



Orchard Report

Autumn 2018 from Ian



Hello & Welcome

At the time of writing we are nearly half way through the first pick of the Bramley. The end of spring brought us a hail storm which hit half the farm while the other half was unaffected and if that was not enough, on the 29th of May, in a four hour period about middle of the day, it went very dark like night and the heavens opened. We had 111mm of rain. Our orchards were flooded. The roads were like rivers. You could have gone white water rafting in some of our orchards and several local houses were flooded. All of this was followed by about 8 weeks of drought as recorded by our weather station. In spite of that we have got a fairly average, if a little on the small side, crop.

Our pheromone spoiler experiment is in its second year and has been very good this year again. We have not had to

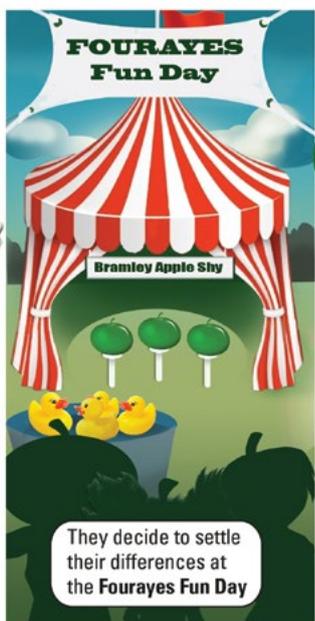
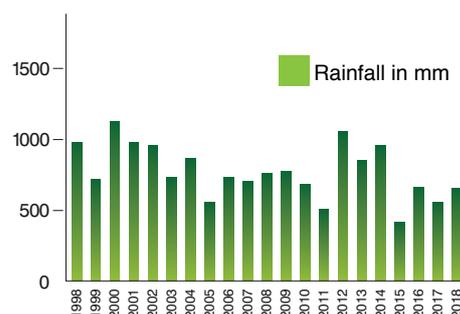
spray for codling or tortrix moths in these orchards.

We have had a lot of instances of fly tipping this spring and summer in our lanes, sometimes blocking them for up to three weeks before our council clears it up. We had one large load that we had to clean from our crossroads orchard at great expense.

Our rabbits on the farm have not increased as I thought they would so rabbit control has not been needed, although I am still controlling rabbits in a neighbouring farm. Buzzards are increasing every year! I see three every morning on my drive to work in the Land Rover and we see them, or hear them, all day at work. Kestrels and sparrow hawks seem to be on the increase as do our badgers and, just before writing this, I saw about 15 Goldfinches.

All the best from
Ian Witherden and all
at Fourayes Farm.

The Rainfall at Fourayes





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Helen Whately, MP for Faversham & Mid-Kent, dedicates Fourayes ‘giant shed’

Helen and Phil inspect this year's crop



Helen Whately, MP for Faversham & Mid Kent, and Fourayes MD Phil Acock, dedicating Fourayes DCA storage to John Acock – farmer, manufacturer and apple processing pioneer

On 7th September Helen Whately arrived at Fourayes, in beautiful Kentish sunshine, to dedicate our state-of-the-art Dynamically Controlled Atmosphere stores (which she referred to with irony as a ‘giant shed’) to the memory of my father John.

The DCA stores, capable of holding up to 1000 tonnes of Bramley apple in near-to-ideal conditions for up to 12 months, was built on the site of the old factory (known as the ‘peeling shed’) where Fourayes, under my dad’s leadership, peeled its very first Bramley apple back in 1963. The rest is, as they say, history and it’s a history that has led all the way to us becoming the UK’s largest

Bramley apple grower and processor. Dad was a farmer, a manufacturer and an apple processing pioneer, and it was with immense pride that all the family attended the dedication, along with staff, growers and supply partners, to hear Helen Whately speak of the importance of British Fruit – for both consumers and as a critical part of the UK economy. Phil.



Phil's Report



Lets *not* talk about Brexit!

This time, unlike almost everyone else it seems, I'm going to refrain from talking about Brexit; except to say it's great news that SAWS (the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme) has been reintroduced, at least for the short term, to attract the labour that's essential for harvesting many British crops. Our own seasonal pickers are largely from the local area (and have been for many years) but I know of many farms that simply couldn't survive without seasonal workers from countries such as Poland and Bulgaria.

2018 has been a very mixed year in many ways and not just because of Brexit. We had an appalling start to the growing season, weather-wise, followed by a summer of unprecedentedly high and sustained temperatures - although the harvest is progressing well as I write. Sadly, earlier in the year, Richard Hawkes passed away following a fall. Every business can benefit hugely from listening to the challenges raised from

an external perspective and Richard used to do just that, in such a disarming way, when we regularly met. He was also a great friend and a person I will very much miss.

My 'hot topic' this time though is the way in which invoice payment terms seem to be growing Pinocchio-nose-like, longer and longer. Some companies claim it's as a result of uncertainty brought about by Brexit but I'm really not convinced.

In 2017 the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy launched a 'Prompt Payment Code' setting out how Central Government Departments would 'lead by example', paying 80% of undisputed invoices within 5 days and the remainder within 30. That got me thinking: how incredible would it be if all businesses operated in that way? Not just incredible but business and economy transforming.

In the world of growing and processing we already offer probably the lengthiest 'terms' imaginable. It begins when we invest hundreds of thousands of pounds to plant or replace an orchard in the knowledge that we're unlikely to see anything like a commercial crop for 5-6 years. As our own apples are harvested there's the cost of bringing

the crop in and that follows all of the input costs for maintaining great quality orchards throughout the year. Even when we purchase produce from the farms around us, here in the 'Garden of England', those farmers are paid immediately for their crops. Then we carry the cost of storing the fruit for anything up to 12 months. Finally, we receive an order and invest in the labour and manufacturing costs to produce the finished goods. Even then the investment isn't over - there's still the cost of delivery to our customers. 30 day payment terms from date of invoice goes some way towards mitigating the sustained investment but beyond that it becomes increasingly difficult to justify being in business. It's hardly surprising that our industry fails to attract the levels of venture capital enjoyed by many other sectors. Still, despite that, we love the work we do and we love being a part of the fantastic products that fill the shelves of British supermarkets, coffee shops and many other places. After all, we're not just growers and processors, we're Fruiticians!

Phil. (Managing Director of Fourayes, Vice Chairman of English Apples & Pears, Fruitician and Mad Scientist).

Ellie: surprisingly famous for an unsung hero!

We cannot believe that Ellie, from our Fourayes Food Development Team, is in Fruit Focus for the third time running! On this occasion it's because Ellie is a winner of Kent's 'Unsung Heroes' awards and a very worthy winner at that. Ellie rarely emerges from the Development Kitchen (she loves it so much) but what does emerge are the most amazing new products for our customers. So, for the third time running – well done Ellie!

Ellie at the Awards ceremony



The Pick of the Crops

Red Fruits: where have all the seasons gone

This season red fruits were plentiful and good quality. The weather was good and with farmers now planting varieties to pick over 'several months' the small window of opportunity that used to exist to buy fresh strawberry or raspberry has gone.

As you might imagine this has changed the dynamics of the market as the need to buy a twelve month requirement during a one month season is a thing of the past.

So can you sit back, relax and buy when you need product? - NO.

Firstly there are the small stream fruits that still have a relatively short season – Rhubarb, Redcurrant, Blackcurrant, Cherry. These you should cover during harvest. Secondly the fruits that no longer seem to have a season – Strawberry, Raspberry and Blueberry in particular – have to be watched over a longer period and over a wide range of origins. To get the best deals you need to watch and weigh up when it's the right time to buy.



Fourayes excels in this area as we are 'in touch' with the market being located in the Garden of England where Strawberry and Raspberry are major items.

In conclusion - markets are changing. With the advance of growing techniques and new varieties the need for professional 'fruiticians' is increasing!

Fun at Fourayes

On July 13th, right in the middle of this year's glorious summer, was the Fourayes Fun Day – a fantastic opportunity for everyone from across the various departments to spend time together. Highlight of the day was the 'stocks' – brought in for staff to 'engage' with the management team. And they certainly did just that, with unbounded enthusiasm. Never before have we seen such long queues or such effort put into the throwing of wet sponges. And all the evidence suggests that not everyone had just one go!



Phil takes a hit!



Carl looks for a stock reply!