

A FARMER'S TALE APTED'S ORCHARDS

Written by Ann Stanley

Apteds (Leslie Apted and Sons)

Visitors to the Eltham Farmers Market will be familiar with Danielle Apted as every Sunday morning, behind the counter of her family's stall near the temporary COVID-19 exit of the market, she greets customers, surrounded with brown paper bags of apples and pears.

The Apteds have been orchardists in the Yarra Valley for over one hundred years. The orchards at their two properties at Arthur's Creek and King Lake West, north east of Melbourne, grow apples, pears and quinces. They also graze Angus cattle and sell some of their fruit for juice, for which there is huge demand.

In addition, they grade apples for other farmers, checking for consistency in shape and size.

The family's main enterprise is growing fruit for the Melbourne wholesale market at Epping but selling at the Eltham Farmer's Market, while of much smaller scale, is more profitable. There are much lower overhead costs and there is no need for the graded fruit that supermarkets and high street fruit shops demand.



NEW SEASON GALAS (FEBRUARY)

Ann took her research seriously

THE ELTHAM FARMERS' MARKET

The Eltham Farmer's Market allows the Apted family to give back to the local community, to meet their customers and tell the story of their produce. In turn, shoppers at the market can be assured that they are buying fruit that is fresh and has not travelled far to reach them.

Leslie Apted and Sons Ltd. makes a significant contribution to the economy in the north of Nillumbik, employing people for 12 months of the year, with up to 60 workers engaged at the peak of the season. A large truck travels five nights a week between April and November to the wholesale market in Melbourne.

A hundred years of experience has resulted in intricate knowledge of the ideal growing conditions for the fruit. Constant observation and tweaking the mixture of fertilisers according to the trees' needs is the domain of Roger Apted and it is always a challenge. Recently they have also had to deal with raids by the local deer and are currently monitoring the progressive movement of Queensland fruit fly into the region.

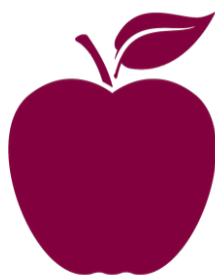
Leslie Apted, whose name is still inscribed on the wooden fruit crates, was the son of George Apted. George emigrated to Australia from England over a century ago.



DID YOU KNOW?

Five members of the family are involved in the day to day running of the business. Leslie's grandson Peter in the role of general manager, Roger - orchard manager, Bronwyn - administration, Eric - cool stores and Ben (4th generation Apted) - packing shed and logistics.

- Apted apples are not waxed. Apparently, supermarkets are no longer demanding this.
- Apples grow better on the side of a hill.
- Apple trees need to 'struggle a bit', so that they set fruit.
- Apples this year will be relatively scarce.
- Espaliered trees allow the tree to stay spindly and all the energy to go into fruit
- Each tree on the Apted orchard is given 8 litres an hour on alternate days through the 24-hour period!



**Eltham
Farmers
Market**

