



# Did you Know

## Did the Apple Fall !



If you ever go to Cambridge, UK, and find yourself being punted on the river Cam, along the backs of the colleges, it's possible that at some point you will be shown a tree by your guide, it doesn't matter which but helps if it is near Trinity College, and told that it is the very tree from which an apple fell on Isaac Newton and inspired him to invent gravity.

Now anyone with half an ounce of sense will realise that this is a fib, meant to please tourists. Ah, but now, if you want to read the real story of what happened, and whether an apple fell on Sir Isaac's bonce, and where, you can thanks to the venerable Royal Society.

In this its 350th year, the Royal Society has revealed a number of its old manuscripts to the public in digital form, with their *Turning the Pages* project.

Among these manuscripts is William Stukeley's 1752 manuscript, *Life of Newton*. Stukeley was an archaeologist, freemason, learned gentleman and Newton's biographer.

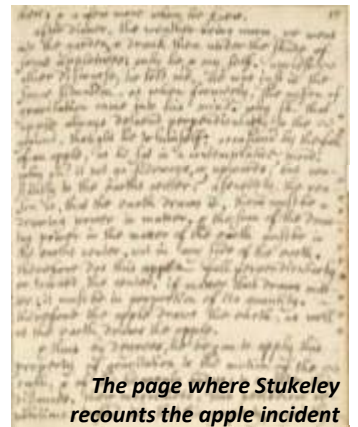
*The way Stukeley tells it is as follows:*

After dinner, the weather being warm, we went into the garden and drank tea under the shade of some apple trees; only he and myself. Amidst other discourse, he told me, he was just in the same situation, as when formerly, the notion of gravitation came into his mind. Why should that apple always descend perpendicularly to the ground, thought he to himself; occasioned by the fall of an apple, as he sat in a contemplative mood. Why should it not go sideways or upwards? But constantly to the earth's centre? Assuredly, the reason is, that the earth draws it...

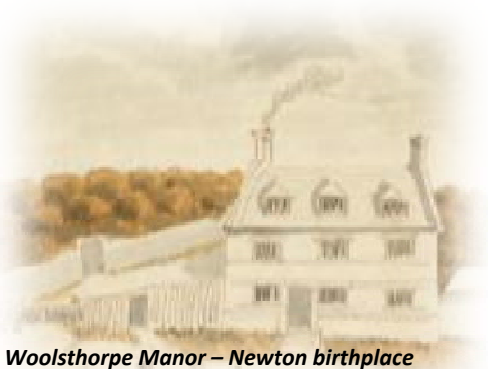
The Royal Society has kept Stukeley's manuscript away from the public's gaze until now – because those parchments are not likely to withstand much thumbing from interested readers. And these aren't the only old scrawls you can get your hands on virtually. The project also so far includes Henry James's fossil notebook, various drawings both anatomical and floral, and other scientific treats.



*Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton*



*The page where Stukeley recounts the apple incident*



*Woolsthorpe Manor – Newton birthplace*



*The famous apple tree according to Stukeley*