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## *The Squadron Apple*

Raised by Doug Campion and planted at Easton Walled Gardens, Lincolnshire.



In 2002, right at the beginning of the restoration of Easton Walled Gardens the phone rang. It was Doug Campion, a neighbour from Colsterworth and a keen amateur tree grower asking if I would like any trees. Of course, I said Yes. Despite being in his 90s, he helped me plant an oak and a walnut. Then, one day, Doug arrived with a small apple tree he had grown from a pip. We planted it together and waited.

The first fruits soon came and much to our surprise they were good. Large, firm, yellow-green apples festooned the tree in October and November. It looked like this new variety was a keeper. Each year, the tree continued to grow and produce fine, healthy crops.

What should we call it? Doug was proud to have been a RAF engineer and my grandfather had been in 12 Squadron during WW2 and flown Lancasters and Wellingtons from sites across Lincolnshire. After two years of flying missions, his flight navigator recorded in his log book: 'Pilots' 21st birthday.' He met my grandmother while she was serving in the WAAF and they were married for over 50 years.

Meanwhile in Lincoln, Tony Worth was coordinating an international drive to commemorate those in Bomber Command who had fallen. At an inaugural fundraising event surrounded by a Lancaster, veterans and young airmen and women, it seemed obvious to me that we should honour those who had risked and given so much. After some discussion, we called it 'The Squadron Apple.'

But we only had one tree. Apple varieties have to be cloned to keep them true which means taking a small piece of wood ('the scion') from the parent tree and grafting it on to a new rootstock. The first year produced rather scrappy results (none of the gardening team at Easton had ever tried to propagate trees like this before) but in 2018 we made some good clean unions and began to keep a small stock of these trees for RAF commemorations. The newly finished International Bomber Command Centre found out about our offer and on 30 January 2020 we delivered three trees to site manager, Roger Williams. The trees will be planted in the grounds in the next few weeks. Eventually they hope to make crumbles for visitors to the restaurant using their own apples.

**Ursula Cholmeley. Easton Walled Gardens.**

