



Orchards East - Historical Research Volunteer

Introduction

Orchards East is an exciting environmental and cultural project covering six counties in the East of England - Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery fund and based in the School of History at the University of East Anglia (UEA), it is devoted to the past, present and future of orchards in eastern England, and will last for three years.

The project extends initiatives already developed by Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group (STOG) and other partners, including the East of England Apples and Orchards Project (EEAOP).

A collaborative project working with existing county orchard groups, other interested groups and orchard owners, Orchards East hopes to stimulate interest and engage a wide range of new volunteers in all things orchard!

Role Description

Volunteer Historical Researchers will help Orchards East discover more about the history of local orchards; when they were planted, how they were managed and what their fruit or nuts were used for.

The role can involve all or some of the following different aspects of research;

- Talking to local people to see what they can recall about the history of an orchard and making notes of the findings.
- Spending time online to see if old pictures or information are available about a local orchard.
- Spending time online to look for references to orchards in County Histories or other relevant reference books.
- Visiting a local library to research newspaper stories or articles about local orchards.
- Visiting a local Records Office to research account books, letters, plans or planting lists relating to local orchards.

Key tasks

These could include finding out:

- Who an orchard belonged to in the past – this might come from looking at plans and maps online or held in the local Records Office such as the Tithe maps or enclosure plans.
- What trees were planted in an orchard – looking for planting plans, nursery records, bills or accounts that list trees that were bought.
- How the orchard was managed and maintained and how this changed over time – this might come from talking to local people, or looking for records in the local archive.
- What the fruit was used for; was it sold locally? made into cider? or sent further afield? – this might come from talking to local people, looking at newspaper stories and articles, or finding letters or account books in the local archive.

For all these tasks Orchards East will offer training in finding, interpreting and analysing source materials.

This role will suit people who..... enjoy variety, like to understand the history of a place, are happy to work on their own or with one or two other people and are interested in contributing to a bigger piece of historical research.

What's in it for you?

- Chance to learn more about undertaking historical research from archives, in libraries and from online resources.
- Opportunity to be part of a friendly, supported team.
- Satisfaction of uncovering interesting stories and facts about local orchards.
- Chance to get to know more about your local area and its past.

Volunteer requirements

- An interest in local history is a good starting point.
- Confidence in using a computer for basic online searches.
- Attention to detail.
- Able to write up research notes (but this does not involve extensive writing!)

Hours when the volunteering would take place

As and when the volunteer has free time, although visiting a local Records Office is most likely to take place from Mon – Friday during normal working hours. Some Records Offices open late in the evening or on a Saturday.

The commitment could be an hour or so a week for a couple of weeks or depending on how much research the volunteer wishes to undertake could cover the period of the Orchards East project, which runs until February 2020.

For more information email: info@orchardseast.org.uk or rachel.savage@uea.ac.uk