

THE ORCHARD AT ORCHARD CLOSE, OFF SLADE ROAD, PORTISHEAD

On Tuesday afternoon, 15th March 2011, Portishead in Bloom together with residents at the Slade Road Supported Housing planted five apple trees on the site of an old orchard. Chris Button, Dave Ridout, John Tovey and Sandy Tebbutt from Portishead joined Yvonne and Bernie to plant the trees, watched by residents from the surrounding bungalows. The trees were all old Somerset varieties bought from Thornhayes Nursery near Honiton, Devon. The names of the trees were "Tom Putt", a sharp apple which was an old popular west country cooking and cider apple and also a pleasant dessert fruit; "Golden Knob" an 18th century small, sweet and nutty dessert apple with a fruity aromatic taste from Somerset; "Bramley's Seedling", the most popular commercial cooking apple discovered in Southwell, Nottinghamshire c.1810 which was especially asked for by the residents; "Beauty of Bath" which was discovered in Bath before 1864 which is a heavy cropping early sweet dessert apple; and "Old Somerset Russet" which was probably discovered in Somerset in the 19th century and is a late dessert apple with a hint of pineapple.

The afternoon was a pleasant spring one and the year-old apple trees were quickly planted and watered in. Residents agreed to keep the circle of ground around the trees weed free to give them a good chance.

Peter Price, one of the residents there, remembers Hawkings' orchard across Slade Road where a medlar tree stood at the entrance. At some point, the orchard was grubbed out to make way for a playing field for nearby Slade Road School children. On the adjoining site of Redland Housing, was the old nursery ground that belonged to Fowlers' the greengrocers in the High Street where vegetables were grown for sale in the shop.

Portishead in Bloom and the residents hope that there will be further opportunities to plant more orchard trees in the coming years.