



Common Ground have done much to promote diversity and conservation of old apple orchards and promote new ones. Since the 1960s they estimate that two thirds of Britain's orchards have been lost to development, roads and the easy availability of limited choice supermarket fruit. Of the 2000 old cooking and dessert apple varieties, and hundreds more cider varieties, only a handful are now known and available today.

Research by The Grocer magazine revealed just 18.6% of the Tesco apple range were of UK origin, while Aldi managed to get up to 22.5% of its apples UK sourced! Justifications given by the supermarkets include the apparently longer shelf life of the foreign varieties, and 'customer expectations' which is presumably shoppers wishing to see the same six varieties week upon week with no seasonal variations!

It is still possible to find an old Sussex variety in a garden or field, for example in the garden of the Blue Idol Quaker Meeting House at Coolham an old apple tree, possibly over 100 years old, collapsed but remained rooted. Its identity was confirmed by Roger Brown as a Bossom variety, of which there was only one other tree in a garden in Graffham. Cuttings have now been taken and this variety will live on.

Community orchards are a great way of maintaining our old local apple varieties, and in addition they provide a focus for community activities in a healthy outdoor space - a sort of open-air village hall, a real community asset. So, wouldn't it be worth considering a community orchard for Horsham town?

