

Taking Stock: Newburgh's Orchard Heritage

Summary of Survey of Orchard Trees in Newburgh in 2003

The orchard survey has been more successful than we ever hoped for!

A big thank you to everyone who participated in the survey.

The survey was a team effort between Newburgh Orchard Group (NOG) members and consultant Crispin Hayes - but without the overwhelming support of the townsfolk of Newburgh, it would not have been a success.

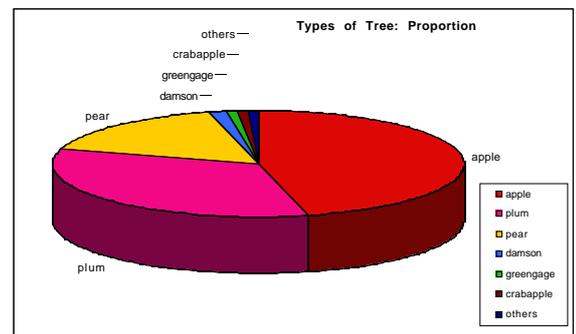
We had estimated that there were around 500 fruit trees in orchards in Newburgh and this number of trees was the target for the survey. But the initial 10 day survey in September found many more. We decided it would be worth extending the survey by a further 3 days. After the 13 days we had surveyed a total of 836 trees at 69 locations.

What Did We Record ?

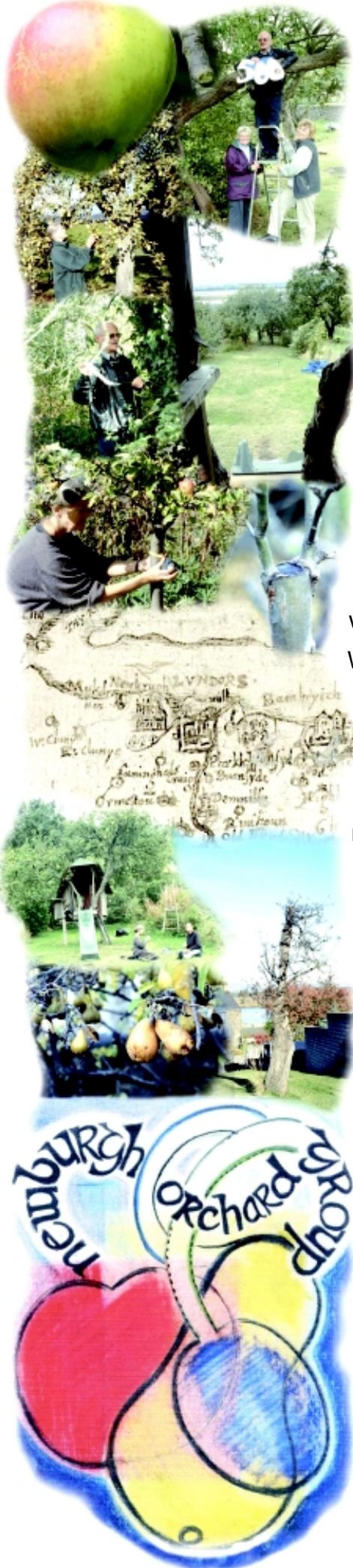
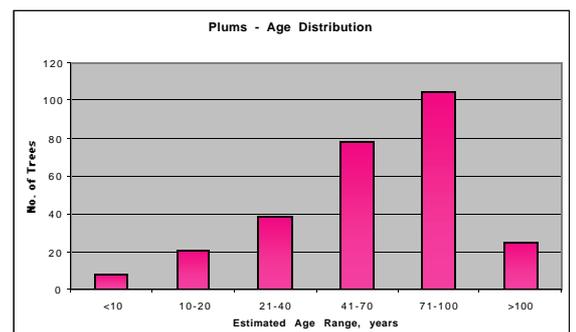
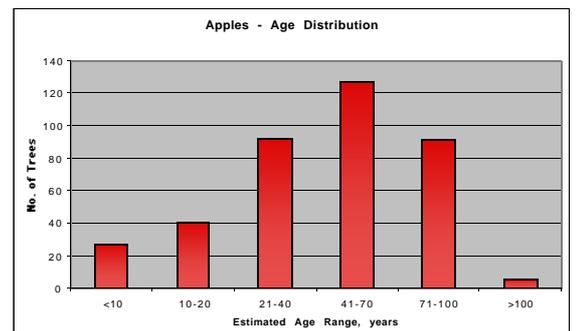
- On a database, we recorded information about each of the 836 trees and 69 locations, together with contact information about the people that kept the orchard.
- On a large scale map of Newburgh we recorded the location of each tree.
- We took a digital photo of most of the trees and some of the fruit.
- We noted down our observations, comments from the keepers of the orchard about their trees and interesting anecdotes about the orchard.

What We Found

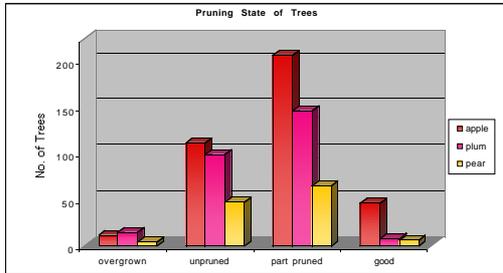
Although Newburgh was renowned for its pears and plums, we were surprised to find that apples were the most plentiful tree - as shown in the (fruit) pie chart below.



We looked at the age of the trees and found that apple and plum trees were an ageing population. Looking at the bar charts you can see that there are a lot more old trees than young ones. A level graph would be better in the long term.



We assessed the state of pruning of the trees and found that most trees were in need of attention, being either 'unpruned' for at least the last decade or 'part pruned' within that time. More apples were well pruned than other trees.



The state of health of trees was assessed. We found that most trees in Newburgh did not have disease and most appeared fairly sound.

Unusual Finds

We recorded some unusual varieties of fruit - some we knew about in advance, such as the Lindorsii pear - but others were a discovery to us, such as the Guthrie's Taybank plum which we found was 'large yellow, sweet and tasty'. Newburgh has a great opportunity to use these and other unusual varieties to raise the awareness of what a unique town it is.

You also passed on a lot of knowledge and anecdotes

"a good bottling pear - not ready yet"

"planted for a cousin's birthday"

"granny said when the starlings started at the pears - that was the time to pick them"

The Newburgh Orchard Group 'fruit device' appearing as part of artwork is used courtesy of Janet Bayne, original artist. Photos Crispin Hayes

Original copies printed on Conservation Doc IT, made in Fife from 75% recycled paper.

Summary written, designed and produced by Dr Crispin W. Hayes on behalf of Newburgh Orchard Group. February 2004

How We Were Received

The survey received the overwhelming support of the community - as shown by the number of people that continued to sign up. While we were carrying out the survey most people expressed the wish that they would rather see the fruit used than for it to go to waste - and they would be happy for NOG to help them with this.

What Next?

Our consultant has put forward some ideas and made a number of recommendations which NOG will consider. The main ones are:

There is no shortage of fruit in Newburgh. NOG should concentrate on developing uses of this fruit, rather than new orchards.

The two key areas of development are; relationships with keepers of orchards and marketing of fruit.

A 'Participatory Appraisal' process would be a useful way for NOG to consult with orchard keepers and the wider community about how they would like the uses of fruit to develop.

The possibility of creating new local employment should be investigated, through starting a fruit co-operative or social business.

The heritage value of Newburgh's orchards has significant potential for attracting tourists. The people of Newburgh need to have a discussion on how they would like this to happen.

Few people know how much fruit their trees yield. A programme to recording yields should be organised. NOG should purchase a number of weighing devices to lend to participants.

There is significant demand for pruning advice. NOG should organise pruning workshops in Newburgh.

Young people should be actively involved in the project; from education to activities and of course eating Newburgh's orchard fruit.



An 'Orchard Trail' around the town could be created, taking in some key viewpoints. If designed sensitively it need not intrude into private gardens or indeed the privacy of residents.

Want to Know More?

Become a member of Newburgh Orchard Group !

A copy of the full report will be available at the local library.

A copy of the full report is available free of charge as a pdf file, via email. Contact NOG for further details.



Newburgh Orchard Group would like to gratefully acknowledge the financial support of:

EU Leader + Programme



Fife Council Venture Fund

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**Newburgh Orchard Group
Contacts**

Mandy Horner
The Old Draper's House
154b High Street, Newburgh

email: ppearson.newburgh@fsmail.net
tel: 01337 840410