thick as your upper arm and massive

cauliflowers', but I wonder if the old gardeners ever poisoned anybody. On one occasion, when the Oddy children were sitting round the kitchen table awaiting their dinner, their father walked in, placed a Souvenir de Congres pear in front of them and said: 'Nar then, what's tha think o' that?' Wall-trained Souvenir de Congres can bear enormous pears and when the children measured this specimen it was 14 inches (35cm) long. He would also walk down through the orchard to their cottage with his apron full of ripe Ribston Pippins and say: 'Sithee, git thi teeth into these.' While still a boy, Ernest Jnr would climb the walls and lie on the coping stones to reach down and scrump Kirke's Blue plums. (It was known as 'the Cox's Orange Pippin of plums', meaning it was considered to be the finest, just as Cornice was known as 'the Cox's Orange Pippin of pears'.)

The Oddy children attended the Boyle and Petyt School (up the A59), the Duke of Devonshire's foundation for the children of his staff and tenants, so had about a six-mile round walk to and from school each day via Bolton Bridge. The pecking order was evident even among the pupils and the offspring of an outdoor servant to a businessman 'in trade' were considered inferior status. However the exceptionally bright Oddys won most of the annual prizes distributed by the Duchess, when the boys had to bow and the girls to curtsy. Young Ernest's future career, which his father envisaged would be to succeed him at Farfield, was determined in 1927, when the eldest son, George, passed the scholarship for Ilkley Grammar School. At first Ernest Snr adamantly refused to allow George to go, fearing he would be fired as a consequence of 'being seen to put himself above his station'. For workers in tied cottages, the sack meant losing the roof over their family's heads. (4 ) He was overruled when the Canon from Bolton Abbey Church, called on George Douglas to insist that George be given 'opportunity to become a schoolmaster'. At this date the Oddys had just moved into their new cottage. Young Ernest remembered how the family sat round the kitchen table with Kershaw's catalogue to choose what apple trees to put in their new garden (Lord Derby, a mid-season heavy-cropping cooker; Lane's Prince Albert, a cooker for storage; for dessert, Laxton's Epicure; Cox's Orange Pippin, and showy red Reinette Rouge Etoilee). They also decided to plant a Schoolmaster, to celebrate George's future career.(5) (He went on to become head boy at Ilkley Grammar School and eventually a headmaster.) The Schoolmaster tree is still there in the corner of the garden....

***To be continued in the January Newsletter. Footnotes follow, then please be sure to read Anne's appeal below.***

(1) OS Grid ref: SE 07739 51619. Farfield Hall is on the left of Bolton Road leading out of Addingham. Its history and that of its famous Friends' Meeting House may be found on the Historic England website, but that does not include a description of the grounds.

The remains of the orchard and walled garden are part of the estate, to which there is no public access, however they can be viewed from the path fronting the cottages at the bottom of the slope. Just past the high boundary wall there is a turning for the chapel. (The Dalesway footpath also passes immediately behind it.) Alongside it is a small car park. Follow the path round the corner (about 20m) to the bottom of the orchard. The first cottage you come to was the home of the Oddy family, who moved there from the houses across Bolton Road in 1927.

(2) I contacted Kershaw's, but they have not retained archives. They recently celebrated their 1501 anniversary and now are keen to know if any of their old catalogues, etc, are still around. Several years ago, at the Harlow Carr Apple Event, one of the people who brought apples for identification told us: 'You shouldn't have much difficulty identifying those, because here is an old Kershaw's receipt listing the varieties.' However none of the apples we looked at corresponded to that list. Fortunately Margaret thought to make a copy.

(3) The late Robin Compton of Newby Hall told me that the flat top, with its slight overhang, to garden walls was not intended for gardeners to walk along, but was to ensure that the rain bounced off to keep the wall dry.

(4) Rowena was terrified that George Douglas would discover that her husband had been to a Labour Party meeting to hear Philip Snowden speak. He would have been sacked on the spot.

(5) Schoolmaster was used for mincemeat, chutneys and any recipe that required the fruit to stay in intact pieces and not 'fall' to a mush. It is also noted for retaining its white colour and not turning a dingy brown. In 1995, as we were coming out of the NFG AGM, Fred Hirst, who was then collecting varieties to put in his heritage orchard, remarked to Ernest: 'I'm looking for an apple called Schoolmaster.' 'Oh,' said Ernest, 'I know where there is one - if its still there. I'll go and look tomorrow.' So when Fred sends his fruit for the NFG's Apple Event display at Harlow Carr, they include Schoolmaster grafted from that tree.

## **APPEAL: RESCUE THE RIBSTON PIPPIN!**

At the top of the orchard, I was devastated to see that one of the two Ribston Pippins in the Victorian part of the orchard has crashed. I do not know of any other big old trees of this variety. In 1897 George Bunyard stated that it is not a suitable variety for orchard planting as it is too spindly to make a tall standard. Farfield's prove him wrong. I guess this to be about 15m tall. Lots of Ribston Pippins are planted in community orchards and heritage collections, because it is a famous old variety and said to be a parent of Cox's Orange Pippin, but those are all young trees.

The fallen tree is healthy and about 2/3rds of its roots are still in the ground, so it should live. I thought it had blown down in the recent high winds with the weight of the crop, but then I spotted rabbit holes tunnelled under it and that the rabbits are already gnawing at unripe apples (delicious Ribston Pippins - yummy). To have caused this amount of subsidence they may have been burrowing for some time (years?) and established a warren. They have also started scraping beneath the other tree.

The history of the Ribston Pippin is well known (see Wikipedia) and I recollect that that the original early C18th tree at Ribston Hall, Knaresborough, blew down, took root and regenerated. I also know that when the large apple tree in the forecourt of Barden Tower (near Bolton Abbey) collapsed and they were preparing to fell it, Ernest gasped: 'Nay, you can't do that! It's an S.T. Wright and there isn't another between here and Nottingham. Throw soil over the roots and it'll be right.' And that tree is still there 25 years later. (However it is not an S.T. Wright: Ernest planted two at Parcevall Hall for I.D. purposes and they do not compare.)

Mrs Robertshaw of Farfield Hall is anxious to know if the fallen Ribston Pippin can be saved. She asked me, but I am no expert. Is there anybody among our membership who could look at the tree, advise whether it is possible to rescue it and offer practical help?

But what to do about the (cuddly and cute) rabbit pests? Does anybody like rabbit pies?

*Anne Lee*

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## **FRUIT WE DON'T GROW: JACKFRUIT**

When we started this series, the concept was broadly to talk about fruit with which we are familiar in the UK, but which doesn't grow here at

all, or only exceptionally in hot house conditions: pineapples, bananas and so forth. I remember thinking that there would be no point in including such fruits as santol, or the delightfully named wampi, as they are unknown in the UK, and I included in this list one of my personal favourites from my earlier life, the jackfruit.

Just recently, however, that has changed. Suddenly, jackfruit (or sometimes jakfruit) is appearing on menus in trendy restaurants (I'm told), and even in supermarket meals. Keen to be reunited with this erstwhile favourite, I tried a jackfruit burger. What a travesty! The fruit itself is soft and succulent, but now it's being used hard and fibrous, as a meat substitute, by the 'meat-free-Monday' brigade, who apparently can't bear to have a meal that doesn't have chew-factor. "You'll definitely want to grab some jackfruit on your next grocery run", burbles the Good Housekeeping website. "These indulgent dishes might look like meat and taste like meat, but don't be fooled! Jackfruit, a tropical fruit native to Asia that resembles pulled pork, is becoming one of the most popular meat alternatives." Not with me it's not.

Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) is said to be the largest fruit, commonly weighing in at 40k, and sometimes measuring as much as a meter long. Probably native to India, it grows in various climatic regions notably the tropics and is cultivated extensively in Southeast Asia, also in Indochina and the South Pacific. The word *jackfruit* has nothing to do with our boy's name, but comes from Portuguese *jaca*, which in turn is derived from the Malayalam language term *chakka*.

Unless you have a very large and greedy family, you buy by the slice rather than a whole fruit. The shape is irregular, oval or oblong, green to brown skin, densely studded with hexagonal spines. Each fruit contains up to 500 seeds in a pocket of succulent flesh that has a curious aroma, at once sweet and musty. These pockets are the main edible part, orange or yellow, with a taste that can be compared to banana, peach or pineapple. The seeds are also used, usually cooked.

The leaves provide a remedy for various skin ailments and an antidote to snake bite.

Should you want to try it as a meat substitute, you buy it in tins and there are, of course, lots of recipes to be found on the internet. Personally I'll stick to quorn.

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# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO YELLOW STRIPEY THINGS



## CARPENTER BEE

- ACTS LIKE IT'S TOUGH, BUT CAN'T ACTUALLY HURT YOU
- HAS NO CONCEPT OF WHAT GLASS IS
- LIVES IN YOUR FENCE
- FLIES AGGRESSIVELY TO TRY AND SCARE YOU AWAY



## HONEYBEE

- IS THE BEE THAT NEEDS HELP THE MOST
- EXCELLENT POLLINATOR
- VERY FRIENDLY
- CAN ONLY STING ONCE



## BUMBLEBEE

- ALSO POLLINATES STUFF VERY WELL
- SO FAT IT SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FLY
- WILL LET YOU PET IT WITHOUT GETTING AGITATED
- ACTUALLY A FLYING PANDA



## HOVERFLY

- WEARS YELLOW STRIPEY UNIFORM TO SCARE YOU
- ACTUALLY CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO YOU
- HANGS OUT IN FIELDS
- FOLLOWS YOU IF IT LIKES YOU



## PAPER WASP

- LOOKS SCARY, BUT WILL ONLY ATTACK IF PROVOKED
- STING HURTS LIKE THE DEVIL
- WILL CHASE YOU IF YOU SWAT AT IT
- HAS NO CONCEPT OF PERSONAL SPACE



## YELLOW JACKET

- WANTS YOUR FOOD AND WILL FIGHT YOU FOR IT
- NEVER LEAVES YOU ALONE
- WILL STING YOU JUST FOR THE HECK OF IT
- IS JUST A JERK



## CICADA KILLER

- LOOKS LIKE SATAN'S NIGHTMARES
- EXCLUSIVELY EATS CICADAS
- CAN STING YOU, BUT USUALLY WON'T
- STILL PRETTY TERRIFYING



## DIRT DAUBER

- ALMOST NEVER STINGS ANYTHING EXCEPT SPIDERS
- BUILDS NEST IN THE GROUND
- HOARDS SPIDERS IN SAID NEST
- COOLEST LOOKING OF THE WASPS

AND FINALLY...

King James I urged his noblemen to plant mulberries, in the vain hope of kicking off a silk trade - their leaves being the sole food of the

silkworm. Many of these trees are still growing, conspicuous by their gnarly branches and horizontal growth, and one, in Deptford, London, has an especially colourful story.

In 1697, Peter the Great of Russia came to England on a fact-finding mission and rented the Deptford home of diarist John Evelyn, which he then vandalised in series of drunken benders. On his departure, says the legend, the sheepish tzar planted a mulberry tree as an apology to his landlord. Whatever the truth of the tale, three centuries later the locals still make jam from the fruit of this tree.

*I am indebted to “Broadleaf”, the magazine of the Woodland Trust, for this snippet. Ed*

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My thanks to all contributors for their help in preparing this edition of the Newsletter. Ed

The next Newsletter will be circulated in early January 2020. All contributions welcome, to the Editor please by December 10, at

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