



MEETINGS HELD AT
THE RHS GARDEN,
HARLOW CARR,
CRAG LANE, HARROGATE, HG3 1QB
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NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

The 2005 season has got off to a good start, with a flurry of activity in the first quarter, beginning with the winter pruning. A hardy group of members met at Harlow Carr on a cold miserable day late in January, and it was decided, in spite of the weather, to prune the old apple trees in the South Field. There is some difference of opinion on the advisability of pruning in frosty weather; some say better not, others think it doesn't do any harm to the trees. Anyway we did it and wait to see the consequences (if any). Following this, in early February, Simon Clark, Margaret Drury and Diana and Brian Davis met at the Yorkshire Showground to prune the Heritage Collection of Yorkshire apples; all the trees are now growing well, even *Nancy Jackson*, who was slow to get going and gave cause for concern in her first couple of years.

Trees from last year's grafting were lifted in mid-February and distributed to members. The ground is now clear for planting more rootstocks and another strawberry bed. It has been decided that a fruit cage will be erected over one of the four beds in the fruit garden, to protect strawberries and grafted/budded rootstocks from birds, rabbits, squirrels, deer, etc.

The grafting workshop in early March was fully booked and "a good time was had by all" as they say. Even those who struggled a bit in the morning practice session did some very good grafting "for real" in the afternoon and we wait to hear from Charlie's students what their success rate was; please do let him know in due course.

The first members' meeting of the year came a little early, at the end of January instead of in February. It is often difficult to find a speaker to come just after Xmas/New Year and if they have to travel any distance there could be a weather problem. On this occasion the editor (me) bit on the bullet and stepped in to talk about fruit tree planting. Delving back into early books (as far as 1685) was fascinating and I gave a historical perspective, finishing with modern practice (which is still changing!). When (if) I find time, I will write it up as a leaflet for members.

It would be a good idea if, in the future, we keep this first meeting of the year "in House", getting members to give talks on subjects that interest them or on their own fruit-growing experiences. These could be anything from 10 minutes to an hour on topics/ experiences/ problems, followed by a general discussion. Any offers for next January, anyone?

Diana Davis

