

Fruit varieties in Nantwich Community Orchard May 2021

Text and photographs by Malcolm Reid

The orchard was established in 2008 and now consists of forty-five trees, including twenty-six apple varieties, some of which are long-established cultivars, and a few particular to Cheshire. There are also three varieties of pear tree and three different sorts of plum tree.

The information on the trees and their fruit was mainly produced using the following sources:

A Guide to the Orchard and Kitchen Garden by George Lindley, edited by John Lindley, 1831

The Book of Apples by Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, 1993

The Apple Book by Rosie Sanders, 2010

The National Fruit Collection database <http://www.nationalfruitcollection.org.uk/>

Details from Elizabeth Falding of the fruit trees propagated by Tony Gentil

All the photographs were taken in the community orchard.

Apples

Arthur W Barnes

Culinary (cooking) apple



This variety of apple tree was first cultivated in 1902 by NF Barnes and is named after his son, who was killed during the First World War. NF Barnes was the head gardener at the Duke of Westminster's estate at Eaton Hall, near Chester.

The apples are best picked in mid-September when they have turned red. They cook well, making a juicy, lemon coloured purée, with plenty of bite and flavour.

Ashmead's Kernel

Dessert (eating) apple



Although this type of tree was first grown by Dr Ashmead, in Gloucestershire, in about 1700, it was not until the mid-19th century that it became widely planted in England.

The fruits are best picked in early October when they have a yellowish-green, brown, and orange-red appearance. The apples have a rich, sweet, or sharp aromatic flavour, and are juicy and refreshing.

Blenheim Orange

Dual purpose apple



This variety was discovered in the mid-18th century by Mr Kempster near to Blenheim Park, Oxfordshire (home of the Dukes of Marlborough). It was named Blenheim Orange around 1822 and subsequently became a popular variety not only in this country, but around the world.

When the fruit is ripe in late September or early October, the apples have a green-yellow and orange-red appearance. The creamy white flesh has a crumbly texture and a rich, aromatic flavour, tasting of nuts. Blenheim Orange apples cook well, producing a stiff paste.

Briarfields Pippin

Dual purpose apple



This apple variety takes its name from Briarfields, Aston, to the south of Nantwich, and was first raised from pips by Tony Gentil at his nursery.

When ripe, the fruit has a green-yellow and orangey-red appearance and can be used as a culinary apple. However, if stored for several weeks after picking, the apples become more mellow and make a good dessert apple.

Charles Ross

Dual purpose apple



Named after Charles Ross, who first cultivated this apple variety at Welford Park Gardens, Newbury, Berkshire, at the end of the 19th century.

When ready for picking in mid-September, the apples turn mostly orangey-red. The flesh is creamy-white, rather coarse-textured, aromatic, juicy and sweet. When cooked, the apples have a sweet, slightly pear-like, flavour.

Duke of Devonshire

Dual purpose apple



This apple variety was first raised in 1835 by Mr Wilson, head gardener to the Duke of Devonshire at Holker Hall, near Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria. It started to be grown more widely in the late 19th century.

These apples are best picked at the beginning of October, but they will keep well for several months. When ripe, the fruit has a green and brown appearance. The apples are quite juicy, slightly acidic and refreshing, with a rich nutty flavour.

Egremont Russet

Dessert (eating) apple



The Egremont Russet is thought to have originated in England and was first recorded in 1872 by a nurseryman, J Scott, in Merriott, Somerset. It started to become popular in the 1920s/1930s and is now probably the most important commercial russet in the UK.

The apples, which are ready to pick in late September, have a firm, fine-textured, rather dry flesh, with a rich and distinctive nutty flavour.

Ellison's Orange

Dessert (eating) apple



An apple variety from Lincolnshire, it was raised by the Reverend CC Ellison and Mr Wipf, gardener at Hartsholme Hall, near Lincoln, at the beginning of the 20th century.

The skin of this apple, when ripe (around mid-September), turns yellow and reddish-brown (crimson), and the flesh is soft and juicy, with a rich and strong aniseed flavour.

Elton Beauty

Dessert (eating) apple



This Cheshire apple variety originated at the Ince Orchards, Elton, to the east of Ellesmere Port, in the mid-20th century.

The fruit is ready for picking in early September, when many of the apples will have turned bright red. They are juicy and sweet, and taste slightly of strawberries.

Ferret's Pippin

Dessert (eating) apple



Like the Briarfields Pippin, this apple variety originated at Tony Gentil's nursery at Briarfields, Aston, to the south of Nantwich. Ferret was the nickname given by Mr Gentil to his stepdaughter.

As the apples ripen, they turn from green to pinky-red and develop a very pleasant sweet taste.

Fiesta

Dessert (eating) apple



A modern variety, which was first raised at East Malling (fruit) Research Station, near Maidstone, Kent, in 1972.

The apples are ready for picking in late September, when the skin turns from greenish-yellow to bright red. The fruits are aromatic, crisp and juicy, with a rich taste – quite sweet and tangy.

Fortune

Dessert (eating) apple



Fortune apples were first raised by Laxton Brothers Ltd in Bedford in 1904 and started to be grown more widely in the 1930s.

The fruits have a fairly firm, rather coarse-textured, juicy flesh, with a sweet and good aromatic flavour. They are ready for picking in early September when the fruit has turned bright red.

Golden Spire

Culinary (cooking) and cider apple



This very distinctive conical-shaped apple was found about 1850 in Lancashire by Richard Smith from Worcester, who also started to cultivate it. During the late 19th century it was quite widely grown, including as a decorative tree alongside paths.

The apples are green-yellow/orange when ripe (in early September), and have a coarse, crisp flesh, with quite an intense cidery flavour; sharp and juicy. Cooking results in a flavoursome yellow purée.

Howgate Wonder

Culinary (cooking) apple



This large culinary apple takes its name from where it was first cultivated – Howgate Lane, Bembridge, on the Isle of Wight – by G Wrattton in 1915-16. It started to become more widely available in the 1930s.

The apples are ready for picking in early October when they have a red and green complexion. The flesh is firm, fine-textured and juicy, and is quite sweet when ripe, with a faint aromatic flavour. These apples cook well.

James Grieve

Dual purpose apple



James Grieve first cultivated this apple when he was the manager of Dickson's Nursery in Edinburgh at the end of the 19th century. The variety used to be grown for market, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. It is valued for its good, regular crops, and makes a hardy tree that thrives all over the country.

When ready for picking in early September, these apples mainly have an orangey-red and yellow-green appearance. The flesh is rather soft, but very juicy, with a good refreshing flavour. The fruits are also sweetly scented. They cook well and make a sweet, delicate stewed apple.

Keswick Codlin sometimes called **Keswick Codling**

Culinary (cooking) apple



This variety of apple is said to have been discovered in 1793, growing on a heap of rubbish behind a wall at Gleaston Castle near Ulverston, Cumbria. John Sander, a nurseryman from Keswick, named the fruit Keswick Codlin. It was one of most popular early season cookers in the 19th century. Although the trees can be prolific bearers of fruit, they tend to produce apples biennially.

The fruit is ready for picking in mid to late-August and has a yellow/greenish-yellow appearance. The flesh is soft, rather coarse-textured and somewhat dry. The apples make a sweet, juicy purée when cooked.

Kidd's Orange Red

Dessert (eating) apple



This apple variety was first cultivated in 1924 at Greytown, Wairarapa, New Zealand by JH Kidd and started to be grown in the UK about 1932.

When ripe in early to mid-October, the fruit has a largely crimson appearance and a rich aromatic flavour. The flesh is firm, crisp, juicy and sweet.

Lord Lambourne

Dessert (eating) apple



Like Fortune, Lord Lambourne was first grown by Laxton Brothers Ltd in Bedford. The variety was raised in 1907 and started to become more widely available in the 1920s. This apple variety is named after Amelius RM Lockwood, First (and last) Baron Lambourne, President of the Royal Horticultural Society between 1919 and 1928.

When ready for picking in mid to late September, the apples have a largely streaked orangey-red appearance. The flesh is juicy, sweet and aromatic.

Merton Russet

Dessert (eating) apple



Merton Russet takes its name from the place that the variety was first cultivated – at the John Innes Horticultural Institute in Merton (formerly in Surrey, now part of Greater London). It was raised by MB Crane and named in 1943.

This variety is ready for picking in mid-October when it has a yellowy-brown/yellow complexion. The fruits have a firm, crisp, tender flesh, with a sweet-sharp, flavour – initially very sharp, but mellowing after a couple of months, if kept.

Millicent Barnes

Dessert (eating) apple



Like Arthur W Barnes, Millicent Barnes was raised by NF Barnes and is named after his daughter. This apple variety was first cultivated about 1903 when NF Barnes was the head gardener to the Duke of Westminster, at the Eaton Hall estate, near Chester.

When ripe in late September, the apples mostly have a bright red/crimson complexion. It is a refreshing, quite sharp and juicy apple.

Minshull Crab

Culinary (cooking) apple



The Minshull Crab is another local variety. It originated in Minshull (Church Minshull), where the original tree was growing in 1777. Crab refers to an apple that will keep well.

The apples have a yellow-green and slightly orange appearance when ready for picking in mid-October. They have a firm, crisp, white flesh, with a very acid and bitter flavour. When cooked, it makes a stiff, but very sharp, purée.

The tree in the orchard is probably too young to produce fruit this year.

Newton Wonder

Culinary (cooking) apple



This variety of culinary apple was found growing in the thatch of the Hardinge Arms, King's Newton, near Melbourne, Derbyshire around 1870 by Mr Taylor the innkeeper. He then cultivated this specimen leading to its wider availability in the late 1880s.

When the apples are ready for picking in mid-October, they tend to be very large and brightly coloured – mostly golden yellow and red. The fruit quickly cooks to a creamy and juicy purée. The apples can also be baked.

Ribston Pippin

Dessert (eating) apple



This is another variety of apple that takes its name from where it was raised. In the late 17th century a pip was brought to Ribston Hall, near Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, from Rouen in Normandy by Sir Henry Goodricke, and planted there. The trees were grown throughout the country in the 19th century, as the fruit was highly valued as a dessert apple.

In late September when the apples are ripe, the fruit has a yellow-orange appearance, streaked with red. The fruits are fairly juicy and have a rich aromatic flavour, with a hint of pear drops.

Saint Edmund's Pippin

Dessert (eating) apple



Mr R Harvey first cultivated this apple variety about 1870 at Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

As a russet, the skins of these apples have a golden-brown appearance, sometimes tinged with red, when ripe. The fruits have an excellent flavour, very rich and quite sweet, and are best picked around the middle of September.

Spartan

Dessert (eating) apple



This dessert variety originated in Canada. It was first cultivated in 1926 by RC Palmer at the Dominion Experiment Station, Summerland, British Columbia, and started to become widely available in 1936.

In early October, when the fruit is ready for picking, the apples have a deep red (crimson) appearance. The fruits are juicy, and their flavour is rich and sweet – a cross between strawberry and melon. They have a strong, sweet aroma.

Sunset

Dessert (eating) apple



This variety was first raised in about 1918 by GC Addy at Ightham, Kent, and given its name in 1933.

The apples turn yellow, streaked with red, when ready for picking in mid to late September. The flesh is firm and crisp, aromatic and fairly juicy, with a deliciously robust flavour.

Pears

Aston Town

Dessert pear



This old variety was thought to have been lost until Tony Gentil from Briarfields, near Nantwich, discovered a tree growing in Aston Town near Runcorn. An illustration of this pear is included in *Pomona Londinensis* (published in 1818), a collection of 49 engravings of fruit drawn by British botanical illustrator William Hooker (1779-1832). In the early 19th century this variety was extensively grown in Cheshire, Herefordshire and Lancashire. Around 2005 Tony Gentil started to bring this variety back into cultivation.

The fruits are best picked in October when the skin is pale green, sometimes tinged with red. The flesh is tender and buttery, sweetly aromatic and juicy.

Catillac

Culinary and perry pear



This variety was initially described by Bonnefond in 1665 and was grown in the gardens of Louis XIV's palace at Versailles, in the late 17th century to early 18th century.

When ripe, the pears have a distinct pink/brown appearance. The fruits have a white, hard, crisp, gritty flesh, with a musky flavour, that turns pink to deep red when cooked. The fruit keeps very well after harvesting in mid-autumn.

Conference

Dessert pear



The Conference pear was first grown by Rivers Nursery, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire. The variety received its name following the award of a first-class certificate from the Royal Horticultural Society in 1885, when it was exhibited at the National British Pear Conference.

The fruits have a thick greenish-brown skin, becoming pale yellow and brown when ripe. The flesh turns from white to pale yellow, with a slight pink tinge. The texture of the flesh is very fine and soft, and the flavour is sweet.

Plums

Cambridge Gage

Dessert plum



Cambridge Gage is believed to have originated from a greengage seedling from the Cambridge area. It was first adopted and grown commercially by Chivers & Son (fruit growers and jam makers), based at Histon, Cambridgeshire, who sent it to the National Fruit Trials in 1927.

When ready for picking in mid to late August, the fruits are green, and some have a purple tinge. They are very juicy, with a sweet, rich honey flavour, and are excellent for preserving.

Cheshire Damson

Culinary plum



Sometimes called a Cheshire Prune, this traditional variety, as its names suggest, is common throughout Cheshire. It is extremely similar to the Shropshire Damson (also known as a Prune Damson), which was recorded in the late 17th century.

The damsons are ready for picking in mid to late September when the small ovoid fruits have turned violet-blue. They have a delicious, rich flavour when cooked.

Victoria

Dessert and culinary plum



This variety of plum was allegedly found in a garden at Alderton, Sussex, and seedlings from it sold to Denyer, a nurseryman in Brixton, in south London. The variety started to be widely cultivated from about 1840 and took its name from the queen, whose reign had begun in 1837.

The plums are ready to pick in late August or early September when the skin has mostly changed from greenish-yellow to purple or red. The fruits are moderately firm and juicy, slightly sweet and not too rich. They cook to a distinctive pink/orange purée, which makes very good jam and an excellent-flavoured filling for pies and crumbles.