

THE APPLE OF YOUR EYE

SLOG QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 44 – SUMMER 2020

*** FRUIT GROWING ***

CONSERVING LOCAL ORCHARDS

PROMOTING HERITAGE VARIETIES

www.slorchards.com

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Editorial

What a strange and unique year 2020 is turning out to be. I hope all SLOG members are keeping safe and well, and finding useful things to do to keep occupied and productive whilst largely restricted to house and garden (and orchard?). Since there is a lack of clarity going forward, all our future planned events must be treated as provisional and as plans either firm up or change, you will be advised by email and updates will be posted on the SLOG website. Likewise, plans for apple press hire still have some loose ends to be sorted out: Andrew Hockenhill who used to administer the hiring of the Spiedel Mill & Hydropress kit at Sizergh Castle has moved on elsewhere in the National Trust. His replacement has not yet been confirmed but members will be advised as soon as we get confirmation from Sizergh. Meanwhile if any member wants to reserve a hiring date, just email me at andyjgilchrist@hotmail.co.uk The big press and

trailer will again be based at Dick Palmer's at Foxfield, so to book that, email Dick at dickrhonapalmer@gmail.com

DNA analyses: As in previous years, SLOG will again participate in fruitID's programme for the identification of apples, pears & cherries. See page 7 for details of how members can participate.

Weather extremes: Almost thirty inches of rain in the first seven weeks of this year gave us our wettest start to the year for over ten years. This raises the possibility of some root death on apple trees that became waterlogged. If you have a tree which looks as if it might be suffering as a result of root death, spray its leaves with foliar feed to help it recover. By contrast, in the last seven weeks we've only had half an inch of rain accompanied by the warmest April on record such that any newly planted trees will be under severe moisture stress.

Annual Gooseberry Show: A hundred years ago, gooseberry shows were hugely popular and very competitive all over the north of England. But like many country customs, they fell into decline in the face of other more modern pursuits. SLOG is reviving this custom here in the South Lakes by holding our fifth annual gooseberry show at our AGM on the 28th of July. So cultivate and feed your gooseberries carefully this season and bring your biggest gooseberry to compete at the AGM. Also, if you grow currants, bring along your best entire strig of blackcurrants, red & white currants for judging. Also raspberries etc. Keep an eye out for gooseberry sawfly which can strip the leaves off your bushes in just a few days.

Did anybody notice the typo in the last issue concerning the Asian Stink Bug? Eagle-eyed Hugh Connor spotted that the bug's length should read 1.7cm, not 1.7mm as written.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please note that due to Covid-19 restrictions, it is not clear yet whether the events below will be possible. Members will be advised of any changes by email, and updates will be posted on the SLOG website.

For the most up-to-date information look in: <https://www.slorchards.com/events>

Sunday 5th July – Summer Orchard Visit to Crookfoot Orchard, Lyth Valley 2pm

We hope to see the original old pear trees whose fruit we have recently been naming. If this visit is not possible on this date, we will seek to rearrange it for a later date to be advised.

Tuesday July 28th 7.30pm – SLOG AGM at Crook Memorial Hall.

Reports from Chairman, Treasurer & Membership Secretary and election of officers. This is your chance to air your views on what SLOG should or should not be doing and help shape our future strategy. Followed by our fifth annual soft fruit show. Categories include heaviest gooseberry, best strig of black/white/red currants, best display of 5 raspberries and 5 of any other berries. **Directions:** From Plumgarth roundabout at the north end of Kendal, take B5284 direction Bowness. Go through Crook village, past the Sun Inn, then up the hill and the Hall is on your left at the top of the hill. Satnav LA8 8LG

Saturday August 8th 1.30 – 4.30pm – Budding & Summer Pruning Workshop, Growing Well, Sizergh

Learn the skill of budding which nurseries prefer over grafting. We will also demonstrate mid-year grafting which is a useful and sometimes more reliable alternative to budding. Summer pruning is a useful means to slow the growth of over-vigorous trees. We will practice summer pruning on the Growing Well collection of over 100 cordons. Bring your own secateurs if you have them (some will be provided). **Directions:** From M6 jctn 36 go 4 miles on A591 towards Kendal, then A590 Barrow, then shortly on right follow brown signs for Sizergh Castle, then Low Sizergh Barn. From Kendal go 3½ miles south on the A591 then just before the A590 interchange turn left into the car park at Low Sizergh Barn Farm Shop and Tearooms. Park at the far end of the car park and walk over the fields to the yurts.

RECENT EVENTS

GRAFTING WORKSHOP

Saturday 29th February, Growing Well

About 30 people turned up this year at the yurts to learn and practice the ancient skill of grafting. This number included about a dozen Growing Well students and volunteers. Phil gave a demonstration and then everybody got to work, with Phil and Andy providing support and encouragement. Attendees grafted over fifty new trees using scion wood from a wide selection of apple and pear varieties onto MM111, MM106, M9, M27 and Quince A.



Apple scion wood labelled & ready for grafting onto rootstocks. The following week the Committee got together to graft a hundred rootstocks into new trees for SLOG sales next winter. Two additional grafting workshops had to be cancelled in accordance with government advice on social distancing. This left us with a stock of surplus rootstocks so we did some additional grafting of new trees for SLOG sales, potted some up for use at our August budding workshop and the final forty or so were lined out to grow on for use next season. If you were able to grow on your grafts in a glasshouse or polytunnel, you can usually tell by the end of April whether they have taken or not. If kept outdoors, the take may not be definite until the end of May.



Once the take is clear, (as shown above) select

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the strongest growing bud, normally the top one, and rub out the others then put a cane in the pot and tie in the growth as it develops. Also rub out any buds which grow from the rootstock below the graft. Carefully remove the grafting tape in July but keep the young trees in a sheltered position until planting out from November onwards.

DAMSON DAY Saturday 18th April, Lyth Valley

Sadly this friendly and popular event was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

SLOG ORCHARD UPDATE

The first Working Party of the year took place on Saturday morning 14th March, ten days before lockdown. John dug out the compost heap and spread it around the trees at the top end of the orchard where the soil is lighter and drier, and Adrian spread blood, fish & bone fertiliser around the other trees. We dug out six trees some of which were cankered and some just not thriving, and planted ten new trees.



Hugh installed the Plant Heritage board which announces our "National Plant Collection" status and we hung new labels on three rows of trees. A very important piece of work was the recaning of over twenty trees which had been collapsing under the weight of fruit and wet foliage last year. This will ensure they remain at the correct angle of between 45° and 60° for cordons. Thanks to Romola, George, John, Tanya, Hugh & Adrian for their hard work.

Blossom is about two weeks early this year, the pears opened in the first week of April, and most apple varieties were in full bloom before the end of April. The warm spring brought out the pollinating insects and in mid-April there

were Orange Tip and Peacock butterflies flitting around. However, fruit set on the pears looks poor, possibly due to a frost in mid-April. The next Working Party will hopefully be in July for thinning fruit set and weeding. The site plan and variety list are on the SLOG website at: <http://www.slorchards.com/orchard.html>



Orchard on 24.04.20 with bright pink *Redlove Era* in foreground. The orchard is on the Underley Road Allotments, situated between Underley Road & Hallgarth Circle just east of Windermere Road, Kendal.

HILARY'S FRUIT STORIES

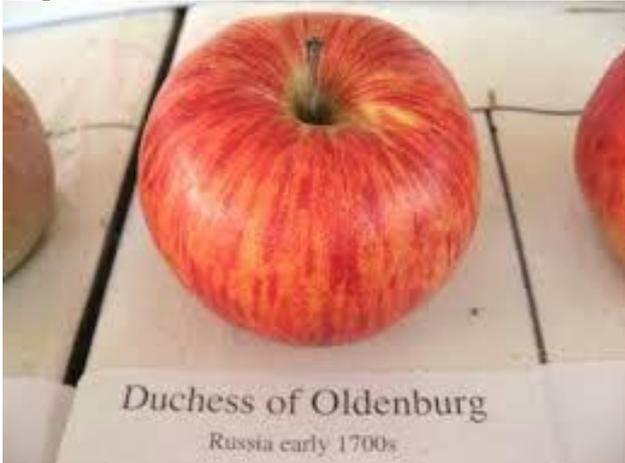
I have written in the past about my favourite apple variety, the *Ribston Pippin* which was the first tree I grafted successfully but in fact I have many favourite varieties and every apple has its story. I have used some of the rootstock left from the cancelled grafting workshops to graft some more unusual varieties which I have found successful. Either they are good survivors found in old orchards or they do well in my orchard or at Acorn Bank.



For instance my earliest apple is *White*

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Transparent an early dual purpose apple which was introduced to Europe from Russia in the 1800's. It is a light yellow apple which flowers early and is ready late July and early August but unfortunately sometimes enjoyed by wasps. A slightly later one is *Lodi* an American apple raised in 1911 and which is now their earliest cooking apple, being ready in mid July over there but slightly later here. It is a seedling of *White Transparent* but does not bruise as easily. We use it as a dessert as it is rather crisper than its parent.



Duchess of Oldenburg is another favourite. It is a pretty pale yellow apple with pink stripes and a useful dual purpose apple known in Russia in the 1700's.



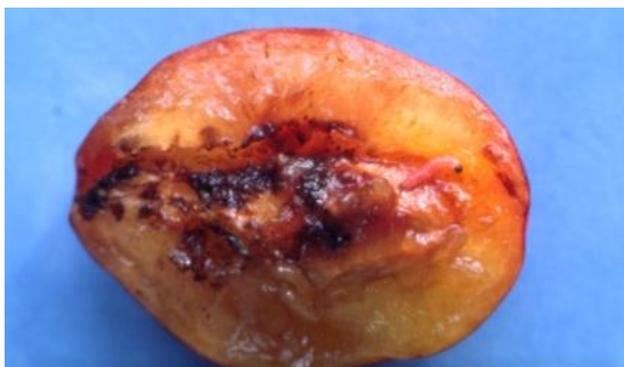
Other successful fruits include the *Rivers Early Prolific* plum. It is sold as a cooking plum because it is small and being dark purple so perhaps not an attractive colour. There was one in my parent's garden and I knew the taste was excellent in spite of it being small. I noticed the greengrocer in Appleby sometimes sold local fruit and asked him if he wanted to sell some plums. I picked them as ripe fruit and took them to him and said they would not last long so I would come and take any unsold ones back in a few days time. [they make good jam!] I noticed the next day they were out to sell labelled as grade three plums and so I went to collect them as promised whereupon my

greengrocer friend said there were none left as he had taken the remaining ones home and 'They were good'. He has now retired and still gets a gift of a few plums every year for changing his opinion. Of course the reason the fruit was so good was that it was left to get ripe. In modern marketing sadly shelf life takes priority over flavour and this is a good reason for growing one's own at home. My mother grew and sold strawberries and the sweetest were the little ones we saved and used for jam.

"PLAGUES & PESTILENCE" PLUM Moth

Last year, Judith Shapland saw that her plums were dropping early and when examined, contained a maggot and black frass around the stone. The culprit was the Plum Fruit Moth (*Grapholita funebrana*) which is a common pest attacking plum, gage & damson. The female lays her eggs at the base of the fruit stalk and the larvae hatch ten days later and immediately enter the fruits and burrow towards the stone. The larva is 10-12mm long, reddish with a dark brown head. It makes a hole at the base of the plum and bores into the fruit. On entering the flesh, the young larva forms a narrow winding mine which soon turns brown and is then visible through the skin. From near the stalk the mine is extended to the centre of the fruit and as the larva grows, the flesh around the stone is eaten and replaced by wet, brown frass. When fully fed the larva escapes through the side of the fruit, leaving a small circular hole in the skin. Attacked fruits ripen early and are easily recognised amongst the developing crop.

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Infested plum fruit showing pink larvae & frass

Commercial growers control this pest by spraying synthetic pyrethroid insecticides, which are also available to amateur gardeners. But if you prefer not to spray and want to reduce damage from this pest, pheromone traps may help. The traps use the 'pheromone' scent of the female moth to attract and catch male moths (without attracting beneficial insects). This greatly reduces egg-laying and therefore the number of maggots. Traps should be installed soon after the end of May. One trap will monitor up to five average size trees for an entire season within a range of 15m (50ft) of the trap.



A pheromone trap at eye level on the windward side of the tree. The trap is simple to use. You place a sticky insert inside the trap, position a monitoring lure, containing the attractant pheromone, in the middle of it and leave it, remembering to check regularly for trapped male moths. Note that it will not prevent damage entirely, but it should reduce the number of fertile eggs laid. More information is available on websites: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=554> <http://www.emr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Plum-Best-Practice-Guide-Plum-Fruit-Moth.pdf>

FRUIT FOCUS: FIGS

The common **fig** (*Ficus carica*), a plant of the mulberry family, is indigenous to an area extending from Asiatic Turkey to north India.



Originating in southern Arabia, figs were brought to the Western hemisphere in the early 16th century by Spanish traders. Fig trees are not native to Northern Europe but the Mediterranean countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece produce very good and delicious figs. Certain varieties, but not all varieties, will happily crop in the open, in the garden, even in Northern European countries such as the UK. However where in the garden? If you know the spot in the garden which is **most sheltered and sunniest**, that's where the fig tree will perform best. Do not plant the fig tree in a cold, wet or damp place. You will be disappointed if you do! Basically if you get the spot right and you plant the tree in a container, then growing figs will be a lot easier. Growing figs in a cold greenhouse is of course great. But red spider mite can be nuisance. If you plant the fig tree in a **container with wheels** then you can store the fig tree from November onwards in a barn, garage or a shed, to **avoid frost damage to the tips of the shoots**. It is the tips of the shoots which will produce next year's crop. If the tree is left outside during the winter months it is best to wrap a **double layer of garden fleece** around the main branches to stop the tips of the branches being damaged by winter frosts.

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Personally I have had very good crops from fig trees grown in a container which has never been moved. **White Marseilles, Brown Turkey and Brunswick** are varieties suitable for the UK. It is possible to **bury the container** as long as the rim of the top of the container stays just above ground level. Provided you water the fig tree very regularly, you can start the tree off in a reasonably small container, for example **35 cm diameter**. Always make sure the container has **good-sized drainage holes**. **Repot the tree after a couple of years** to a bigger pot. You can do this several times. Growing the tree in a pot controls excessive shoot growth, while retaining regular crops of figs. Use soil-based compost such as John Innes compost number 3. Always choose a **pot** or a container which is the **same width at the top as at the bottom**. These type of pots are more stable, when the wind blows. All the same, trees in pots are best secured to a wall or a post to prevent them from blowing over and the pot being broken or the tree being damaged. Always **remove the late-developing figs before the winter arrives**. In the UK, this second crop of figs will only ripen if the tree is grown in a greenhouse. **Feed the tree in moderation** to ensure healthy green leaves. If fig trees in containers are left to dry out, the leaves and the crop will fall. It won't kill the tree immediately, but you will have lost the crop for that season.

Top ten fig tips:

The best time to plant a fig tree is from November to March.

- 1) If it is to be trained against a wall, erect a support frame.
- 2) Prune in April and feed with "Growmore".
- 3) Prune back new growth to a **5-leaf length** in

June.

4) Continue to **water weekly**. Approximately 5 litres/week from May onwards.*

5) From November to April, protect new growth against frost with a **double layer of garden fleece**. This protects the mini pea-size figs.

6) If you like figs annually, then you will have to **plant the tree in a container 45 cm in diameter and at least 40 cm in depth**, with good drainage holes, covered with broken terra cotta pots. A bigger container results in a bigger tree.

7) Keep the plant **free from weeds** and particularly grass.

8) Figs will appear at the **new growth** each year.

9) **Drought conditions will kill the fig plant!** However the **more sun the better**.

10) Recommended varieties are **White Marseilles** and **Brown Turkey**.

courtesy of Dan Neuteboom: <https://realenglishfruit.co.uk>

*this article is written by a grower in East Anglia where annual rainfall is around 25" so weekly watering is unlikely to be required in the South Lakeland area!

NEW APPLE VARIETY: *MAGIC STAR*

Magic Star is a new apple variety bred at Wageningen University Research in Holland by crossing *Elise* and a scab resistant selection.



Its unique benefit is its ability to store well and deliver great flavour and texture even after one year in store. For British apple growers it offers the possibility of supply out of store after the traditional *Gala* and *Braeburn* season, extending the 'home grown' season beyond the traditional April/May through June & July until the new season starts again in August/September.

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The harvest time is similar to or just after *Braeburn* in October. This scab resistant variety produces firm and colourful fruit with a crunchy bite and a sweet taste. It is now in extensive commercial production in the Benelux and its fourth year in England. A limited quantity is being retailed by Tesco. It is hoped that sales of English grown *Magic Star* out of storage in the May/June/July period will displace imported southern hemisphere apples, thereby reducing food miles and promoting the “eat local” concept. Website: <https://magicstar.eu/>

2019 UK APPLE STATISTICS

Last year, the national British apple crop was estimated at 230,000 tonnes, a 4% reduction compared with 2018, but pretty much in line with the average of recent years. This figure is only 2% of total EU apple production but the good news is that UK production now accounts for 42% of UK consumption, a significant improvement compared to just 23% in 2003.



This is not due to increased acreage or yields, but rather to improved storage so that UK *Braeburn* are still available in good condition

out of store in late spring/early summer, displacing Southern Hemisphere imports and reducing air miles. The UK top fruit marketing organization, British Apple & Pears, has set itself the target of increasing the 42% locally grown consumption figure to 60% by 2030. The focus is very much on red, juicy, crunchy and sweet apple varieties as indicated by consumer tasting panels. This means not just currently popular varieties such as *Gala*, *Braeburn*, *Jazz*, *Cox & Discovery* but also *Rubens*, *Cameo*, *Kanzi & Zari*, plus the new varieties *Envy*, *Sweetie*, *Evelina*, *Red Prince & Magic Star*. Website: <https://britishapplesandpears.co.uk/>

DNA ANALYSIS

Following four successful DNA analysis programs from 2016 to 2019, “fruitID” are again offering a DNA analysis service for apples, pears & cherries in 2020. SLOG participated in this project with interesting results as reported in previous newsletters. The price in 2020 is £32.40 per sample of apple, pear or cherry. It is important to note that the results provided will simply state whether there is a match to the database, and if so, to which variety. This means that if we know a variety is a new seedling, it will not be on the database, and the reply will simply be “unidentified”. They are not able at this pricing level to provide any speculation about parentage. Nevertheless, this offers the possibility to identify remnant trees which have been grafted and therefore should be a recognised variety. Consequently SLOG has notified fruitID that we will submit samples of apple and pears for analysis. The process involves taking leaves in June and posting them to East Malling. The samples will be frozen on arrival at East Malling, and then all samples analysed in winter. We expect to get answers in January 2021. If any SLOG members wish to have any apple, pear or cherry trees analysed via this service at the special price of £32.40 per sample as shown above, please email andygilchrist@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01539 727772 as soon as possible and **before the end of May latest**. For more detail on these two organisations, see their websites: <http://www.fruitid.com/#main>

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<http://www.emr.ac.uk/commercial-services/dna-testing/>

SLOG Grants for Community Orchards

The SLOG tree planting grant scheme has now been in operation for six years during which time we have provided support to eleven Community orchard projects. Groups can apply for support in the form of up to twenty trees or £200 cash or equivalent value in materials.



Pupils from Penny Bridge CE Academy with their new apple orchard. Inset: Noah and Theo with Mayor Sharon Webster. Below, pupils presenting their project.

The most recent recipients have both been schools: Penny Bridge Academy at Greenod planted twenty SLOG grafted apple trees in October 2019, and Grasmere Primary school planted twenty trees made up of a mix of apples, pears, plum, damson and medlar in March 2020. In addition, we provided support to a Kendal initiative which resulted in the planting of 25 *Discovery* apple trees on the Sandylands Estate in spring 2020.

SLOG SHOP

1. SLOG has a range of container grown maiden apple trees for sale at £15.00 each, comprising traditional varieties suitable for our Northern climate on a range of rootstocks. Visit <https://www.slorchards.com/trees-for-sale> to see the list and for guidance on purchase and collection.

2. Wells & Winter labels are the most cost-effective permanent solution for recording tree variety identity. They are rigid black plastic labels measuring 2 x 3½" (5x9cm), giving a permanent and very visible result. They are available at 15p each.



3. Apple Notelet cards £2 per pack of 5 different cards each featuring a different apple variety.
4. Recipe books: 28 full colour pages detailing 45 recipes for a wide range of fruits only £2.50.
5. The Apples & Orchards of Cumbria: Lavishly illustrated with over 100 full colour photos describing the twenty or so Cumbrian apple varieties and the fifteen orchards open to the public. Judged runner-up in the "Landscape & Tradition" category of the Lakeland Book of the Year Awards, 2014. £9

SLOG Discount at Suppliers: Rogers & Beetham Nursery

SLOG has negotiated a 10% discount at Rogers of Pickering for SLOG members. When you place an order for any kind of fruit: trees, bushes, etc., quote your SLOG membership number and Rogers will apply 10% discount to your total bill. See: <http://www.rvroger.co.uk/?linksource=frontpage> We also have a 5% discount at Beetham Nursery applicable to all items (except in the café). Just show your SLOG membership card at the checkout. www.beethamnurseries.co.uk/

TAILPIECE

"The Apple of Your Eye" is a quarterly publication, the next one being the autumn issue due mid-August. Contributing articles, preferably in word.doc, are welcome, along with photos where possible, by the end of July 2020 to: andygilchrist@hotmail.co.uk

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