

LETTER FROM THE TRUST CHAIRMAN – 6th July 2007

Dear

Much water has flowed under the bridge since I last wrote to you in February.

Activities at Brogdale

As our lease on the accommodation at Brogdale finished at the end of March, we moved our commercial activities off site. We have set up a new office very nearby, at the Abbey School. The move was another BT triumph of confusion, but we eventually made it. We have established a new garden centre at Macknade Natural Garden Centre, Selling Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8XF, located about a quarter of a mile down the road on the A2. We are pleased to report that sales of National Fruit Collection trees are doing well.

The restaurant at Brogdale has now been taken over by Tom la Dell, and we understand it offers excellent fare. The shop and garden centre are still being sorted out (Tom declined to take over the shop).

We, of course, continue to maintain the Collections at Brogdale Farm and run guided tours. We will continue to sell fruit from the National Fruit Collections to our valued customers and make available apple displays to our regular events organisers holding apple day events. Sadly, we no longer have access to the fruit trees on the balance of the farm.

Other Activities

The Trust have been exhibiting this month at Hampton Court Show in the NCCPG Plant Heritage Marquee, where we received a Silver Award for our stand. We are grateful to all of those Friends who are helping at this event.

I am glad to report that a British Collection of Brogdale trees has been planted at Jeskyns Farm, Shorne Wood Country Park in Kent as part of the Forestry Commission's Thames Gateway initiative. On the weekend of 13th and 14th October the Trust will be showing an Apple Display at Shorne Wood Country Park, Brewers Road, Shorne, Kent DA12 3HX just off of the M2 at the Shorne Country Park Visitor Centre. Our main objective is to

recruit some local volunteers, who we will be training up as local volunteer Orchard Officers, with whom we will be taking the project further as the trees become established.

The Defra Bid

We have worked hard to determine the right response to the Defra call for competitive tenders for maintaining the Collections going forward from April 2008.

We examined all the options carefully – from continuing at Brogdale without facilities to moving, over a number of years, to a new nearby site.

We clearly heard the commitment to the Brogdale site of Joan Morgan and the group of Friends who requested and attended the EGM in April. We laid out at the meeting how we were thinking about the options at that time, but – in a bad-tempered meeting - the group was clearly set in its view. They voted to amend the Friends constitution to (only) support the Trust whilst it maintains the Collections at Brogdale. We understand they have now formed a breakaway group, campaigning for the Brogdale site.

We are saddened by this stance, but acknowledge the group's right to take it. It seems to create division when we should all be putting the future of the Collections first. And it pre-empt's Defra's decision.

We ultimately made our choice and submitted our bid to Defra on 14 May. Defra then advised us and all other bidders to keep the details of our bid confidential and refrain from lobbying for it until their assessment was complete. We wish to respect this request from Government, so we are still not yet able to explain where we finally ended up. I apologise, for I know you would like to hear more.

Defra say that they hope to announce their decision in early autumn. So all will be revealed then. Clearly, we hope we will win the new contract and look forward to continuing to maintain the Collections into the future. But whatever Defra decide, we will respect their decision. As we have said before, we have been motivated only by the welfare of the Collections and their use for the public good – whatever some gossip might say.

As required by the constitution, the Trust will consider whether or not to adopt the EGM motion in September/October of this year. Also by then we

may know Defra's decision concerning the future maintenance and curation of the Collections.

Going forward

Through until next spring, we will continue as usual, organising tours, events, etc. More details will be given in your new newsletter. We hope you will continue to come and enjoy the Collections at Brogdale.

Beyond then will clearly depend on Defra's decision. We will communicate again in the autumn when we hear from them.

With Best Wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. J. Brady". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

C J Brady
Chairman, Brogdale Horticultural Trust