



Jo Malden, Tim Metcalfe, Peter Adams and Holly Kilpatrick planting the Winter Queening

The Idea

The Wolvercote Community Orchard was created in 1994 by the Wolvercote tree Group using a strip of allotments owned by the Oxford Preservation Trust opposite the Trout Pub. The idea to create an orchard came from one of our members, Tim Metcalfe, after reading a Common Grounds leaflet on English orchards and the decline of many old apple varieties. There are over 2000 varieties of apple in this country but we see little evidence of these in our shops and supermarkets.

With this in mind, and with kind permission from the Oxford Preservation Trust, our initial aim was to create an orchard in the village where you could find many of these forgotten, local varieties of apple.

From Tiny Seeds

The first 20 trees were planted in 1994 with the help of the children from the Wolvercote Wildlife Watch Group and since that time we have gradually added more varieties as well as other fruit trees including plums, pears and quince. The group has been successful in locating varieties such as the Bampton Fairing,

Winter Greening, Annual Sweeting and , more recently, several varieties developed in Eynsham by Frederick Wastie including Jennifer Wastie, Peggie's Pride and Sergeant Peggie. We even have our own variety growing in the orchard which we have called The Wolvercote Wonder. Now in 2008 we can boast over 40 varieties of apple and over 60 fruit trees in the orchard.

The Well

When we first took over the plot of land for the orchard we found an old dilapidated and redundant well so we took on the task of rebuilding this and today it is a fine central focus for the orchard and is flamboyantly dressed for the very special occasion of the our annual Apple Day in October.

The cover of the well bears a plaque which we dedicated to a seventeenth century nurseryman called Ralph Austin.

Ralph Austin

As self taught botanist Ralph Austin had a philosophy very akin to the naturalists and environmentalists of today; he believed that growing fruit trees would encourage self sufficiency and charitable deeds within a



Apple juice tasting on Apple Day, 2006

community. Sent by Cromwell to Oxford to plant and study apple trees, he went on to build Oxford's first cider factory and in 1653 he published a book in which he suggested "every gentleman should go down from Oxford and plant an apple tree in his village to alleviate the starving and the poor".

Sadly he died with no children to carry on his ideals and the only plaque to commemorate him is now in our Community Orchard.

Apple Days

From the small beginnings of the orchard Apple Day was an integral part of the project and we were keen to keep the celebration of the apple a simple affair. So with appley cakes and fruity preserves, apple tasting, freshly juiced apples, and old fashioned games like the longest peel, conker conquest, maggot in the apple and treasure hunts we welcomed the passer by. But even we were astounded by the numbers that wandered in, and it has grown and grown each year – our last Apple Day received over 300 people through the gates!

It is also on Apple Day that the group pays the annual rent to the Oxford Preservation Trust in the form of a basket of apples.