



Fruitful endeavour

In 1860 perhaps the most important and influential tome ever written on British fruit was published. **Brent Elliott** examines its genesis, author and revision through five editions. Images from the RHS Lindley Library

THIS YEAR IS THE 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Fruit Manual*, a guide to the fruit grown in Victorian Britain. It is so comprehensive and useful that it remained the standard text for more than a century, and is still consulted. The fifth edition, published in 1884, is now out of date because of all the cultivars that have been introduced since, but no more recent book has matched *The Fruit Manual* for breadth, scope or depth. Although some of the selections described have been lost from cultivation, many are still widely grown.

Remarkably, the five editions of the book were the work of one man. Robert Hogg combined the knowledge of a fruit nurseryman with the writing and editing of a skilled publisher, and made a long and distinguished contribution to the work of the Royal Horticultural Society. A special display illustrating Hogg's legacy, including examples of many of the fruit cultivars he described that are still grown at RHS Garden Wisley (see pp696–697), will be staged at the Autumn Harvest Show at Vincent Square this month.

Early stages

The first edition of *The Fruit Manual*, published in the autumn of 1860, was 280 pages long. It was not the first systematic list of fruit – Robert Thompson's *Catalogue of the Horticultural*

Society's Collection of fruit was first published in 1826 – but it covered almost all the range of hardy fruits (187 cultivars of apple, 116 of plums, 282 of pears, 92 of cherries, and many others). All were described, but there were no illustrations. Many books on apples (the best-documented British fruit) already existed including Hogg's own *British Pomology* in 1851, but his *Manual* covers a panoply: almonds, apricots, berberries, cherries, chestnuts, cranberries, figs, currants, gooseberries, grapes, medlars, mulberries, nectarines, nuts and filberts, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, quinces, raspberries, strawberries and walnuts.

The *Manual* was revised twice in its first decade, with more cultivars added in the second (1862) and third (1866) editions. One of its few rivals was *Scott's Orchardist*, the second edition of which appeared in 1873. This was the work of John Scott, founder of the Merriott Nurseries in Somerset, which closed recently. On inspection, Hogg found much of it was copied from the *Manual* verbatim, so he sued Scott for plagiarism, obtaining an injunction against the sale of any more copies.

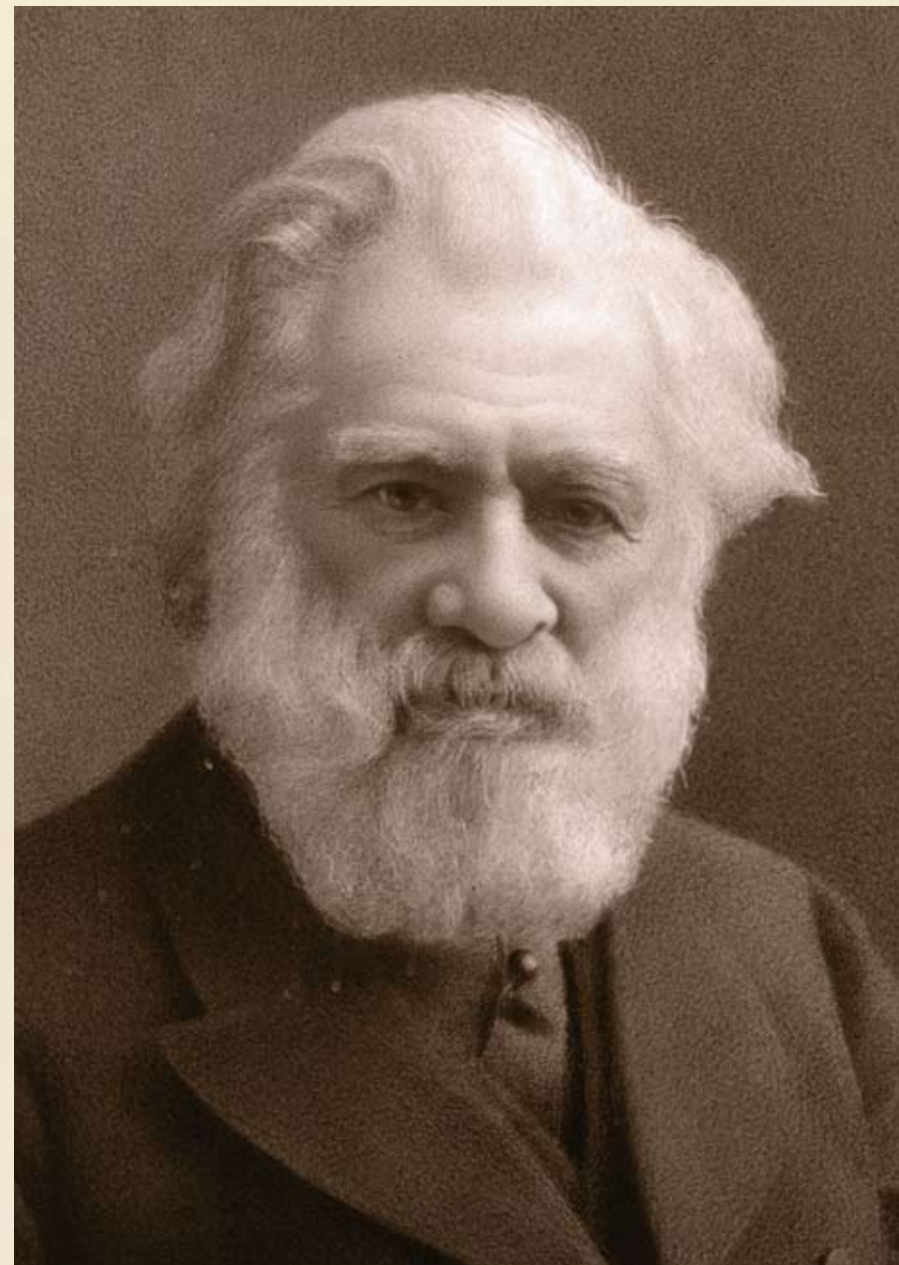
There were no further editions of *Scott's Orchardist*. The trial reports say: 'the case was, on the defendant's own statements, the clearest possible case of one person copying from the works of another that could be conceived'.

The legal case did not prevent Hogg working, and the fourth edition of *The Fruit Manual* appeared in 1875. It was not just larger than its predecessors, at 600 pages, but different in character: Hogg had done a great deal of historical research on many of the cultivars. The *Gardeners' Chronicle* remarked that 'the additions are so extensive as almost to constitute a new book rather than a new edition', and that the historical detail raised 'The *Fruit Manual* from the level of a catalogue to that of an encyclopedia'. By the fifth and last edition, the book was 759 pages, with 718 apples against 184 in the first edition.

Although praised for its comprehensiveness, there was criticism of the *Manual's* lack of an apple classification system. Having no key to enable readers to identify apples was seen as a deficiency, especially when many of the other fruits covered did have clear and usable classifications. In 1864 Hogg offered a system for apple classification based on floral anatomy, yet in the final edition of the *Manual* this had 192 groups of apples and took 29 pages to explain.

Hogg's later years and legacy

Increasingly involved in what was (from 1861) the Royal Horticultural Society, Hogg was instrumental in 1875 in bringing about the resignation of then President, Lord Bury, who



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ROBERT HOGG

Robert Hogg was born at Duns in the Scottish Borders, in 1818. His father was a supplier of forest trees and agricultural seeds in Coldstream. Robert was educated at private school in Duns, then at Edinburgh University. In 1836, he found employment with the fruit nursery of John Ronalds in London.

He travelled and studied on the Continent, was employed at another nursery until 1849, but from then worked as an editor. In the early 1850s, he began an association with George William Johnson, who in 1848 had founded the weekly magazine *The Cottage Gardener*. In 1855 Hogg joined Johnson as joint

editor and proprietor, in 1861 changing its name to *The Journal of Horticulture* and becoming sole owner in 1879.

In 1854, Hogg helped found the British Pomological Society with Joseph Paxton, who became its President. It seems to have been founded to counter a perceived lack of attention to fruit by the Horticultural Society. It worked: the Society set up a Fruit Committee in 1858 (now the Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee), effectively absorbing the Pomological Society (wound up in 1860). Hogg spent the rest of his life on the Fruit Committee, for several years as its Secretary, and from 1886 to 1888 was its Chairman.

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he considered was moving the Society away from its founding principles. After this a new RHS Council was formed, and Hogg was appointed the Society's Secretary, a post he retained until his resignation (due to pressure of other work) in 1884. However, he remained a member of Council until 1889.

Hogg had been editor of *The Journal of Horticulture* since the mid-1850s, but he gradually handed over the editorial side to his son. He died in 1897, and was buried in Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey. He is remembered by the RHS in the Hogg Memorial Medal (right). Instituted in 1898, the Medal is still awarded at the Society's shows for exhibits of fruit.



Since Hogg, fruit authors have tended to steer clear of his encyclopedic approach. Instead they have concentrated on the cultivars thought the best or most widely grown, covering fewer selections in greater depth, or they focus on fewer fruit types. Commercial importance, present or in the recent past, has become a chief concern of books on fruit. And the number of cultivars introduced in the 126 years since the last edition of *The Fruit Manual* means we are unlikely to see its like again. ■

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● See pp696–697 for Hogg fruit cultivars growing today at RHS Garden Wisley ►

i *The Fruit Manual* can be viewed by appointment at the Lindley Library, London.
● A limited numbered facsimile edition (November 2002) published by Langford Press, £40, 800pp, ISBN 9781904078036, is available from RHS Mail Order: 0845 260 4505



sour cherry 'Morello'

apple 'Ribston Pippin'



apple 'Cox's Orange Pippin'

grape 'Black Hamburg'



whitecurrant 'White Dutch'



pear 'Beurré Superfin'

pear 'Hacon's Incomparable'

pear 'Zéphirin Grégoire'

green gages

HOGG TODAY

Some of the cultivars described in the first edition of *The Fruit Manual* in 1860 are now obscure or lost, while some already old or well known were notable for their absence. Fruit expert Jim Arbury, Horticultural Specialist at RHS Garden Wisley, describes some of the fruit mentioned in the book that are still grown there.

● The *Manual* was not illustrated: pictures here are from *The Herefordshire Pomona* and drawings by William Hooker, the Society's principal artist in the early 1800s.

APPLES

Many of our best-known apples were bred or discovered in the 19th century. Some fairly new in 1860 included: 'Cox's Orange Pippin', c1825 which, although recent, Hogg described as an excellent dessert apple (now the most popular in Britain); 'Adams's Pearmain', 1820s, still a fine late dessert; and 'Alfriston', late 18th century, a good cooker.

Apples that had already stood the test of time by 1860 included: 'Harvey' (syn. 'Dr Harvey'), 1629, a good cooker; 'Ribston Pippin' AGM, 1707, a widely-grown parent of

'Cox's Orange Pippin', which Hogg described as 'the king of English dessert apples'; and 'Calville Blanc d'Hiver' (syn. 'Calville Winter White'), 1598.

Absent from the first edition was 'Bramley's Seedling' AGM, which today has more than 90 percent of the UK cooking apple acreage – it was raised in 1809, but not available until the 1870s. Ancient apples 'Cornish Aromatic' and cooker 'Catshead' (probably not listed by major nurseries in Hogg's day) are actually more commonly available today.

GRAPES

Grapes were primarily grown in glasshouses in Hogg's time. The *Manual* included: *Vitis vinifera* 'Black Hamburg' (now 'Schiava Grossa'), an ancient cultivar but still one of the best glasshouse grapes for flavour; 'Alicante'; and 'Muscat of Alexandria'.

CHERRIES

Of many sweet cherries in the *Manual*, few are still grown (some are in the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale, Kent), unlike still-popular sour cherry 'Morello' AGM.

SOFT FRUIT AND PLUMS

No strawberries and only one raspberry ('Yellow Antwerp') survive from Hogg. A few currants do: he preferred whitecurrant 'White Dutch' to redcurrants, as it is sweeter.

Already old in 1860, green-gage is now classed as *Prunus domestica* Reine-Claude Group. Hogg described it as 'one of the richest of all plums'. 'Victoria' AGM, 1840, is inferior in flavour but crops well and is now the most popular UK plum by far.

PEARS

Included in 1860 were quite recently introduced pears: 'Beurré Superfin' AGM, 1844, described by Hogg as a fine dessert pear; and 'Williams Bon Chrétien' AGM, bred in 1770 but introduced in the early 19th century. It is now the world's most-widely grown commercial pear (often known by the synonym 'Bartlett' in the USA).

Cultivars from 1860 still grown at Wisley but rare elsewhere include 'Hacon's Incomparable', which Hogg said was 'melting with a sugary, vinous, highly

perfumed flavour'; and 'Zéphirin Grégoire', which he thought delicious but lacking in vigour.

Now-popular pears omitted from the *Manual* include: 'Doyenné du Comice' AGM, introduced 1858, one of the best-flavoured pears; and 'Louise Bonne of Jersey' AGM, c1788, still a good, reliable garden cultivar. Britain's most widely-planted pear (probably because of its reliability in the changeable UK climate compared with more sun-loving selections), 'Conference' AGM, was not named until 1894.

@ Read more about *The Fruit Manual* in an RHS Occasional Paper by Brent Elliott at: www.rhs.org.uk/occasionalpapers

i The Autumn Harvest Show at Vincent Square, Westminster, 5–6 October has a special display on Hogg and fruit from the first edition of the *Manual*.

* All four RHS gardens hold A Taste of Autumn events (see p712): Apple Day at Rosemoor, 10 Oct; A Taste of Autumn, Wisley, 21–24 Oct; A Taste of Autumn, Hyde Hall and Harlow Carr, 23–24 Oct ● The Wisley fruit collection can be visited during garden opening hours.