

‘Rymer’ – evidence presented to the RLC Panel

University of Reading, 18th November, 2025

Summary

In the British Isles, the variety ‘Rymer’ had been known in the fruit literature from 1822 onwards and was stated to have been named after a gentleman called Rymer, of Thirsk in Yorkshire, who raised it. However, living trees continued to escape detection and it was thought probable that it was a lost variety.

Some 20-30 years ago fruit from two old trees from the Welsh Marches were identified by Mike Porter as ‘Rymer’, based upon its rather unusual morphological features. Grafts were taken and the young trees conserved by the Marcher Apple Network (MAN). Years later, in 2016, a sample, A477, was DNA fingerprinted by East Malling Research and found unmatched by any accession in the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale. In 2017 the second conserved tree was fingerprinted; its sample A1100 matched A477.

More samples from scattered sites emerged as a result of DNA testing and by 2023 a total of six exactly matching U.K. trees had been found. By then, the hunt for evidence of the name was underway.

However, in New South Wales, Australia, some catalogues from 1843 onwards indicated that ‘Rymer’ had been taken there, grown and replanted through the years and trees of that name are still known at a Farm near Braidwood in New South Wales (NSW). Direct evidence of the naming of these trees and fruit has been provided, both of living memory and newsprint. Crucially (dried) leaves that were sent in 2025 to the UK and DNA-tested at IBERS at University of Aberystwyth match the UK sample trees.

It is also now known that ‘Rymer’ was introduced to Kashmir in India, likely by British Officers, as part of the efforts to enhance crop production. It was named ‘Maharaji’ locally which most commonly refers to a royal title like "great king" or "great ruler" and is a respectful title for a guru, saint, or spiritual teacher. In 1979, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) received an accession of ‘Maharaji’ scionwood from Srinagar, Kashmir. Subsequent DNA testing and a recent analysis found it too matches the ‘Rymer’ in Australia, England and Wales. It has been allocated a MUNQ code of 7153 by INRAE and has no other matches in European records.

In an extraordinary new development, DNA testing using SNPs analysis shows unequivocally that ‘Rymer’ paired with Northern Greening are the parents of the well-regarded varieties ‘Annie Elizabeth’ and ‘Newton Wonder’.

Moreover, both ‘Rymer’ and ‘Northern Greening’ are either a parent or grandparent(s) of the much-loved ‘Bramley’s Seedling’.

Astonishing!

Stephen Ainsleigh Rice
Marcher Apple Network

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