

JOANNA CROSBY



Dr Joanna Crosby, one of the founding members of Trumpington Community Orchard, died peacefully in January 2026, after becoming ill last summer. She is most remembered for her love and expertise in all things apples. ..

Joanna said that her interest in apples and orchards began when she was a girl growing up among the orchards in Kent. Living in Cambridge in 2007, she became one of the founding members of the Trumpington Community Orchard Project. Later, she became a Director of the East of England Apples and Orchards Project (EEAOP), which works to identify, protect and restore heritage apple varieties

Joanna loved sharing her knowledge with others. Each autumn, she could be found at Apple Days, identifying local garden apples brought in by members of the public, and in the winter she often led wassailing events, the ancient tradition of blessing the trees.

Her expertise extended beyond these hands-on skills. Having earned a first degree in history from Cardiff University at the usual age, she applied those skills to researching apples and orchards some decades later. Her focus was on their social and cultural history in the U.K. She explored the presentation of the apple and the orchard in art and wider culture, and the relationship between representations of the apple and gender. She also researched the horticultural history of the apple and how it was grown, setting the science of fruit growing into its cultural context.

This culminated in the award of a PhD for *The Social and cultural value of the apple and the orchard in Victorian England* from the University of Essex in 2021. This was followed in 2024 by the publication of *Apples and Orchards since the Eighteenth Century: Material Innovation and Cultural Tradition* (Bloomsbury). She spoke at seminars and conferences including at the Leeds Food Symposium, the Oxford Food Symposium, and the University of Cambridge Gender and History Workshop, and at local history and garden society meetings.

In 2024, she combined two of her interests – everything Japanese and apples – with a three-month research trip to the far corners of Japan, to explore the nation's apple culture and history. She visited temples, apple auctions, research institutes, and working farms, all accompanied by her trusty Totoro, the Studio Ghibli mascot, who often appeared in her photos. While she sadly did not complete her book, her article *The apple orchards of England – and Japan* which was published in *Rural History Today* (Issue 49, Summer 25) provides a taster.

Joanna was warm, kind, and gentle, and had many other interests including gardening, painting, photography, travel, reading (and writing) novels, making and looking at art, tai chi, and eating cake. She lived with her mother Liz, and is also survived by her father Roger.