

THE CULTIVATED APPLE & HISTORIC ORCHARD

The sweet cultivated apple is thought to have originated in Central Asia, in the wild apple forests of the Tien Han 'Mountains of Heaven' of Kazakhstan.



ANNIE ELIZABETH

The walled gardens (or paeridaeza) of the ancient Persia contained apple orchards, and apples later cultivated

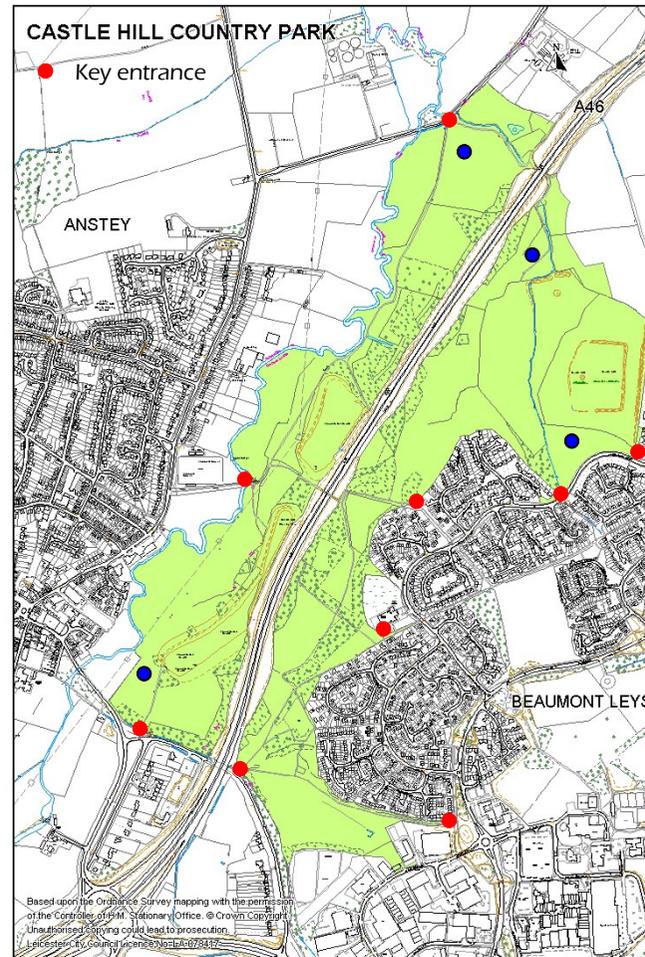
throughout the Greek and Roman empires.

It was the Romans that introduced the apple to Britain, most likely from Slovenia. Prior to this date the only native apple would have been the bitter crab apple.

The Persian word 'Paeridaeza' translates as 'Paradise' and it is not uncommon to find 'Paradise' linked to monastic orchards throughout Christian lands- including those orchard sites associated with the Knights Hospitaller.



Barnack Orange



● The Castle Hill Orchards

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CASTLE HILL COMMUNITY ORCHARD(S)

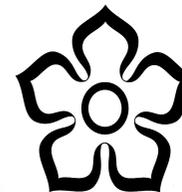


CASTLE HILL COUNTRY PARK

Park Services
Tel: 0116 454 1003
email: parks@leicester.gov.uk

Friends of Castle Hill Country Park
email: fochcp@aol.com

Castle Hill Archaeology Project
Email: robnandbren@ntlworld.com



Leicester
City Council

TEL: 0116 454 1003

THE MONASTIC ORCHARD

In 1338 the Knights Hospitaller were in possession of a 'preceptory, 220 acres of pasture, meadow and orchards' at Castle Hill. It is possible that this orchard dates back to c. 1250 when the Hospitallers acquired these lands from Simon de Montfort, the Earl of Leicester.

It is likely that this would have been a mixed fruit orchard containing apples, plums, cherries, damsons, medlars, quinces, vines, figs and nut trees. The fruits would have been grown in an intensive organised manner, providing the landowner with a regular income.

The Hospitallers relinquished their Beaumont Leys property in 1462.

Whether or not the 'Castle Hill' orchard continued after this date is unknown, but an old estate plan of



Knight Hospitaller

(Image Courtesy of Rothley Court Hotel)

Beaumont Hays dated 1686, suggests that an orchard in excess of 40 acres, and which occupied the neighboring earthwork site, possibly survived into the early 17th century.



THE NEW ORCHARD

In 2005 Park Services, in association with the Leicester branch of the Swadhyay Pariwar, sought to re-establish a

traditional orchard at 'Castle Hill'.

A few native gean or cherry trees, and a mix of traditional varieties of apple trees were planted out in naturalistic fashion. The apple varieties planted included; *Greensleeves*, *Worcester Permain* and *Egremont Russet*.

Since 2005 further varieties of apple trees have been planted by Park Services



and the local community. These include traditional Leicestershire varieties such as *Annie Elizabeth*, *Barnach Orange* and *Saint Ailred*. Other fruit trees planted include; *Quince*, *Medlar*, *Plum* and *Hazel*.

More Orchards

More recent years have seen the planting of additional community orchards:

This includes the 'Anstey Leys' (apple) orchard at Gorse Hill, the Leicestershire Heritage Apple Orchard at Thurcaston Gate (Anstey Lane), and the 'Nut Orchard' located beyond 'the glades'

While some of the trees been obtained locally, including the Leicestershire varieties,

many of the trees have been obtained from the



National Fruit Tree Centre at Brogdale, Kent. Besides reflecting on a landscape long past, these trees add considerably to amenity and biodiversity values.

CASTLE HILL COUNTRY PARK