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Apple source: Original Bramley tree celebrates its 200th birthday

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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It is Britain's most famous cooking apple and the UK market for it alone is today worth £50million. However, the Bramley's beginnings were rather more humble.

It was first grown from a pip planted in the 19th century and the original apple tree, which still stands in the corner of a Nottinghamshire garden, this year celebrates its 200th birthday.

The tree is looked after by Nancy Harrison, who lives in the cottage in whose garden it stands. It was Nancy who helped to restore it to its former glory after acquiring it 50 years ago.



Culinary history: Nancy Harrison stands next to the original Bramley apple tree in her garden. The fruit celebrates its 200th birthday in September



The Bramley is Britain's most famous cooking apple

'I have lived in this cottage all my life,' the 88-year-old said. 'In my childhood it was just a grotty little knarled old tree in the garden next door.'

'Then, when the house lay derelict I acquired the cottage 50 years ago for £500 from Mr Bramley, who had owned the property since 1846.'

'The tree itself was in a very bad condition, but I was fortunate that a fruit farmer called Claude Coates came along and treated it, fed it and watered it.'

'He looked after it for more than 20 years and got it on its feet and got it in the wonderful condition it is in today.'

The Bramley apple tree grew from a chance seedling planted by a young girl, Mary Ann Brailsford, in 1809 - the year Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln were born.

At that time George III was on the throne, and Europe was in the throes of the Napoleonic wars.

Playing in the kitchen of the cottage where her family lived, Mary Ann planted some pips from the apples her mother was preparing in a flowerpot.

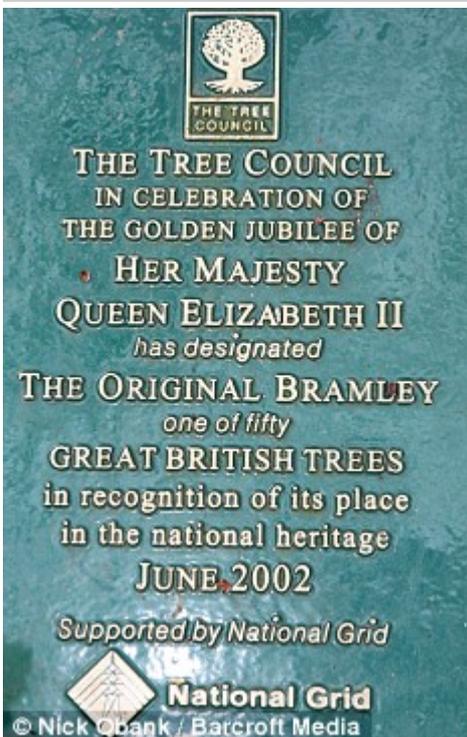
After a seed germinated and the plant grew, it was replanted in the garden where it continued to grow.

But, it was not until after the Brailsford family had left Church Cottage, and Matthew Bramley moved in, that it produced the first fruit.



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The original Bramley tree grew after a girl Mary Ann Brailsford, planted a stray apple pip in 1909



A plaque honours the tree

The Bramley apple was introduced commercially by local nurseryman Henry Merryweather in around 1865 and is now the most important cooking apple in Britain.

Still delivering generous crops every August and September, Mrs Harrison receives scores of visitors each summer, eager to taste the famous apple.

'I absolutely love it here, no-one can understand why, but I love the house and the tree,' she said.

'Everybody who comes to see the tree is very impressed by it. It has great history and it really is lovely.

'It has wonderful crops of fruit each year. We eat them, we cook them, we stew them and fry them.

'Everybody who comes along takes an apple and says how delicious they are.'

In the 200 years since that first chance seedling, the Bramley apple has remained unchanged and every Bramley grown today is a direct descendant from this tree.

Adrian Barlow, of The Bramley Campaign, is thrilled at the fruit's revival.

'It is quite fitting that there should be such a resurgence of interest in the Bramley as we approach its bicentenary year,' he says.

'It has survived 200 years because of its unrivalled cooking qualities that no other commercially grown apple can match.

'It is truly in a class of its own and is a great British institution that we should treasure.'

The Bramley is almost exclusively a British variety, though it is also grown by a few farms in the US and Canada.

Usually eaten cooked, it is considered too sour by most to eat raw.

It is used in countless traditional British dishes, from crumbles to pies as well as cider and chutneys.

Today there are 500 growers of the Bramley generating an industry worth more than £50 million per year with sales soaring by almost 20 per cent in the last year.

Around 25,000 tonnes of fresh Bramley apples are sold each year, while a further 58,000 tonnes are used commercially.



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Institution: A blue plaque outside Mrs Harrison's cottage explains the history of her 200-year-old apple tree. The Bramley industry is today worth £50million

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