Stamford Community Orchard Group - Spring 2011

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, we hope you find it both interesting and informative.

We have altered both the format and layout for this edition as we search for the ideal which will guarantee to you, the Friends, our promise to produce a regular newsletter to keep you up to date with progress on the Orchard and its future development, activities and ideas for the next "Apple Day".

We are in the process of replacing a few of the trees that have either died or are unhealthy with trees that we have grafted ourselves. By the time you read this we will have pruned the trees on the Orchard and taken the opportunity to use that activity to demonstrate the process to both members of the group and Friends. We will have also planted more snowdrops on the orchard that were kindly donated by a supporter and have been promised some more by an interested member of the community. Wildflowers on the site are increasing helped not only by further planting but also by the mowing regime we have introduced based on that which is used on local nature reserves. – i.e based on the old haymeadow timetable !!!

Recently two of our grafting experts gave a demonstration of their skill to other members of the Group in order to increase expertise within the Group and we are considering giving such demonstrations to the community at large in the future.

Apple Day last year was a resounding success with hundreds of people attending despite alternative entertainment in the town, but we must not rest on our laurels and have some new activities planned for this year's event including a "live" event from the award winning drama group Wild Cats.

Whilst we were not lucky enough last year to discover any of Stamford's lost apple varieties we did find some that are unusual to this area – Cockle Pippin, Wealthy and Lord Hindlip, but the search continues and if you know of any old trees that you think are worth investigating please let us know,
All in all a successful year and we look forward to further success in the coming months. All we ask is your continued support either as a "Friend", sponsor or volunteer.

Thank you.

Max Winslow

A Codlin at Burghley?

*www.**scog**-web.org.uk*

You might be interested in this ancient apple tree found in Burghley Park. I had heard about this tree from different sources for some time, but had never got round to seeking it out, until today. The history of the tree is that, before the Enclosures Act, there was a turnpike that went across the Park to Pilsgate and, on this road, stood a Public House called the New Inn. This is well documented by historians. A map of 1755 records the New Inn Barn and, in 1756, Capability Brown started his work at the Park so the Pub could have been demolished at this time. More research is needed here. This tree could be well over 200 years old and, if so, would be one of a very few. The fruit is Codlin type and yellow with the occasional pinkish-brown flush. The trunk measures 2 metres 12 centimetres at 1.5 metres high and is hollow as a chimney -- the top has broken out some years past and new growth has kept it going. What a wonderful example of perseverance! Look at the photos and send me your comments on this beauty.

Denis Smith

Interesting Fact

In 2010, an Italian-led consortium announced they had decoded the complete genome of the apple (Golden delicious variety). It had about 57,000 genes, the highest number of any plant genome studied to date and more genes than the human genome (about 30,000).

Source Nature Genetics

A Lesson in pruning…..

Once a tree has been planted there is a tendency to just let it grow and hope for the best. A small crop of apples may result but a tree which is regularly pruned will be far more productive. Pruning is also fun and following a few simple steps will give good results.

Why do we prune? Firstly, to achieve a good shape and structure. A tree naturally concentrates its energies on growing upwards along the central stem. By pruning this stem, the tree is encouraged to develop a bushy habit through the energy being diverted to the growth of lateral branches. In later years, these laterals can also be pruned to develop sub-laterals and fruiting spurs.

Judicious pruning creates space within the tree. Spacing is important because crowded branches can be a vector for bacterial and fungal diseases. As a rule, older wood should be removed first in order to allow the younger wood to develop.

Secondly, pruning is required to remove dead, diseased and damaged branches, in the case of the former two by cutting them right back and the latter by pruning to a healthy bud. There are two types of bud on an apple tree: a growth bud which lies flat to the stem and a flower bud which is circular. Both will produce fruit but only the flower bud will do so in the current year's growth. Care should be taken when assessing a stem for pruning as a live flower bud could be hiding below dead buds from last year's crop.
The amount of pruning a tree requires depends on its vigour. Vigorous shoots require little or no pruning whereas weaker shoots need pruning in order to stimulate growth. For older trees the emphasis is on thinning the older wood in the lateral branches.

Apple trees are trained to grow in different ways, for instance as cordons or espaliers, and each has its own method. But all trees adhere to general pruning principles which, if adopted, should ensure a bigger crop of apples.

'Apple trees are usually pruned in the dormant season so if you hurry, you can still prune your tree as long as it is no later than the end of March'

Paul Bennett

Lord Hindlip found at Wothorpe

One afternoon, in early October, myself and Max Winslow went on a journey to Wothorpe to identify apple trees, at a house on 1st Drift. Max had been contacted by the owner but, on arriving, we found nobody at home. As we were already geared up with an apple picker we went to look at the tree, which had been identified, at our apple day, as Cockle Pippin. It was an extremely old tree, and quite a rare find and we now have permission to go back and take graftwood.

From here we visited a derelict cottage at Wothorpe to find a tree that had been spotted by a lady walking her dogs who had informed Max After a walk across a field, we found the tree, laden with apples, and we took enough fruit for identification purposes.

On the way back to our vehicle we were stopped by a cottager who thought we had been conkering but, after hearing our story, gave us permission to
investigate his fruit trees at another out-of-the-way cottage. We found one apple tree and a pear tree: the apple turned out to be a "James Grieve" -- not too unusual -- the pear was probably a cooking variety that we could not identify.

But the best find of the day must go to the tree at the derelict cottage. This apple has now been identified as "Lord Hindlip"; an unusual find, once sold by the local nursery W & J Browns. That was quite a day!

Denis Smith

Dates for your diary

- Late June (date to be confirmed) - Grafting by ‘budding’
- July (date to be confirmed)-SCOG ‘summer social’ for friends and members
- 1st October 2011 - Apple Day