

# MARCHER APPLE NETWORK

## RHWYDWAITH AFALAU' R GORORAU

Newsletter No 10

Non-Members £2

Summer 2004

### CHAIRMAN'S TEN YEAR REVIEW

Where have we got to, and why are we here?

Those of us who came together at Wye View, Glasbury-on-Wye, over a decade ago, were imbued with the aim of "rescuing" native apple varieties from extinction – nothing more and nothing less – by looking for them in farm orchards and gardens mainly in Powys, but generally along the Welsh border. Glasbury, where Sheila Leitch lives, seemed to form a focal point in the Southern Marches.

Having found and, hopefully, identified, we would endeavour to propagate and plant. What were our resources? No land of our own. Professional support in the form of nurseryman Paul Davis – far into the middle of Wales at Capel Isaac – plus some good will on the part of others.

We focussed specifically on non-cider varieties. In England, Bulmer and other cider makers, with their long established expertise and resources, made amateur participation in tracking cider fruits appear a waste of time, and hardly appealing to the palates of the apple-consuming public.

"Assets" – if we may call them such – were already in place at the National Trust's Berrington Hall, under the auspices of the NCCPG\*, whose 'apple collator' at the time, Stanley Baldock, had organized the planting of some 50 varieties on half-standards. Also at Llangynidr, Crickhowell, where founder member Michael Porter and his wife, Chris, were busy planting several hundred varieties on their own property.

We were able to draw upon a rich mine of published information. 'The Herefordshire Pomona', published near the end of the Victorian era, was without doubt both a legacy and an inspiration, encapsulating the immense contribution to pomology made at that time by Dr. Robert Hogg and his collaborators. It rectified to some extent, but never fully made up for, the damaging effect originating in the mindset of Thomas Andrew Knight, the early-19th Century geneticist and pomological innovator (President of the RHS and native Herefordian). He maintained that fruit varieties as such are in a process of degeneration from one individual cultivar to its successors by propagation – encouraging, therefore, the relegation of older varieties in a continuing search for improvement by experimenting with new varieties. The latter, of course, has continued ever since in the world's experimental fruit establishments.

His opinion was not borne out by subsequent experience. Publications by more recent authors, some of which emanated from RHS Wisley or the Brogdale Trust (which is home to the National Fruit Collection), have made a very significant contribution to the pool of knowledge available to us.

Our activities, therefore, have centred upon displaying to the general public – at the sequence

\* National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, Herefordshire

of Autumn shows which we frequent – that the British Isles has inherited a truly remarkable diversity of apple cultivars and, to a lesser extent, of pears, (which belong climatically to the mid-southerly countries of Europe in the main), and that this diversity exists to be planted, husbanded and obtained beyond the admittedly convenient confines of the supermarkets.

An apple is climatically adaptable to a degree, hence its lasting popularity both for display and consumption from the time of Imperial Rome. Indeed, it goes back beyond to the ancient civilisations and, in later times, forward to Protestant Europe and its offspring who colonised America and, subsequently, the more favourable climes of the Southern Hemisphere.

Displays of apple varieties, which people either have never heard of or which evoke a pleasant memory of childhood, give rise to questions as to what people have "inherited" in their own gardens or orchards. As a result we are called upon to determine the identities of varieties brought along to places where we are exhibiting.

This is a very time-consuming activity, and the waiting queues are getting longer by the year. Computers have been employed in an attempt to make the task easier, but the characteristics of an apple tend to be both variable and diverse, and it is difficult to pass such knowledge and skill on to others: one has also to bear in mind that a tree grown from a pip will turn out to be a variety without at least one known progenitor. Named varieties of apples are propagated by the time-honoured skills of budding or grafting a shoot from the specimen tree on to a 'rootstock' of a different tree, except for a few, known as 'pitchers' or 'burrknots', which will grow roots from cuttings. Hence the budding and grafting courses are proving popular!

As a result of this activity and these skills we have attempted to raise our own sample fruits to provide a reference source for a given variety. For this we have been indebted to a few individual landowners, who have made parcels of land available to us for planting. In total we now muster a few hundred trees as our contribution to securing the permanence of treasured varieties in support of what is being done elsewhere. We believe that we should continue this work, expanding where opportunity arises. This calls for a significant outlay initially and ongoing maintenance. In due course, and sooner rather than later, there will be a need to harvest and distribute what may be produced in quantity. In all of this we are duly grateful for the support we have received from funding bodies.

Our membership is now 300 and increasing, but not quite as fast as the varieties we attempt to nurture! We need all the voluntary input that we can attract and, where necessary, find the money to pay for some of the work involved. Our activities now embrace a heightened interest in varieties which are grown specifically for cider making, as ever focussed towards older varieties which are in danger of becoming lost.

We have published our own booklet 'Apples of the Welsh Marches', containing descriptions and a number of photographs. We provide what we hope is interesting and useful information through this Newsletter. We are involved in the organization of courses to disseminate knowledge and experience about fruit tree management.

We are looking at ways of making 'The Herefordshire Pomona' more accessible to a wider public. We have our own ably managed website and during the past three years have become a company limited by guarantee, registered as a charity. This all adds up to an attempt to increase public awareness of what is at stake and to satisfy growing interest. Our hope is for the future.

Ray Boddington

## INTERNATIONAL FLAVOUR AT AGM

The 2003 AGM held at the Shirehall, Hereford, on October 18th, was again a great success. The Chairman disposed of the business with good reports from the various officers.

Mike Porter and Tony Malpas and helpers staged a magnificent display of nearly 250 varieties of dessert, culinary and cider apples, while Chris Porter and her team laid on the refreshments for which we are renowned. The apple identification team was kept busy with a few interesting varieties turning up. The website was up and running and, downstairs, away from the hurly-burly of the main hall, apples and juices were being tasted and sold. Some German visitors, on tasting a Scotch Bridget apple exclaimed that in Germany it was known as Kaiser Wilhelm. If anyone of our members is growing Kaiser Wilhelm or knows where samples can be obtained, can they please bring them to the next AGM at Clyro on Sunday, October 17th, so that further comparisons can be made?

Two members, Paul Davis from Llandeilo and Kevin O'Neill from Pershore, brought trees in containers for display and sale and the Hereford Nature Trust also had a small display. It was a lot of hard work, but very satisfying to know that it had been successful.

Tom Froggatt

## THE YEAR'S EVENTS ON THE WELSH SIDE OF THE BORDER

### Blossom Day at Fforddfawr Farm

'Glasu', (the Powys-based Leader+ programme,) as part of their Orchard Strategy, held a very successful event on 8th May, at Fforddfawr Farm, Glasbury-on-Wye. After the prolonged cold spell and the wet weather of the preceding week, the old cider trees were just coming into blossom. Charles Morgan, Conservation Officer of the Brecknock Wildlife Trust, led a couple of tours round the orchard, pointing out the value of such habitats for wildlife and the benefits of not being too tidy-minded, by leaving fallen timber, heaps of sawn off branches and rotting hollow trees. The children of Glasbury Primary School, in colourful costumes all made at the school, provided entertainment by dancing to the music of the Flight of the Bumble Bee. Inside the marquee were various stands. The Countryside Council for Wales had lovely wildlife pictures which were being given to the visitor. Those of us on the *MAN* stand were kept busy with book sales and questions about apple varieties. Paul Davis had apple trees in blossom for sale, with the striking deep pink of the early cooker, Arthur Turner, being particularly attractive.

The 'Glasu' display was very popular as they had their newly published free bilingual booklet entitled 'Promoting the Importance of Orchards and their Products in Powys'. It contains a large folded poster, 'A Guide to the Apples that Grow Well in Powys', with the other side in Welsh, and the illustrations are taken from Mike Porter's photos used in our 'Apples of the Welsh Marches'. It has been printed in large numbers for distribution to all the schools in Powys, to Tourist Information Centres and to all members of the Wildlife Trusts of the three old counties of Brecknock, Radnor and Montgomery. It will certainly raise the profile of the work *MAN* has been doing over the last ten years and we are grateful for Glasu's welcome funding of this publication. We have been given a good supply for distribution at Apple Events or elsewhere. Anyone who is unlikely to be attending an event can write to me for one. Please send an A4 sized SAE.

There was also a cookery demonstration stand close by us and, at the end of the afternoon, there was time to sample a delicious apple Welsh Cake and have a copy of the recipe. We are grateful to Mr & Mrs Richard Eckley and family for hosting this event.

## 2004 Royal Welsh Smallholder & Garden Festival

Once again, MAN had a stand at the Smallholder Show at held at Llanellwedd on May 15th/16th. The weather was good and the event was well attended. Our stand was next to the 'Glasu'one, which was handing out the newly published free booklets entitled 'Promoting the importance of orchards and their products in Powys'. We shared a stand with Paul Davis and as he had trees for sale there was a lot of interest and we sold numerous copies of 'Apples of the Welsh Marches'. Any helpers at this small show get a free ticket, so please come forward and offer for next year. Enthusiasm is the main requirement and with two or three people on the stand, there is the opportunity for each volunteer to have a break to browse around.

### 'Entertainment under the Apples'.

This event was first held three years ago by Philip Bowen, one of our members in Wales, when he opened his orchard at Penlanole in the Wye Valley. It was so successful, that it has become an annual event, held on a Sunday in September. With the old orchard and the new Welsh varieties supplied by Paul Davis and planted under the All Wales Agri-Environmental Scheme, Tir Gofal, the afternoon provided a very pleasant setting for members in Powys, or from further afield, to meet each other and 'talk apples'. All the proceeds went to local charities. Penlanole is on the A470 between Rhayader and Newbridge-on-Wye.

Sheila Leitch

### A TASTE FROM THE PAST

Last month, at our display at the Black Mountains Festival, where Tom Froggatt and I always have a stand in Talgarth market, we noticed one elderly gentleman looking closely at the basket of very small, flat, dark red and somewhat scabby *Devonshire Quarrendens* from my garden, one of the apples early enough to put on display, but which cropped very poorly this year. He said joyfully that he hadn't seen a 'Quarentine' since he was a boy of six or seven. He remembered that the roadman used to come down the lane where he lived, with a donkey cart for the sweepings, and in early Autumn, always had a pocketful of these apples and would give some to him and his sister. They loved the flavour, and they used to wonder if it was partly due to the pocket also housing the roadman's pipe and 'baccy'. He lived at a cottage with several trees of this variety in the small garden, and no others. Most years, at this event, there would have been some for tasting, but I had been hard put to find five half-decent specimens for the display and had to keep them for the other Apple Events. Our visitor was just happy to know that at least somebody still grew the tree, as he had often asked about it in nurseries and shops, but could not find it. I told him my tree was over 100 years old, but that graftwood from it meant our Network could now supply young trees from this variety. It makes our efforts to save these old cultivars very rewarding when the sight, smell, or taste, of a childhood favourite brings such pleasure to someone at our stand.

Sheila Leitch

The farm of our President, Sir Andrew Large, is in the Welsh Agri-environmental scheme, 'Tir Gofal', and groups of children are shown around the farm. His Farm Manager asked him to write a note about the orchards, to get the children's interest and, as he says in his covering note, "This is the result:-"

### APPLES AT CUI

Cui used to have a large orchard. It's in the field behind the barns, but only four or five of the original trees are still there. There are a couple of old perry pears, probably at least 150 years old, and several old apples that are probably a bit younger.

One day I was walking in the woods above Cui when the idea came to me that it would be good to re-establish the orchard with new trees. I could do so by saving the existing old ones which I found struggling in the woods and in the gardens of the long abandoned farms in the hills round about. The fact that those trees are still surviving, means that they must like our climate and our soil, and besides there might be some old and rare varieties which would otherwise die out.

So, armed with secateurs I would go and collect scions, – that's small twigs of the recent growth – from these old trees. You do this in the winter, and keep the wood damp and cool – a fridge will do, or even stick them in the ground in a damp spot – until late March when the sap is starting to rise. Then you graft them on to small trees, called rootstocks, and several months later you can see the buds open on the scion where the sap passes across the join of the graft into the scion. In due course the scion grows and turns into a genuine clone of the tree from which you took it. You have to propagate in this way if you want to be sure you reproduce the original apple. If you try planting from pips they will produce new trees, but they will not be the same as the parent, because they have genes from both parents – the tree and the pollinator – and just like people they will not be the same as either parent!

So now I have trees growing which I name after the farms from which they came. Rhiw, Berth Lwyd, Pant-y-Gelynin etc. Now that the trees are getting big enough to bear fruit – it can take 5-10 years – I am gradually getting them identified by the experts at Brogdale in Kent. We've already found some quite interesting forgotten varieties.

This was how the collection started. But being both a bit inquisitive and a sort of hoarder, I couldn't resist adding to the collection from year to year. I chose ancient local varieties, and ones which originated in the Marches and Herefordshire. Then I found some interesting other varieties from Celtic regions with similarly damp climates – Scotland and Ireland even Cornwall. Some came from much further afield: Australia, Russia, Japan and America. And then there are a few modern varieties, partly because they are so resistant to disease. So now I have a collection of about 300 identified varieties (and another 60 still unidentified!), of all different sizes, shapes, colours, and tastes. We also have about 25 varieties of Pears.

We have apples from 20 or so countries, including the distant ones and also most countries in Europe. The emphasis however is still on the local Welsh and Marches varieties.

The question is how do you manage to handle all this? Looking after apples is not for those with no time to spare. There is so much to do. Every time I threaten to get a few more trees now my wife gets cross and asks how I will do it all! There is certainly never a dull moment, and here is a list of the main jobs.

- Weeding. This comes first because it's the job I like doing least! You have to weed in the nursery, but also in the orchards around the bases of the trees. Otherwise the weeds and grass take all the goodness from the soil; the trees don't grow properly, and you don't get any fruit.
- Pruning. This is great fun once you know what to do. It's quite satisfying looking for the 'spurs' on which there are fruit buds forming, and making the tree grow the way you want it. In the summer you have to shape the cordons and espaliers, leaving only the branches you want. (Cordons are the spindly pole-like trees that grow at an angle of 45 degrees, and espaliers are the ones that are trained horizontally along wires in 5 or 6 layers). I prefer pruning the bigger trees in the orchard in the winter, when you can see what you are doing.

- Fertilizing. Then there's fertilizing – this is heavy work in the Spring. I normally need magnesium and lime, because our rather high rainfall leaches these out. Sometimes I need potash, which makes them fruit better, or nitrogen to make the trees grow. Farmyard manure is probably the best all-round, and it's organic too.
- Tree Support. One thing not to forget is the ties. The young trees have to be supported for six or seven years so they don't get blown over. The problem is that the trunks grow and get thicker, and if you aren't careful the ties can strangle the trees. I lost several when I forgot. So you have to loosen the ties once – or sometimes twice – a year. The support poles sometimes break too, so they need to be re-fixed, or replaced.
- Sheep! Living in Wales it's perhaps no surprise that one of the biggest dangers is the sheep. They have a passion for the bark on the trunks, so you have to keep them away with wire netting. If they get their teeth in they rip off the bark and eat it, and this kills the trees! We once had a terrible disaster when they got five or six trees, and I'll be more careful in future.
- Diseases and Pests. There are certainly lots of these about. The first one is **scab**. This is a discoloration or cracking of the skin of the apples, though it can reduce your crop, and give you funny looking apples too, but it isn't life threatening. But **canker** on the other hand is another matter, and we seem to get more than our fair share of it. It eats into the bark, and can kill small trees, whilst causing ugly die-back on the branches of bigger ones. You have to try to cut it out with a knife in the winter, when you can see the blemishes in the bark. Sometimes the tree grows through it and is cured, and sometimes you end up losing the trees.
- Furry and feathered friends. Lastly there are the squirrels and crows that like my apples as much as I do! So do the worms of codlin moths which make burrows through the apples when they are quite young.
- Picking. So if you aren't careful you won't have any time for picking the crop, storing it, or making cider or juice. That's the main job in the autumn, and great fun it can be with a bunch of friends to help. The weekends seem to get jollier as they go on, and as the need for refreshment with swigs of last years cider gets more frequent.
- Cider making. We blend the cider from different varieties, sharp, bitter and sweet. You have to watch the fermentation process and decide when to strain and purify the cider. You also mustn't bottle it till the fermentation is well advanced, or you end up with a series of exploding bottles and a big mess.
- Juice making. We make different juices, some quite sharp to wake you up at breakfast, and others sweet. There are quite a lot of steps here. Firstly wash off the mud. Secondly crush the apples to a pulp in an electric mill - very efficient when it doesn't clog up! Thirdly collect the mulch into 'cheeses' – square cloths making up five or six layers which you put into a press. Fourthly squeeze out the juice (about 80% of the volume comes out as juice!). Fifthly bottle the juice, pasteurize it to stop it trying to turn into cider and exploding, put on the caps, clean the bottles, put on labels and.....phew! then get down to drinking it.

Before they had fridges they had varieties of apples which will keep all winter, and so now that we have so many varieties, we have fresh fruit to eat from late July, when the earliest varieties ripen, to May when the last of the late keepers starts to shrivel.

[Editor's Note: *MAN* needs to be collecting observations, in the same way, from growers, on the recently found Welsh varieties, of which nothing has been recorded. I have just finished writing an article for the Autumn issue of 'Natur Cymru' (Welsh Nature), about the traditional Welsh apples we have been finding since 1994, when we first carried out an orchard survey in the Dynefor area of the Towy Valley in Carmarthenshire, or Dyfed, as it was then called. The magazine always includes some articles in Welsh and I have appealed for information from readers on names and descriptions of fruit they may recall.]

#### **NORTHERN FRUIT GROUP**

1. For a number of years, NFG have managed "model" fruit gardens at Harlow Carr. Their future and our involvement with them, are uncertain at present because of the changes at Harlow Carr as a result of the RHS "take over".

2. We continue to manage heritage fruit collections at Helmsley walled garden and are advisers for several gardens including a new collection of several hundred apple varieties at Lotherton Hall owned by Leeds City Council. The Lotherton Hall collection when complete will be one of the most, if not the most comprehensive collection of traditional varieties in the north.

3. Our budding and grafting sessions continue to be much in demand.

4. We had a successful showing year with a gold medal at the Harrogate autumn show

5. Our program of lectures was well supported with long and lively question and answer sessions afterwards. A brilliant talk by Will Sibley of Marshall's particularly springs to mind, in which with great erudition he "took us through" most of the topics currently exercising the fruit world. John Butterworth too, gave us a fascinating talk about fruit growing in Scotland.

6. Along with many voluntary societies, we are becoming increasingly aware of the limitations imposed by advancing age. In particular, we need new active younger recruits for our committee. Related to this "ageing" problem, is the fact that there are several activities we would very much like to start or extend but just do not have the resources to develop.

7. Orchard surveys and recording.

Philip Rainford continues to do exciting work in Lancashire, discovering and recording old "lost" apple and pear orchards and initiating conservation measures for a number of them. Ernest Oddy is continuing his detailed cataloguing of a number of "old" Yorkshire orchards and tells me that he has several potentially interesting previously unsurveyed orchards "lined up" for detailed study this season.

8. NFG have long been interested in carrying out a comprehensive survey of Yorkshire's orchards. This activity was of course a central part of our unsuccessful HLF bid. If successful, we would have had a full time "organizer" for the survey. Since that set back, we have hesitated to start a survey for fear of over extending our resources. However we have recently developed a protocol involving representative areas rather than the whole county, with the emphasis on identifying and recording the frequency and distribution of apple and pear varieties. We think NFG has the resources to carry out this survey successfully. Hopefully, it will start this year.

9. "APPLEKEY" (our computer based apple identification key) Apart from adding new varieties to the 700 or so already included, in particular as many as possible of the traditional varieties recorded in the Common Ground list, there remains the daunting task of adding

illustrations/photographs to the existing descriptions. A non-illustrated "version 1.0" is ready for distribution and I am finding out next week how to handle this regarding copyright, price etc. I want version 1 to be available for use this season (2004). Version 2.0 will have illustrations and a couple of hundred more varieties. Subsequent versions will have errors corrected, hopefully improved descriptions of varieties that do not key out easily, more varieties and increasing numbers of varieties with illustrations to back up the descriptions.

Simon Clark

### NATIONAL ORCHARD FORUM

Newsletter No 4, Summer 2004 Issue, has just arrived and, as always, has items gleaned from the various orchard groups. You may remember in our Newsletter No 8 that, in the WANTED section, there was a request for apple wood from someone in Scotland keen to locate fallen applewood in some quantity, which could be purchased and transported to use in an experimental smoking process. I was very intrigued to read in the NOF an article by Sean Jones about the use of fruitwoods in the making of wind instruments, as their tight grain structure is ideal and takes a polish so well. Apple is particularly used for the smaller high-pitched instruments such as recorders, fifes and whistles with pear used for the lower pitched, larger recorders and flutes. Plum is also used, and he finds this wood particularly difficult to come by. As a folk musician, I have a collection of table harps (autoharps), chord zithers, a hammer dulcimer and a particularly beautiful rosewood concert zither once belonging to an Austrian princess, the latter yet to be mastered. The lovely woods and mother of pearl inlays add to the pleasure of playing these sweet-toned instruments. Sean has trouble in getting hold of good material, so, next time you have a venerable fallen tree or one which has to be felled, you might like to think of it being used to make a folk instrument and bear his request in mind, Tel. 01189-814600. He says "If you can help me in my quest for British fruitwoods, do drop me a line at sean(at)jonesinstruments.co.uk " Tom Froggatt, when I mentioned the above item, told me he has three fallen trees, so will contact Sean Jones.

Sheila Leitch

### MIND THAT MISTLETOE

I became intrigued by mistletoe after spending a day earlier this year with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, tutored by the entomologist John Cooter, visiting orchards to the east of Hereford. We were looking for signs of the Noble Chafer beetle feeding off rotting fruit wood. By the end of the day I was amazed by the quantity of mistletoe in the trees. Colleagues sent me articles and reprints, which highlighted how many other subjects touch on this plant..... history, medicine, myth, and literature.

I'd only related to mistletoe as part of Christmas, but it acts as both nursery plant, and as part of a food chain. It supports a weevil, several bugs, and the larva of the mistletoe tortrix moth. This moth remains a localised and rare species, with records only from the south west midland counties of Britain - Gloucester, Hereford, Worcester, Somerset and Monmouth, the counties with the greatest concentration of mistletoe. The tiny larva mines into a mistletoe leaf and lives between the upper and lower surfaces for protection, until ready to pupate in the bark of the host tree.

These insects and mistletoe berries provide food for birds. I'm interested that mistletoe, in attaching to an earth bound plant, is making a bridge from the earth to the air and airborne animals. As neither shrub nor tree, mistletoe was thought to represent an in-between state, a freedom from limitation, so that anyone under it was free from restriction, but at the same time free of protection. The druids invested mistletoe with magical powers and took great care when cutting it down not to let it touch the earth. The Norse god, Balder, was promised that he was safe from any weapon made from the wood of a tree; a devious rival not only discovered that



The first task for the new Head Gardener, Michael West, was to strip away brambles in which the pear collection was largely encased. He has since extended the collection by propagating and planting cultivars inside the walled garden where Wamers have installed a substantial facility for swimmers. Inspection at this time by the NCCPG's 'apple collator', Stanley Baldock, resulted in some cordon cultivars from this collection finding their way their way to the walled garden at Berrington Hall National Trust, Leominster, which are a continuing success.

More recent contact at the Malvern Show with the current Fruit Superintendent at Wisley, Jim Arbury, resulted in a visit by him to the site in 2003 to further the work of identification. Through the good offices of MAN's Company Secretary and Treasurer, a small tent was put in place to facilitate the task. Mr Arbury has recently come back to us with some identifications and the study will, hopefully, be renewed this season: he regards the collection as "very important" and MAN will endeavour to assist with any liaison required.

Ray Boddington

### CIDER APPLE AND PERRY PEAR SUBGROUP

There is little to report from the Group. Several orchards were visited in an effort to discover identifiable examples of varieties that do not exist in the various Bulmer orchards. One of these was on the National Trust lands at Brockhampton. The N.T. wants to restock this old orchard with the varieties existing there at present if possible. Maybe we can help in the future.

An orchard in the Herefordshire Golden Valley yielded a variety apparently called Cadwalader, it is believed to be a Welsh cider variety although the name does not appear on any listings so far consulted. The tree itself was dying but successful grafts have been achieved. A possible example of Handsome Hereford (Norman) has been found. The apple fits the description and illustration in the Herefordshire Pomona but confirmation is still required. If anyone knows of a positively identified tree of this variety please contact me and give me details of its location and owner so that a comparison can be made.

Grafts of Red Styre, from a Glasbury orchard, and the possible Handsome Hereford have also succeeded.

A register of the location of known old variety trees has been started with the object of enabling the identity of unknown trees to be established by cross-reference and comparison whenever possible. However this will only be of any value if MAN members who are aware of the location of the lesser-known varieties pass that information on. If you have old cider or perry pear varieties, of known identity, in your own or neighbouring orchards we would like to hear from you in order to get the register properly up and running.

The information required to produce the register is as follows:

1. Orchard owner:
2. Address and telephone contact number:
3. Known tree varieties in orchard (Must be positively identified)

Send the details to Richard Cheshire, Apple Mead, Kinnerley, Hereford. HR3 6QB

The Herefordshire Pomona lists 46 cider varieties. 20 of these are currently known to be growing in various orchards in the county. The continuing task is to discover if any positively identifiable examples of the other 26 exist. The previously mentioned Handsome Hereford is one

of these. A list of these varieties is available from me. In addition, it is vital to find as many as possible of the varieties introduced subsequent to the publication of the Pomona, particularly those grown on the Welsh side of the Marches.

If you also have ancient trees, the variety of which is unknown, we would also be interested. A brief description including the following details is required:

Tree size, shape and growth characteristics (upright, spreading, drooping.)

Fruit maturing season.

Colouring, shape and size of apple.

Taste of fruit (e.g. sweet, bitter sweet, mild sharp, etc.)

There are several ways of identifying unknown trees the obvious one is the memory of an older generation still alive who may no longer own the particular orchard but knows what is in it. Sale documents sometimes include an orchard-planting plan. The County Record offices may hold copies. In a few cases the types of trees in an orchard may be listed in the Deeds.

If we are to succeed in identifying and ultimately re-establishing examples of the old and lesser-known varieties it is up to us to get going on the detective work. Happy hunting!

Richard Cheshire

### **BRITISH BEEKEEPERS NATIONAL SPRING CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION**

This event was held at the Royal Showground, Stoneleigh in April and MAN was asked to take a stand, free, in a hall which had many miscellaneous stands. As I had been asked to give a talk in the Lecture Theatre I enlisted the help of member, David Barker and colleague, from Birmingham and Bernard Danvers and his wife from Coleford to man the stand in my absence. As one of the other speakers was unable to come from Ireland at the last moment I was asked to give two talks and thus MAN benefited by £80 in fees. Very generously my travel expenses were also paid by the BBKA. I took about 20 blossom spurs, mounted in Oasis, showing the different forms and colours and also indicating how the blossoms open at various times. Do you know how the dates are recorded? If not, come to Stoneleigh next year.

Our stand was situated in the "Granary Hall" and seemed to create a lot of interest. A few new members were enrolled but sales of books provided the largest income. If you live near Stoneleigh or are interested in bees, would you like to help on our stand next year?

All sorts of queries arise – an American lady brought in 11 blossoms saying, "You said last year that you could identify apples from the blossoms." I picked these a few days ago and put them in a warm place but they are still not open." I diplomatically told her that blossoms were an aid and showed her pages of Rosanne Sanders book. I think she was persuaded to let us have actual fruit for identification.

Tom Froggatt

### **NEWS FROM MEMBERS' ORCHARDS**

As mentioned in Newsletter 9, under the heading 'The Year's Events on the Welsh Side of the Border', there was news of John A Lyle's Museum Orchard of old varieties of Welsh apple trees. During a recent chat with him, his happy news of some fruit this year, prompted me to ask him for a short report on how it is all going. Rather than listing it under the 'From our Correspondents' heading, where Sarah's orchard tribulations were given a write-up last year, I thought we ought to start a new section for news of all these recently planted orchards, as we now have more members with their own trees to report on. So, for next year, please send in your news, of what

the year has been like, weather-wise, pests, harvests, wildlife observations, how you keep the grass down, the rabbits at bay or anything else good, bad or indifferent. News of old orchards will also be welcome, with ideas of how to keep geriatric trees going for a few more years. Another telephone call, this time to John Lloyd, to check on date of the Church Stretton Apple event, has brought in another welcome local account. A recently joined Life Member, Mr Henry May, has formed an Orchard Trust with the aim of setting up a collection of English cider apple trees and has already carried out some extensive plantings, with more planned. These communications prompted me to think about my orchard season so, that too has been added to this section.

Sheila Leitch

### Pant-Rhedyn, Gellywen, Carmarthen

Firstly, with regard to our Welsh Apple Trees, we have not been able to discover any new varieties. Secondly we have had rather difficult weather for our Orchards this summer. We had a wonderful crop of blossom considering the age of the trees but unfortunately had a rather hard frost at the end of May. Then the few actual apples we had were decimated when a neighbouring herd of cows broke into the orchards in July. In addition I think we must have had one of the driest summers in the country having rain only on two nights, and at no other time, between May 6th and early July. The result is that there has not, so far, been much new growth on the trees. However the rains now seem to have started and we hope for new growth before the winter sets in,

We decided, last winter, to include some Cider apple trees in the Orchard which, although not necessarily native to Wales were grown by Welsh farmers from the XVIIth Century until the start of the First World War. Cider was an important crop on farms during that period in Wales. It produced a drink as an alternative to water, which was distrusted, and was also a staple beverage, whatever the time of day. Cider vinegar was considered superior to wine vinegar and was used to pickle vegetables and fruit for the winter. It could also be distilled to make cider brandy.

We have planted the following varieties of cider apples: - Harry Masters Jersey, Breakwells Seedling, Somerset Redstreak, Sweet Coppins, Stoke Red, Broom Apple, Frederick, Raglan Redstalk, Welsh Druid.

I do hope this information will be of interest.

John A. Lyle

### Rock Cottage, All Stretton, Shropshire

The Summer solstice saw us light a fire in the cottage and bring in the potted citrus fruit from the cold. It is little wonder that this year's crop of top fruit is a mixed picture. Looking at the down side, the weather certainly put paid to an apricot tree which, last year, was our pride and joy. Like our peach, which is also fan trained on a reasonably sunny wall, this too had fallen back with fewer fruit to be gathered in August.

Apples over-all have done well, with Ashmead's Kernel surpassing expectations. This has been a remarkably reliable variety, no doubt benefitting from a Victorian garden where all the wood ash from their grate was dumped. It is not clear what happened to the King of the Pippins espalier – it has no fruit, whereas there is usually a handful in the poorest of seasons. However, the Lodgemore Nonpareil, that I grafted a year or two back, has fruited for the first time.

Otherwise, the pattern is much as last year for apples. Pears had the loveliest blossom we have seen, yet the crop is disappointing, which is true of the plums too, but the damson, Shropshire Prune, looks well-blessed with fruit.

Much of this year's problems must be put down to the shortage of bees at the right time. Can one blame them for staying away when it was so wet and cold?

John Lloyd

**Tidnor Wood Orchard Trust, Herefordshire.** The Trust was set up, in 2003, by Mr Henry May, part of whose working life was spent in the county. To quote from his Mission Statement, "The intention is to set up a collection of English cider apple trees, in trust for posterity, for use as a gene bank and a source for research and academic study." Within two years he has purchased four orchards, the first one being a commercial orchard of 5 or so acres at Tidnor Wood in the Lugg Valley with about 450 half-standard trees, mostly about 35 years old, of varieties Michelin, Yarlington Mill, Dabinet and Bulmers Norman. The opportunity then arose to purchase the nearby Old Orchard of over 2 acres, which consisted largely of old standard cider apple trees in a traditional format. The many gaps are being replanted with a variety of cider apple and perry pear trees. In all, the Trust will own and manage about 25 acres, in as traditional a manner as is practical. To quote again, "The preservation and enhancement of the natural flora and fauna is a high priority of our site management and we are taking active steps to re-introduce wild flowers etc and provide a range of habitats." Although now living near Dunoon, in Argyre, Mr May hopes to invite members of MAN to visit these orchards and see both the original cider orchards and the new plantings. He tells me that Paul Davis will be selling the duplicate, potted, half standard trees, grafted at the time of his most recent order, as he only required one of each but two were done in case of failures. Some are not strictly cider, as many varieties were used for cider in different parts of the country. The web site is [www.tidnorwood.org.uk](http://www.tidnorwood.org.uk)

#### **Wye View, Glasbury-on-Wye, Breconshire.**

Most of my fruit trees date from the age of the house, 1890. Some years ago I met the elderly lady who had been the maid here before the First World War, when she worked for the couple who had the house built. She described the vegetable garden as it had been then, with typical Victorian box hedges, laid out as a parterre, inside which were planted espalier fruit trees. She even remembered the name of one, Ben's Red, which she liked. The garden layout remains the same and I still have that tree, long escaped upwards from its original trained shape, though, after careful examination, we now know it to be the similar variety, Devonshire Quarrenden – no doubt a case of wrong naming by the nursery, though I do not know where the trees were purchased. It has taken years to get them all named. One interesting tree is an early fruiting variety of the Herefordshire Quoining. It seems to warrant the name Summer Quoining, which is given as one of the synonyms, as mine is ready in September. It is always striped as well as heavily flushed with crimson and does not keep as well as the Herefordshire Quoining, which lacks stripes. There is also a Crimson Quoining, said to be a very late season fruit. There seem to be seedling variants of this very old type of apple, always heavily perfumed and a fruit you either like or you don't. Mine never fails to fruit and can continue to blossom over several months.

The other two mid season apples which always bear a crop, regardless of late frosts, are Stirling Castle and Duchess of Oldenburg (*syn. Borovitsky*), which is a very beautiful Russian apple and is well adapted to cold Springs and late frosts. Worcester Pearmain and Lady Sudeley are also laden. The highly coloured fruits of the latter, showing up brilliantly against the dark green leaves, are a picture and it is no wonder it was a popular garden variety in Victorian times. A wet August, as this has been, suits this cultivar and the fruit is juicy with a distinctive flavour, much sought after by the birds and wasps. However, the cold Spring has led to a dearth of fruit on Lord Grosvenor, (an early codlin cooker), Dr Harvey, a mid-season cooker and the three dual purpose Blenheim Orange. King of the Pippins has one low hanging branch heavily laden, but the rest of the tree has a poor crop. This indicates the importance of the microclimate in the vicinity of each tree. There is also a small orchard in a more exposed position, outside the walled garden, planted, I believe, in 1976, the year of the great drought. These trees have very little fruit to show for the wonderful blossom except for Laxton Fortune, perhaps flowering early enough to coincide with some pollinating insects. Red Ellison and L. Superb are almost bare

and Bramley's Seedling and Tydemans Late Orange are very disappointing. There won't be many apples worth taking down to the cellar this year.

A couple of makeshift life extension ideas for ancient trees may be of interest to others. A telegraph pole had to be replaced in my field and the SWALEC men asked did I want them to take away the old one. "Not if I can keep it", I replied, my Steptoe instincts well to the fore. It has now been sawn up and made into a very strong H-shaped support for the old Blenheim Orange tree that came down in a high wind last Spring, and was resting on some of its branches but not yet lying prone. Twenty five years ago, when we first moved in here, we noticed that the old Devonshire Quarrenden had a sawn-off espalier branch which was rotten, hollow and held rainwater. We cleaned it up and filled it with concrete and the tree is none the worse for this remedy. Someone at the Black Mountains Festival event asked if we thought it would be OK to use concrete to help support a hollow trunk. I admitted to having used it without ill effect but what do others think?

Sheila Leitch

### INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Members of your committee are often called upon to talk to various groups, or speak on radio or TV. Groups such as Women's Institutes, gardening clubs, Townswomen's Guild, NatureTrusts, Probus, and Leominster Vintage Club have appeared on the list over the past 12 months and already a talk in October 2005 at Ross-on-Wye has been arranged. Would you like to join the Speakers Panel. I have a few slides and a projector, a vast library is available for research and past Newsletters give the history and objectives of MAN. Please let Sheila Leitch know if you can help.

Tom Froggatt

### BROGDALÉ HAS HIT THE HEADLINES

No, they have not found the lost costard apple, but have featured in the Winter issue of Weather Eye, the magazine for everyone fascinated by the Weather. The old weather adage was quoted in this same issue, 'Be it dry or be it wet, Nature always pays its debt'. It has certainly repaid for the dry Spring this year, as places as far apart as Boscastle in Cornwall and Locheamhead in Stirlingshire know to their cost. Apparently last August, the 10th to be precise, a new record temperature of 38.5C or, in old money, 101.3F was recorded on the Stevenson screen at Brogdale. Until that date, the record temperature was held at the nearby weather station at Faversham, Kent. The writer goes on to say "The site is surrounded by an immense variety of fruit trees, over 2300 kinds of apple and 550 types of pear alone. There were several factors that helped to make Brogdale's recordbreaking heat. It is situated on the dip slope of the North Downs and the gentle south-south east winds on this day would make it the lee side where air would be subsiding and warming – a foehn affect. This part of Kent remained in sunshine whereas cloud developed over London and areas to the north of the Thames with thunderstorms in places. Also a short sea track across the narrowest part of the Channel from a very hot France meant little cooling, as it crossed open water." He goes on to say "Following on from my visit to Brogdale I enquired whether they could identify an old but very cherished apple tree in my garden. I gave them a specimen from the bountiful crop 2003 had produced. So it was with great interest that I recently received news from Brogdale that it was indeed a very good variety not often seen these days – a Blenheim Orange. Excellent for eating and cooking; perfect with cheese and was used for Apple Charlotte."

Sheila Leitch

## ORCHARD TRAINING COURSES

MAN is not planning to organize any courses this year as 'Glasu', in Powys, and 'The Blue Remembered Hills Project', in part of Shropshire, are both running day courses in their areas, with Paul Davies for the Restorative Pruning Courses and Mike Porter on Apple Identification Courses. Full details of these are at the end of the Newsletter, under FORTHCOMING EVENTS. There may be additional courses arranged after this Newsletter goes to the printer early September and will be advertised in local papers, or, if you have already attended a course, you will be on the mailing list of these two organizations.

Sheila Leitch

## TREE KITS

### *Herefordshire's Orchards*

Herefordshire's old orchards are an important landscape feature, a valuable wildlife habitat and the basis of many local traditions and the culture of the county. In fact during the late 17th and 18th centuries the character of the Herefordshire landscape was portrayed as a "forest of fruit trees". Few orchards today contain the rich collection of local varieties that were once an integral part of our commercial and domestic fruit markets, as well as our social heritage.

### *The Fruit Tree Initiative*

To stem this loss the Herefordshire Council Parks & Countryside Service has developed the 'Fruit Tree initiative'. The scheme aims to help people source old apple varieties that were once traditionally grown in Herefordshire, but that are now rarely planted and difficult to obtain commercially and in turn restore or replant traditional standard orchards. The scheme now also offers traditional varieties of fruit tree that are budded on to semi-dwarf rootstock, resulting in a smaller tree that is suitable for planting in a smaller garden – ensuring that this budstock will be available for future generations to use for propagation.

The trees are grown by Frank Matthews Ltd. of Berrington Court, Tenbury Wells and are supplied at an age that should show good growth within two years of planting. This scheme is self-financing except for Herefordshire Council's staff time. The price you pay is based on the wholesale price we get charged.

### *Notes*

ALL advance ordered trees must be collected from Queenswood Country Park, Dinmore Hill, between 10am and 3pm on Saturday 27th or 10am to 2pm Sunday 28th November 2004. All advance order applications must be received by 12<sup>th</sup> November 2004

### **SPARE TREES**

Any spare trees from the 2004 collection along with some other apple trees of different varieties/rootstocks will be available to "Cash & Carry" at the collection weekend. Come along early in order not to miss out on anything! Payments made at the collection weekend can only be in Cash or Cheque as there are NO credit card facilities at weekends at Queenswood.

### *Fruit Trees for Orchards*

The aim of these "kits" is to help the restoration or replanting of traditional standard orchards. Each Orchard kit consists of one young tree supplied as a bare root maiden, together with a soft-tie. The apple varieties are budded on to M25 vigorous rootstock. With formative pruning this will lead to a traditional standard apple tree 4+ metres tall. Assuming there are other orchards nearby you should not suffer any pollination problems. You will need to decide upon and supply a suitable stake to support your tree, an 8' fencing stake with 6' high coil of weldmesh fence is

mistletoe did not qualify as a tree, but also incited another god to throw the arrow made of mistletoe at Balder, who instantly fell down dead. Definitely one of those prophecies with a riddle in the tail, the sort which caught Macbeth on the hop.

What we know of the Druids came first from the Roman writer, Pliny. Herbalists have always acknowledged the healing properties of mistletoe, and Culpeper recommends it for "mollifying hard knots, tumours and impostumes, drawing forth thick as well as thin humours from the remote parts of the body." In the 17th and 18th centuries, an increasingly materialistic period, antiquarian writers in England took it up, mixing myth, magic and fertility into a very saleable potion, a forerunner of our modern heritage industry. Frazer's mammoth study in magic and religion, with the druidic Golden Bough central to the subject, was published in 1922. Mistletoe has worked its way into festivals which celebrate the turn of the year. Now this heady mix is an evergreen fixture, firmly attached to our culture despite some churches discouraging its display.

Much of my information comes from articles by Jonathan Briggs, and if you are looking for a wider review and greater detail look up his piece published by *Plantlife* in 1999 called 'Kissing Goodbye to Mistletoe?' In it he outlines the results of two qualitative mistletoe surveys, one in 1970, and the other which he coordinated in the 1990s.

Outside its usual areas, why, when introduced, does mistletoe sometimes spread, sometimes not? Briggs mentions a population in California, introduced in 1900, which has now spread over an area of over 200 sq km, and to a variety of hosts. While in Edinburgh, where it was introduced by a local botanist in the 1890's, it has spread, but only a matter of a few hundred yards. Another introduction in Cambridge Botanic Gardens has reached a large range of hosts. In contrast, mistletoe in the Dublin Botanic Gardens, despite being introduced in 1890 and with a wide host population available, has hardly moved at all.

Because there is such an uneven distribution of mistletoe in Britain there is a perception in some parts that it is in decline, even at risk. This is surprising to anyone who knows orchards where trees in winter are festooned with bundles of dense evergreen. And not just apple. Although there is only one species of mistletoe growing here out of 1500 worldwide, our *Viscum album* has been noted on at least 60 different host species. Apple is far and away the commonest host, but in both gardens and orchards, surveys show that next on the list come lime, hawthorn and poplar, with fewer sightings on maple, willow, crabapple, false acacia, ash, plum, oak and rowan, in more or less descending order.

I've not come across any suggestions why mistletoe favours these species, but before too many dissertations are published on the subject, it's worth considering the situation in which these trees are likely to grow. For a start, distribution tends to follow river valleys such as the Thames and Wye, and the lowland counties already mentioned. There are very large areas of Britain where mistletoe is extremely rare, particularly the north and west. It avoids exposure, and even the gentle Cotswold hills form a boundary to the concentration of mistletoe sightings in the vale of the Severn. Most host species also grow in upland situations, so rainfall, exposure, and mean temperature will be factors. But there are enough variations in tree species, climate, recording procedures and observer attitude to make any simple claim to explain distribution fall on its head. What has been observed, however, is that mistletoe favours free grown trees having plenty of light and air, parkland trees, lines of poplar grown as windbreak, hedgerow and roadside trees, gardens and of course orchards; in other words, places where the planting of trees has in some way been managed. It also appears to favour hybrid cultivars rather than wild trees. Briggs says "Mistletoe must once have been a fairly rare inhabitant of naturally open

woodland and scrub. It is human intervention over the centuries that has led to it becoming more common."

Trees grown with good space around are maybe the only specimens able to realise their full potential as plants, and to be intrinsically healthier than woodland trees which constantly grow in competition. Is mistletoe telling us that it prefers healthy trees in a healthy habitat? Tree age, and so relative vigour, now starts to become part of the picture. For germination, mistletoe is aided by the rougher more fissured bark of mature and old trees, and it is less common to see mistletoe on trees less than 40 years old.

What does this mean for the future of mistletoe in orchards? The intensive plantings of commercial varieties of fruit trees on dwarfing rootstocks, heavily dependant on chemical controls, managed for maximum output instead of the health of the tree, inevitably result in trees with a lifespan which may never reach true maturity, let alone 40 years. Nor are these orchards a proper way to manage the finite resource of agricultural land; instead they represent a desire for low cost uniform bulk produce, as well as being vulnerable to politicians lurching from one agricultural policy to another. Mistletoe is low on the political agenda. On the peoples' agenda I hope it occupies a different space. What we can foster is a respect for the large old free grown trees where they still exist, and to ensure that sites continue to get planted up with young trees on vigorous rootstocks. Mistletoe can be a potent symbol for anything good which we wish to cherish for our future.

The process by which it attaches to its host is a fascinating study. Bark with fissures, as on mature and elderly trees, helps to capture seed deposited by birds. But are there other ways mistletoe relates better to an older host? It's a frugal parasite, drawing only water and minerals from its host, but in attaching itself a gall is formed, and galls often produce substances which in turn help to feed the parasite but harm the tree. Host wood beyond the point of attachment does not prosper, so does the parasite hasten the decay of the host? Ultimately, yes. If a tree becomes infested, mistletoe will reduce fruit yield, finally killing its host and itself. Only this year a member of Marcher Apple Network paid to have a false acacia pruned of a mass of mistletoe which threatened to break off branches – unfortunately at a season when it had no resale value. So the tradition of seasonal harvesting has always made sense, if only as a means of promoting the mutual health of two valuable plants.

Coming to the present, Britain imports large quantities of mistletoe from Europe, mostly for our New Year custom, a use which is almost unknown over the channel. In Germany and Switzerland it is intentionally planted and harvested at different times of the year to make medicinal extracts. Pickers seek out a variety of host species because each imparts different properties. Based on indications given by Rudolf Steiner, mistletoe extracts are used in the treatment of both benign and malignant tumours. It contains a complex of immunological compounds, and modern conventional medicine may now be catching up with what is already known by anthroposophical medicine, and what has always been realised by a long tradition of herbalists.

In the Plantlife article Jonathan Briggs describes at length how to grow your own. Too much to recount here, but I can add one detail I have been told will give mistletoe seed a better chance to germinate, and thereafter to attach itself to the host bark, which is to stick to the side of the tree which faces north. Good luck.

Diggory Kempton



## LITERARY CORNER

I am indebted to our member, Mrs Bissell in Abergavenny, for the following entries for the date of Thursday, 11 March, obviously from a small American calendar. The first entry is headed Forgotten English.

**Last Luck.** The last of anything, supposed to ensure luck to the giver. A child begs for the *last luck* or core of an apple, and it is generally bestowed by children, from the supposition that more will come to them by so doing. Each pippin [core?] is thrown at random over the head, and a simple nomony repeated, so [that as] many apples as..... pippins thrown will be forthcoming.  
C. Clough Robinson's Dialect of Leeds, 1862.

**Probable Birthday of John Chapman (1774 – 1845)**, better known as Johnny Appleseed. In 1806 the legendary husbandman began planting and tending apple trees along the Ohio River, navigating with a pair of lashed-together canoes. He was equally interested in preaching biblical messages and, in the course of his travels, converted many Indians. Thomas Holmes's 'Journal of a Year's Residence in America (1818), written while Chapman was spreading his evangelical seed, offered this reassuring firsthand observation: "I have traveled more than 4,000 miles about this country, and I never met with one single or rude native American."

## ORCHARDS AND WILDLIFE

Traditional orchards can form a valuable habitat for wildlife. 'Traditional' indicates a regime of management which has the continuity appreciated by fungi, flowering plants, and invertebrates as well as creatures higher up the food chain. Wild plants and animals are able to adjust their life-styles where the rate of change is slow and a regular pattern maintains the *status quo*. Trees in traditional orchards may be of different ages: the old or diseased being replaced gradually, so that over many years trees which grow well in that area will prosper and the associated wildlife can be encouraged to help maintain the orchard's health.

Commercial orchards have to be managed according to quickly changing economic climates. They can be valuable to insects and birds in the short term if the methods of maintenance are sympathetic, but change may have to be devastatingly swift. It is not easy for commercial growers to harness natural aids in fruit production because management techniques do not encourage the co-existence of wildlife. Over the last ten years, *MAN* has been demonstrating how enjoyable apple diversity can be. Many Local Authorities are to be congratulated for including orchards in their Biodiversity Action Plans, since orchards can be one of the longer enduring habitats in today's rapidly changing countryside. Modern-day gardeners often enjoy taking care of the wildlife around them and similarly orchardists, however small and select, can make a considerable difference to maintaining a healthy environment while at the same time adding zest and interest to their own lives.

Apple, pear and plum blossoms are so beautiful, designed to tempt their insect pollinators. Although hive bees are very useful in ensuring the fruit sets well, they are less inclined to work on cold, damp Spring days when the industrious bumble bees, having no human resource to feed their colony, will forage late into the evening. Traditionally, and inevitably, there will be wilder, more scruffy uncultivated parts of the orchard or garden where bumble bees can find an old vole hole to make a nest. Apart from the queen, who over-winters, the rest of the colony, like those of wasps and homets, only live one season. It is well worth the orchardist encouraging these hardworking insects to set up residence close by. Unlike hive bees they rarely sting! Various small wild bees and hoverflies, whose larvae devour aphids, visit the orchard, together with *Dilophus febrilis*, a black fly with long dangly legs, whose unpleasant-sounding English name "Feverfly" might disconcert until it is realised it, too, does a helpful job of pollinating the early blossoms.

Our orchard has a wide age-range of fruit trees, probably supporting a wider range of wildlife species now than was here originally. Even mistletoe, lost when its ancient apple tree host blew across the field in a Winter's gale, still grows in the hedge and homets which had colonised the rotten stump still visit the garden in Spring and the fruit in the orchard in Autumn, although we are not sure where they are based since their choice of the attic had to be discouraged. Last Autumn and Winter we had larger flocks of fieldfares, redwinkkks and mistle thrushes than ever, the numbers seem to increase each year as these hungry migrants descend on the orchard after their long journeys from Scandinavia. They continue to visit sporadically throughout the Winter. For various reasons we store quantities of apples in the cellar, these have to be sorted periodically, so when the trees are bare of leaves and fruit the birds are tempted to come nearer the house having this bounty spread out for them. We have a great view of bird behaviour: bossy fieldfares aggressively bouncing against all-comers, shyer redwings relying on their fierce-looking eye-stripe to maintain position and mistle thrushes puffing themselves into a bigger, more threatening shape as they all stake their claim at the feast. We enjoy their company as much as they enjoy the fruit: the "chuck-chucks", pipings, whistles and "churs" advertising that season of the year.

Wildlife is not totally beneficial of course, from our point of view. Loud are the groans and grumbles when a blue-tit's speculative peck ruins the best apple on the tree, when the marauding crow family descends to plunder unripe, undeveloped fruit clumsily breaking young branches at the same time. Bullfinches are not popular when it's discovered they have been attacking the young fruit buds. Canker, mildew, scab, aphids and codlin moths are irksome nuisances infiltrating the stockade so that in some years it looks as if the "Baddies" will win the battle of the balances. Yet if it were not for the destructively chewing caterpillars and leaf-sucking aphids, willow warblers, blackcaps, garden warblers and chaff chaffs wouldn't make their welcome return to us in April, joined by the expectantly awaited spotted flycatchers and, in a good year, redstarts searching for these creepy-crawling monsters in May and June. And how about when you go out into the Spring orchard when the blossoms scent the warmed air, when ladybird and lacewing larvae are chewing up the aphids and when, as this year, there are four song thrushes from early dawn to late evening vying with each other at full throttle, each claiming territory from their several singing posts? When the smart bullfinch family whistle to each other as they enjoy the sorrel, the tinkling twitter of goldfinches reminds us that they are eating the knapweed and thistle seeds, the orchard is truly a special place to be.

There is so much interest and joy in watching red-tailed and buff-tailed bumble bees, furry carder bees, hover flies and solitary bees doing their rounds early on a cool May morning; such chilling shivers to experience on hearing the menacing *basso profundo* hum of a queen homet as she patrols the blossoms for insects. Ants, annoying when they march up the apple trees to farm and "milk" the aphids, just have to be tolerated when their grassy tumps encourage green woodpeckers, cackling as they and their duller green offspring prod and poke for the delicacies to be found inside these citadels, hi the warm dusk of a June evening, we wait expectantly for emerging male Ghost Moths to perform their hypnotic ballet above the tall grasses while Noctule bats manoeuvre above the orchard in pursuit of 'May Bugs' and other beetles. At this time of day it is difficult to tell the smaller pipistrelle from a late-searching swallow or house martin as all zoom through on their quest for insects. Only once in twenty-odd years have we seen a shadowy barn owl cross our patch, but one never knows what may turn up as we meditatively sip our last-year's brew of apple juice! When the tawny owls start to call from the oaks along the river, we usually let the 'night brigade' take over and listen from the comfort of indoors whilst they hunt for voles and mice out there.

Our collection ranges from ancient varieties introduced into Britain by the Romans, like *Decio*, to a few very modern disease resistant ones like *Meridian* which became available about five years ago. Some of the older varieties have wonderful flavours, and they make the modern ones seem rather bland. But they also tend to suffer from disease, and not to have such big crops. My favourites are *Ashmead's Kernel*, which is quite an old English Russet (dating back to 1700). It doesn't look very special, being a rather dull green with brownish flush but it has a great flavour with a hint of nuts. But I have lots of other favourites including lovely crunchy early apples like *George Cave*, and some of the local varieties like *Saint Cecilia* which is a sort of Welsh Cox. Some of them are meant to taste like other fruits or spices - remember *Blenheim Orange*? But there's also *Pitmaston Pine Apple*, *Lemon Pippin*, *Lowland Raspberry*, *Irish Peach*, *Gooseberry* and *D'Arcy Spice* and *Nutmeg Pippin* to name a few.

Some of the names are quite quaint too. What about *Peasgood's Nonsuch* or *Knobby Russet* (it really is!), or *Hambledon Deux Ans* (because the fruit is reputed, wrongly, to last two years).

We have apples for all kinds of purposes – cooking, for eating, and for cider. A few varieties can be used for all three. There are rather dry ones like *Hereford Beefing* which you can slowly bake in the oven into apple rings. And others which are good for tarts or baking: *Mère de Ménage* is ideal for apple charlotte, *Golden Reinette* for tarts, and *Catshead* for dumplings.

Walking the orchards is always fun any time of the year. Blossom and young buds in spring, ripening apples in summer, coloured fruits and leaf fall in Autumn, and the developing shapes of the trees in winter.

Why not walk around and take a look for yourself?

Andrew Large

#### ORCHARD GLEANINGS 2004

One of the fundamental aims of MAN is to rescue old local varieties of orchard fruit from the threat of extinction. The other day one of our members asked what progress had been made in our hunt for 'lost' apples. During our tenth anniversary seemed an appropriate time to review our progress.

On the MAN stall at the Malvern Autumn Fruit Show in 1995 we displayed a poster of "Wanted Apples" seeking information about eleven varieties which appeared to have been lost from cultivation. Most were of local origin, including, *Credenhill Pippin*, *Herefordshire Costard*, *Herefordshire Spice Apple*, *Longville's Kernel*, *Onibury Pippin* and *Wormsley Pippin*. News about several of these is given below.

*Longville's Kernel* and *Sam's Crab* appear to have been recognised as synonyms ever since the variety was described, under the former name, by Lindley about 1830. *Sam's Crab* seems to have been the name in general currency in Herefordshire for the past century or so. An idea, mentioned in The Herefordshire Pomona (1876 – 85) that there were two sorts of *Sam's Crab* was probably just a reflection on the range in flavour of fruit from individual trees. However, Hogg took a different view in The Fruit Manual; in addition to the *Sam's Crab* which is a synonym for *Longville's Kernel* he included a second *Sam's Crab* with an almost identical description – "A Herefordshire cider apple". A prevalence of synonyms is just one of the problems which beset the identification of old apples. Fruit of ancient trees is often sparse and distorted by disease, therefore identification often requires the propagation of young trees. Even with the use of dwarfing rootstocks it may be several years before fruit is produced (trees of *Landore* in my

orchard, grafted on MM106 eight years ago, have not yet borne any fruit). When healthy fruit is available it needs to be compared with published descriptions, and wherever possible, authentic samples from the National Collections.

The saga of the search for the Herefordshire Costard, documented in Newsletters 4 and 5, highlights some of the pitfalls involved in the authentication of old varieties. The process may involve years of painstaking research. Although many old varieties are well described in the classic handbooks such as those of Hogg and Bunyard, and may even have coloured illustrations in a Pomona, there are often disparities in the accounts. The early-season cooker Sugar-Loaf Pippin, re-found in a garden at Glasbury, puzzled us for several years, mainly because of conflicting details in published descriptions.

Surveys of traditional orchards and identification enquiries at Shows have been the main ways in which we have encountered old apples. However, the recent rediscovery of a lost Shropshire apple followed a stranger path. For twenty years I have had two trees of "Bringewood Pippin", grafted from Brogdale scions, growing in my orchard. Soon after the trees started to bear fruit it became apparent that it did not match the published descriptions. But it was several years later, after dozens of samples had been dissected and checked, that it became clear that the apples were an excellent match for the Sweeney Nonpareil described in The Fruit Manual. Although no illustrations have come to light, Hogg's detailed description of this distinctive apple leaves little doubt about its identity, and several other nineteenth century accounts support this diagnosis. Sweeney Nonpareil was raised in 1807 by Thomas Netherton Parker of Sweeney Hall near Oswestry.

The rediscovery of the Worcestershire apple Chatley Kernel is recounted by Peter Weeks in Newsletter 7. Peter, who lives in the hamlet of Chatley, shows what can be achieved by careful research. The relationship between the red "Chatley Pippin" and Chatley Kernel is still being investigated by John Aldridge. John is patiently waiting for fruit to be produced on young trees of Whiting Pippin which were propagated from budwood sent by John White of Swadlincote in Derbyshire. Whiting Pippin is another lost Worcestershire apple. Other re-discovered apples at present on trial in our museum orchards include Credenhill Pippin, White Paradise, and Winter Quoining.

In 2001, one hundred years after Credenhill Pippin was first exhibited, young trees were propagated from an old tree at Swainshill. Apples from that tree brought for identification to the Big Apple event at Much Marcle, appeared to match the brief accounts of Credenhill Pippin in 'Apples of England' and 'The Apple Register'. In due course we are hoping to discover more about the provenance of the Swainshill tree. Credenhill Pippin is said to have been raised at Hereford by a Mr. Whiting. Is he the same person who gave his name to Whiting Pippin?

Wormsley Pippin is an old local variety which has proved particularly elusive. It was raised at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the famous pomologist Thomas Andrew Knight, who named it after his birthplace, Wormsley Grange, about seven miles northwest of Hereford. The first account of this large, mid-season cooker was published in the Transactions of the Horticultural Society in 1811 and there are illustrations in several nineteenth century Pomonas. Hogg, who gave a detailed description in The Fruit Manual, considered it a "most valuable apple", adding in a footnote "as a culinary apple it is not to be surpassed". However by 1920 Bunyard was recording "Seldom grown now". There have been several false claimants but we are still hoping that the true Wormsley Pippin will be re-found in a local orchard or cottage garden.

What we believe to be the true Winter Quoining has been re-found in orchards at Kingsland and Checkley. This is an extremely old variety illustrated in The Herefordshire Pomona. As is often the case with these ancient varieties, there appear to be several different sorts; they are all quite distinct from the apple in the National Collections known as Winter Pearmain, which also has the synonym Winter Quoining.

All the lost apples discussed above, with the exception of Credenhill Pippin, have detailed descriptions in the classic handbooks which greatly help in their identification. However, some varieties we come across lack this helpful documentation. These are usually very local varieties which were probably never offered for sale by commercial nurseries. All the Welsh apples except Cissy, St. Cecilia and Baker's Delicious fall into this category. Authentication of such undescribed varieties depends on such factors as provenance and independent corroboration, together with such historical background as may be gleaned by local research. The dual-purpose apple known as Landore or Monmouth Green is such a variety. There is a passing reference to it in Kilvert's Diary and some of the older inhabitants of the Welsh Marches can recall it in some detail, but no published description has been found. In cases like this, names require confirmation from two or more independent sources. "Suspects" can be cultivated and studied in our museum orchards. Evidence from orchard visits indicates that Landore has long been a popular variety in the countryside around the Black Mountains.

Onibury Pippin, a Shropshire apple, came to light on an exploratory visit to the village of Onibury. The second person we met was a very helpful and knowledgeable Shropshire tree warden who showed us an old tree of Onibury Pippin growing in a cottage garden in the village. The variety is reputed to have been raised by Thomas Andrew Knight, who had a nursery in this area in the nineteenth century. Onibury Pippin was included in a collection of dessert apples which won second prize for Thomas Griffiths of Tillington Nurseries at the Great Apple and Pear Exhibition of 1883 at Hereford. In a report on the event Onibury Pippin was praised as "a perfect model for a dessert apple .....worthy a place in every collection however small". Surprisingly the apple does not figure in The Herefordshire Pomona, and little information has been discovered in the literature.

Until last year the only local Welsh apples that had been independently authenticated were Marged Nicolas and Pig yr wydd. However, recent research by one of our members, Mrs. Muriel Beck, has achieved a similar status for Brithmawr. Mr. Joe Broom, the last manager of Fair Oak Nursery, the successor to John Basham & Sons at Bassaleg near Newport, was able to confirm a sample of apples collected by Mrs. Beck as definitely the variety Brithmawr. Mr. Broom commented that in the 1950s the nursery only kept one tree of Brithmawr as they did not consider it to be of commercial significance. John Basham raised the variety St. Cecilia about 1900, and in the early part of the twentieth century the nursery regularly exhibited at RHS events. Brithmawr is an attractive, red-speckled, large culinary apple that was exhibited by Fair Oak Nursery at the RHS Fruit Conference in 1934. To discover more about its qualities it is now being cultivated in one of our museum orchards in company with other undescribed local varieties such as John Norman, Hughes' Carnation, Pren glas and Pig Aderyn.

There are plenty of mysteries to be solved, synonyms to be disentangled and lost varieties to be rediscovered. We are still searching for Birdstow Wasp, Duke of Beaufort's Pippin, Herefordshire Pearmain, March Pippin, Forman's Crew .....

Mike Porter

### GRANT AID

Before reporting on our orchards we would like to record our grateful thanks to the Countryside Council for Wales for a grant for Museum Orchard Operations in Powys, 2003-2006. This has enabled us to purchase equipment to help maintain our orchards in good condition. Members of *MAN* provided match funding from the considerable hours of volunteer work done and recorded over the year. We purchased, locally, after seeing a demonstration cut done at Tredomen Court, a ride-on Countax Mower and a 36" Field Mulcher, together with a road trailer and a hitch-on Dump Truck for carrying stakes, hole boring equipment, post rammers and all the other heavy equipment needed on planting days. A Security Wheel Clamp and a heavy duty Stihl Brushcutter for strimming were also purchased from this grant, which includes insurance costs and payment for mowing for the next two years. This mower can be towed, on its trailer, to each of our orchards.

The Brecon Beacons National Park provided a Conservation & Community Grant with which we were able to make up the shortfall and buy a Combi-ladder, to enable us to safely prune the trees as they grow taller, to pick specimen fruits for displays and to collect graftwood from old trees where the only suitable scions are frequently to be found only at the very top of an ancient tree. The assistance given by Claire Parsons, the Community Development Officer, in filling in this grant application, was much appreciated.

Sheila Leitch

### NEWS OF OUR ORCHARDS

#### TREDOMEN COURT, Llanfilo, Breconshire.

This, our largest 'Museum Orchard', now has nearly 200 trees, of which only a few are duplicates, being cultivars from different sources which we are comparing. Blossom-time was particularly beautiful this year, as most of the trees are old enough now to be flowering and several films were taken to gather information on pollination groups, blossom colour and petal size, all of which will help in the identification of the unknowns. The promise of the Spring has been fulfilled on this site, and most of the older trees are so laden that branches have broken in the recent windy spell and some late thinning will have to be done to prevent further damage.

We are very pleased with the performance of the new ride-on mower. The first cut was heavy going, as there was a lot of what Bryn Davies, our member who is in charge of the mowing and strimming, calls 'feggy stuff' as well as tall docks and nettles. A later mid-summer cut and strim tidied it all up well and a third cut in late August has made it look well-cared for and photogenic. Once the fruit is harvested, a last strim round the trees will be done. At the moment many of the trees have branches so weighed down with fruit that they reach the ground. We know we can trust Bryn with the strimmer! The coarse grasses should be on the decrease by next season. Prior to these acquisitions, the orchard was mown for hay and there was considerable damage to the trees from the tractor and wide cutter.

Last Autumn, at some of our Identification Sessions, we were able to put names to quite a number of our mystery trees growing at this orchard, grafted with scions taken, for the most part, from old trees, where the quality of their fruit had not enabled us to name them. For others, a second examination confirmed our previous ideas. A large, heavily russeted apple from Penmaes Orchard at Bronllys, has now been identified to our satisfaction as Reinette du Canada.

We are delighted to see fruit, for the first time, on some of our more interesting finds. Several years ago, as reported in Newsletter No.2, I was phoned by an elderly gentleman who said he

was the great grandson of the innkeeper at King's Newton in Derbyshire who, about 1870, found a good apple growing in his thatch and transplanted it into his orchard, which still remains. This was later known as Newton Wonder. He had other apples in the orchard, including one called Whiting Pippin and sent us some twigs in July. John Aldridge managed to obtain a couple of buds from the very poor dried out material and has been waiting, ever since, to see if the tree is the genuine cultivar, as described in Hogg's 'The Fruit Manual'. On a visit to Tredomen this week to photograph the trees in fruit, I found that the Whiting Pippin bore seven flat-round green apples with very short stems and noticeable lenticels. The external appearance of the apples, though still immature, seems to match the description in Hogg's 'The Fruit Manual'.

It was interesting to see the fruits on a healthy young tree of a variety we are calling Hughes' Camation, which has been slow in coming to bear. Fruit collected from two veteran trees from different orchards, both aged well over 100 years, were often very irregular and mis-shapen, but these at Tredomen were large, clean and well-coloured and I have tried one of the early windfalls baked, which was a favourite way of cooking them in Glasbury, where we believe the cultivar originated. It baked beautifully and had a good flavour, and, in the first week of September, was twice the size of my immature Bramley's Seedling fruit. It was called the 'August Apple' by some of the people who had it in their garden or orchard.

It would be helpful if, for next year, we could muster a group of volunteers who would meet once a month at whichever is their nearest orchard, for routine maintenance work such as checking tree ties, thinning fruit, dealing with broken branches, collecting produce and, in the dormant season, pruning and planting. Something to discuss at the AGM?

Sheila Leitch

#### **CROFT PENDARREN, Llangynidr, Breconshire.**

'Tir Allen 59', one of the unknown trees which bore fruit in 2003, has been provisionally identified as New Northern Greening. This is a late-season culinary variety which originated before 1850, according to The Apple Register.

Last winter dense thickets of blackthorn and brambles, which were encroaching from the hedges, were cut back. Four apple trees were planted in March. Some of the older trees such as Pig yr wydd and Hughes' Camation have produced fruit for the first time this year, but will the squirrels or the crows get there first?

Mike Porter

#### **DONNINGTON, near Ledbury, Herefordshire.**

The tree collection here continues to grow and the allotted site is virtually complete. There have been no further casualties to date, either through drought or the opposite. Trees which have shown a willingness to fruit include May Queen, Kidd's Orange Red, Sam's Crab, Epicure, Court of Wick, Colonel Vaughan and, now, Betty Geeson, Roxbury Russet and Syke House Russet. But the best performer undoubtedly has been Stirling Castle – despite having had to survive some onslaught by rabbits before proper guards were put in place. This is noteworthy since this variety, if you examine our website, triggered that chance meeting between an apple enthusiast in Glasbury and another one in Hereford!

We owe a debt of gratitude to our member, Andrew Putnam, Treasurer of 'Big Apple', who kindly came to the rescue when we were planting the last few trees and had to be left to continue alone when John Aldridge became unwell and had to be taken home. Thus was the day saved.

Ray Boddington

#### **LOWER FFORDDFAWR, nr Hay-on-Wye, Breconshire.**

The very dry summer of 2003 did not help our newly grafted young trees on M9 rootstocks to

get their roots established and with the added stress of a hot dry spring this year we have lost quite a number. This site is on quite stony ground and drains freely and the conditions affected some of the trees planted in Autumn 2002, which we had hoped were well established. Some of the casualties were varieties we had bought from Brogdale, to give us the chance to become familiar with fruit we have not yet located in our area. Six were scions collected in the winter of 2003/4 and grafted on site on surviving rootstocks in March, during a grafting training day organized by 'Glasu'. Only two of these grafts took. Perhaps the date was partly to blame as the sap was not yet rising in the rootstocks and the subsequent watering was apparently inadequate. Later, quite a number of the young trees were afflicted by aphids and the leaves curled up and died. They were sprayed with detergent, but a check in August confirmed that they were still looking poor. It is hoped we can replace the losses by another order from Brogdale and collection of more graftwood.

We will have to routinely water this nursery site next year unless there is plenty of rain throughout the growing season. Weather goes from one extreme to the other these days and unseasonable weather is the norm. Excessive rainfall seems to alternate with severe drought conditions.

Sheila Leitch

#### **WESTHOPE, near Canon Pyon, Herefordshire.**

All the trees seem to be in good health but cropping is varied. The remarkable Newland Sack (see earlier issues) is doing well. Trees with good fruit include Domino and Sam's Crab. Small to fair crops are on Duke of Devonshire, Scotch Bridget, Stoke Edith Pippin and Annie Elizabeth and there are a few fruits on Winter Quoining, Golden Harvey and Severn Bank. The other trees, Pomeroy of Hereford, Prince Alfred, Gascoynes's Scarlet and Piq's Nose Pippin are without fruit.

Now the trees are getting bigger and especially when they are in full leaf, maintenance of this orchard, with its rampant vegetation and deer cages not all that easy to get into, is something of a problem. The field owner had her contractors give the orchard a serious cut last year, but nature soon asserts itself. This year I got a local man to do some of the heavy strimming. Next year we will need a new maintenance regime and extra help would be appreciated.

Peter Austerfield

#### **NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS**

We continue to exchange Newsletters with other groups with similar aims to our own. A few extracts and items of interest are included below:-

#### **IRISH SEED SAVER ASSOCIATION**

The Autumn Issue has just arrived. It includes an outspoken article entitled 'Confronting Contamination', reprinted from 'Seedling' magazine April 2004, which makes an impassioned case against genetically modified crops, giving five reasons to reject co-existence of GM crops and non-GM crops, as contamination is inevitable.

On a happier subject this issue includes details of a 'Native Apple Catalogue, 2004', which lists a wide selection of native trees, together with some from elsewhere which are known to do well in the Irish Climate. It is the culmination of many years work by people from all over Ireland and lists 85 varieties of apple which can now be supplied as young trees on semi dwarfing, half standard or standard rootstocks. Many come from the National Apple Collection held at Capparoo at ISSA and at University College Dublin and were formerly presumed to be extinct. Purchasers are asked to document the characteristics of their trees as they grow; flowering and fruiting times, vigour, disease resistance and taste. They will provide forms on request for this purpose.



The orchard can be a good place to see orange-tip butterflies, attracted by the milkmaid flowers, in April and May. Then comes the time for speckled woods, meadow browns and common blues who enjoy the patches of bird's-foot trefoil: paler holly blues sometimes frequent the hedge hollies in Spring or the ivy in August. When the purple knapweed starts to flower small skippers arrive and with the occasional small copper flit around these handsome plants sometimes in large numbers in warm summers. The last butterflies of the year, red admirals, small tortoiseshells and peacocks, some of which will have started life here on the nettles, haunt the orchard in Autumn to sip the juices from rotting apples, previously attacked by blackbirds or wasps. The survivors will over-winter in the ivy or undergrowth and may be seen around the garden perhaps on a warm February day. In the grassland in Autumn, wax caps, yellow, bright red, orange, buff and, occasionally when the grass is of the right length, the rare pale pink beauty, are an indication of an orchard's biodiversity and are also a manifestation of the historic value of maintaining land in a natural and traditional way which encourages and supports a vast wealth of wildlife.

Last October at the AGM at the Shire Hall in Hereford, MAN was joined by two workers from the Herefordshire Nature Trust who are looking in old orchards for insects like the special moths which depend on mistletoe for their livelihood and rare saproxylic beetles like the noble chafer. These last inhabit well-established orchards where ancient trees have been left to rot in peace, something which would not be generally recommended in modern orchard maintenance. The People's Trust for Endangered Species is currently supporting survey work in Gloucestershire's old orchards. If we dismiss these ancient trees and condemn different regimes of management so that everything conforms to one "ideal" way of doing things perhaps we shall be in great danger of losing not only a great British landscape asset, but a much more delicate system of natural life-forms whose significance we are only just beginning to appreciate. Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Red Data Book accounts make us aware of the fragility of the planet. To identify and conserve old apple varieties before they too all disappear is one of MAN's chief aims: by looking after the apple genes in traditional orchards, a working relationship with wildlife can be fostered, providing a haven for other plants and animals in a balanced, natural environment. There is the added bonus of wonderful fruit that we, in our short spell here, can take much pleasure in sharing.

Chris Porter

### NURSERY NOTES

In the spring, I usually graft with scions of 3-5 buds, which results in young trees with strong central leaders and just one or two side-shoots. These 'feathers' are very useful as they help thicken the stem and heal the graft. If they are not too strong they can be left, but quite often they are powerful enough to compete with the leader and have to be stopped. I usually cut them back to a downward facing bud about 4" from the main stem in early July. The fleshy tips are thrown away and this has always bothered me as it represents a waste of valuable propagating material.

In an annual report from Long Ashton Research Station, I read that, in order to free varieties from viruses, they grew them for a month at 38°C to inactivate the virus and then took softwood grafts, so last year I gave softwood grafting a go.

A saddle cut was made in the stump of the fleshy tip, which was placed onto a complementary cut on the new soft rootstock growth. The graft was carefully bound with a piece of rubber grafting tape and the whole assembly enclosed in a polythene bag to maintain maximum humidity.

This technique is not for the faint-hearted! Within a day, the tip had wilted and within a week the leaves had fallen off. But after 3 weeks, the apical shoot had started to grow and by the end of the year, several inches of new growth had been made. I am very pleased with the results and will try to include the technique in my grafting schedule.

Like most people, I have a horribly diseased *Cox's Orange Pippin* in the garden! A few years ago I grafted a *Grenadier*, which is very resistant to both scab and canker, onto one of the limbs.

This year it has borne considerable fruit showing no sign of scab even though the Cox fruits immediately below the graft are badly affected. Similarly, there is no sign of canker on the Grenadier wood despite there being a nasty canker lesion on the Cox just below the graft. However, the Grenadier leaves are suffering from 'Cox spot', which I believe is a physiological irregularity shown by Cox and several other varieties (including *Afal Pig yr Wydd*), which has clearly passed through the graft.

Paul Davis

### GRAZING IN TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS

The press has recently discussed the proposals of the Food Standards Agency that traditional orchards should no longer be grazed by any farm animals due to possible contamination of fruit by droppings. No mention of foxes, badgers, grey squirrels or birds. If you feel strongly, as I do, against the proposals, please write to your M.P. As you well know, all cider fruit is routinely washed before processing and eating and cooking apples do not come into contact with the ground. Whatever next!

Tom Froggatt

### ON THE SUBJECT OF PEARS

There is still a substantial collection of cordon pears at Holme Lacy House – not far out of Hereford: the house in this county boasting the largest number of bedrooms and some spectacular plaster ceilings and, formerly, Grinling Gibbons carvings plus a panelled Edwardian ballroom, (roughly contemporary with the 'Titanic'). The edifice was raised by Viscount Scudamore who, besides introducing the renowned 'redstake' cider apple, had been King Charles 1's ambassador to the French Court. In its earlier days the garden of Holme Lacy House has been suggested to have been laid out as a 'battle garden' of the type in vogue at the time of William 111 ('of the Glorious Revolution').

The cordon pear collection dates from Victorian times and an article extolling this system of growing was published in 'The Herefordshire Pomona' by the then owner, Sir Henry Scudamore Stanhope Bt.

After several changes of illustrious ownership an heiress of the Wills family gifted the whole property to the local authority in the 1930s. Under public ownership, therefore, it was used as a 'mental institution' under local medical supervision until about 20 years ago – give or take. It was then left empty and unloved while the County Council (of Hereford and Worcester) endeavoured to find a purchaser but, after several changes of ownership during which time some extension and restoration was carried out, it finally ended with a private buyer and is now leased to Warner Holidays and, therefore, resplendently run and occupied by a constant stream of visitors!

Obviously, over this lengthy period – though yew hedges were left intact – the surroundings to the house underwent a period of benign neglect – none more so than the collection of pears.

recommended, although you may wish to vary this depending upon the management regime/grazing of your orchard. Please ask for further details on any of this information.

*The Varieties for Orchards - £8.50 per kit/tree*

Api (or Lady Apple)  
Ellison's Orange  
Irish Peach  
Scotch Bridget

*Special Variety for 2004 - £8.50 per kit/tree*

*Introducing a brand new Herefordshire apple variety raised for the 21st Century -*

**HEREFORDSHIRE RUSSET**

After many years of careful selection, propagation and lots of TLC, Frank P Matthews of Tenbury are pleased to be able to offer the residents of Herefordshire the first new Herefordshire apple variety for decades.

"Trying the apple last autumn whilst looking around Matthew's orchards with owner/manager Nick Dunn I decided straight away that it should be included as the 'special' in the coming year's fruit tree kit initiative, as everyone should get the chance to own a tree of this fabulous apple variety - supporting new county distinctive varieties is equally important as those traditional older ones",

"The Herefordshire Russet combines the best russet nuttyness with crisp creamy flesh, balanced mouth tingling acidity and a seemingly endless supply of rich apple juice. The classic golden-russeted skin with a greeny-yellow under colour is thin and crunchy. Combine all this in a hand-sized apple from a regular cropping and disease resistant tree and I believe you've the finest dessert apple available today - and you can cook with it too! Nick Dunn and F P Matthews are on to a real winner whichever county you may live in." Available on M25 'standard' rootstock for traditional orchards and M9 rootstock for gardens and training. (M9 trees will require permanent support from a stake reaching about 6' in height but are also ideally suited to training as cordons, espalier, fans and bush trees) An apple covering every taste, don't miss out order your Herefordshire Russet today!

*Fruit Tree Kits for Gardens*

The aim of these kits is to keep the budstock of the traditionally grown old apple varieties alive in gardens so that they are available for future generations to propagate. Each Garden Kit consists of one young tree supplied as a bare root maiden together with a tie. The apple varieties are budded on to M26 semi-dwarf rootstock. With formative pruning this will lead to an apple tree 2-3 metres tall. It is advisable to have a minimum space of 2 metres between trees. In a garden setting pollination is not normally considered a problem due to the proximity of other apple trees in surrounding gardens. A stake or cane may be required to support the tree.

*The Varieties for Gardens - £8.50 per kit/tree*

Orders Limited to a maximum of 2 kits per site/application.

*Bramley "Original" (budstock sourced from original Bramley tree)*

Brookes's  
Hunt's Duke of Gloucester  
Pitmaston Pine Apple

Leaflets, which include application forms, are obtainable from Parks & Countryside Service, PO BOX 41, Leominster, HR6 OZA. Tel/Fax 01568-797305.

James Bisset Principal Countryside Officer October 2003

## IDENTIFICATIONS

May we again remind members who wish to have apples identified that we require some information on season (early, mid or late), whether eater or cooker, approximate age of tree, under/over 50 years, and the address. We ask for three typical specimens of a variety, which must be in good condition. Identification sessions involve our 'team' members travelling up to 50 miles to gather round the table, so a charge of £1 per variety for members, and £3 for non-members is made. You may, of course, bring specimens to any of the apple events which we will be attending and so save high postage costs.

## SALE OF GRAFTWOOD AND BUDWOOD

A few members have taken advantage of the offer in last year's Newsletter to supply propagation material, and we hope to hear of successful results. *MAN* will continue this service. As stated last year, in order to make the collection of material reasonably convenient and economical, there will have to be cut-off dates for receipt of orders. Those for graftwood have to be in by 10th January, to Mike Porter, Tel: 01874-730354, and budwood by 10th July to John Aldridge, Tel. 01432-820304. Sheila Leitch and John Aldridge will have lists of varieties grown within the Network. Prices per stick (10 - 12") to members, £1.25 (non-members, £2.50). Postage at cost, minimum £2.00. The scheme is geared to personal, not commercial, quantities.

## MAN LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Last year Tom Froggatt, our Treasurer, was able to purchase, after a valuation had been made, a large collection of fruit books. These make a very interesting addition to our library and are included in the library list which is available for a second class stamp and a SAE. Books can be consulted by arrangement at Wye View, or at an event, or some can be borrowed for short periods by members living locally, who are able to return them in person.

This year we have had a reprint done of our first publication:-  
Apples of the Welsh Marches. Text by Marcher Apple Network. Photographs by Michael Porter. Design and Typeset by James Bisset for Oldlands Press. The reprint includes one more apple, *Newland Sack*. This publication lists the old varieties of apples cultivated in the traditional orchards of the West Midlands and the neighbouring parts of Wales. It includes dessert and culinary apples available for sale by nurseries, but excludes purely cider apples. There are alphabetical lists of 'local' apples, with a brief account of each variety, arranged by county or region where they are thought to have originated. Also listed are varieties extensively grown in our area in the past and still to be found in local farm orchards. 88 are listed and described and are accompanied by 20 beautiful colour photographs. Priced at £3, or £4 with post and packing, this very attractive and informative booklet can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Mr. D. Kempton, Brook House, Hopesay, CRAVEN ARMS, Shropshire, SY7 8HD, and will be on sale at all the Autumn events which we shall be attending.

Sheila Leitch

## THE WEBSITE

See Richard Wheeler's detailed account of the website which appeared in Newsletter 9. His suggestions there of how you can help are repeated below. His 'Soundbite notes for this year follow.

### Can You Help?

Of course you can! Here are some suggestions...

If you have any influence with another website ask their webmaster to set up a link to the *MAN* website. The *MAN* website has an extensive links page to other regional and national websites with related interests and I am always happy to add a reciprocal link.

If you have information which can be included in the website – particularly on events, courses, grants and orchards open for visiting – please let me know. There is some bias towards Herefordshire in the website content because information from Herefordshire comes to me fairly readily.

Do you think that some of the website is poorly written or incorrect? Why not rewrite those parts you think can be improved - I wrote the page on Orchards to Visit and it really is a bit of a mess. Help on any of the items listed above under Future Plans would be most welcome.

For any suggestions, requests, questions, complaints or praise about *MAN*'s website please feel free to contact me –

Richard Wheeler, *MAN* Webmaster  
webmaster@marcherapple.net

### ***MAN* website "soundbites"**

There are 107 files on the Marcher Apple Network website. These make up 38 distinct webpages.

Over the past year (July 2003 to June 2004) there have been 16,624 requests for webpages from the Marcher Apple Network website. That is an average of 45 requests a day. October 2003 was the busiest month with 2067 requests. 16 Feb 2004 was the busiest day with 161 requests.

Most visitors to the Marcher Apple Network website find the site through the search engine Google. The next most popular source – Yahoo – gives about a ninth of the number of visitors that Google does. Thanks to all of The BBC, Gloucester Orchard Group, The Malvern Trail and The National Orchard Forum - all of who provide links to Marcher Apple Network website.

The most popular page on the Marcher Apple Network website is that listing nurseries which sell traditional varieties of apples and pears. (Nurserymen take note! and check your details are correct). The next most popular pages are the links to other sites, the book list and the events diary.

The diary on the Marcher Apple Network website is the most comprehensive (and up-to-date) list of events in the Marcher Counties which celebrate apples and pears.

The webwise amongst you can help Marcher Apple Network whenever you buy from amazon.co.uk by first going to the Marcher Apple Network books page - <http://www.marcherapple.net/books.htm> Amazon know you have come from the Marcher Apple Network website and will give Marcher Apple Network commission on any purchases you make.

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

Saturday/Sunday, 28th/29th August. Black Mountains Festival, Talgarth. *MAN* will have a small display of early season apples, with some to taste and buy. We shall be in the Market, on the Sunday only, from 12.00am–5.00pm.

Saturday/Sunday, 4th/5th September. National Botanic Garden of Wales, Middleton Hall, Llanarthne, nr. Carmarthen. Plant Sale. Paul Davis will be there with apple trees for sale and *MAN* will be there for the first time with a small display of early apples. It is hoped some local varieties will be brought for identification. For further details: Tel. 01558-667148.

Sunday, 12th September. Entertainment under the Apples at Penlanole. From 2.00pm–6.00pm. On the A470 between Newbridge-on-Wye and Rhayader, just south of the Vulcan Arms. For further details Tel. 01597-811487.

Saturday/Sunday, 18th/19th September. Abergavenny Food Festival to be held in the Market Hall and the Castle. A celebration of food of the Marches. Farmers' Market with local specialist food producers selling delicacies. MAN will be at the Castle on both days where there will be a display of fruit, an identification service and book sales. Our member, Colin Gardiner, will be in the Market Hall where he will be selling his certified organic Gellirhyd Apple Juice. Further details from Julia French. Tel. 01873-851643.

Saturday/Sunday, 25th/26th September. Malvern Autumn Show at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern. MAN will have a fruit display, including some apples from Berrington Hall and will be offering an identification service.

Saturday/Sunday, 25th/26th September. Apple weekend at Berrington Hall, near Ludlow. Details from the Office, Tel. 01568-615721.

Saturday/Sunday, 25th/26th September. Open weekend at the Sunnybank Vine Nursery, Journey's End, King Street, Ewyas Harold, Hereford. This nursery holds the National Vine Collection of outdoor hardy dessert and wine grapes, plus the National Seedless Vine Collection. Total over 300 varieties. An opportunity to see the largest collection of vine varieties ever assembled in Great Britain, most carrying ripe or nearly ripe grapes. Everyone welcome. Plenty parking space. Refreshments available. There will be no charge but a contribution to help cover costs and to support a local good cause will be welcomed. Further details from Brian Edwards, Tel. 01981-240256. Web site: <http://vinenursery.net.com>

Saturday/Sunday, 2th/3rd October. Open weekend as above, but for Specialist Societies by invitation. MAN members are welcome on either weekend.

Thursday, 7th October. Trumpet Ploughing Match and Fruit Show at Lower Walton Farm (just past the Slip Inn), Much Marcle.

Saturday, 9th October. Apple Day in the Ironbridge Gorge. Cider Making at The Greenwood Trust, Ironbridge, Shropshire. The day will include the history of cider, apple varieties, cider making demonstration and instructions on how to build a small timber framed cider press. Shropshire Apple Trust have restored the traditional twin-screw apple press and scragging mill and invite people from all over the county and beyond to your own apples and take them to the old station site at Coalbrookdale in the two weeks prior to the event. Large display of different Apple varieties, some particular to Shropshire and craft demonstrations of the work of the Greenwood Trust such as pole lathing. There will also be a chance to have your own apples identified. Bring samples with leaves. Fun activities for children. Pork roast and vegetarian option. Country wines and cider for sale. For further details, please contact Michael Pooley, Tel. 01952-433229 or The Greenwood Trust on 01952-432769 or at [gwt@greenwoodtrust.org.uk](mailto:gwt@greenwoodtrust.org.uk)

Saturday, 9th October. Oktoberfest. Hightown, Hereford. MAN will be represented. For details contact Kate Easthaugh, Tel. 01432-383209.

Saturday/Sunday, 9th/10th October. 'The Big Apple'. From 12.00am-5.00pm. A harvest-time celebration of English apples and cider in the Herefordshire parishes of the Marcle Ridge. The venue will be Hellens Manor House, Much Marcle. MAN will be there with a display of traditional varieties of apples and pears and will be identifying your samples. There will be tastings and apple juices on sale. For final details of talks, demonstrations and other events, phone Jackie Denman, Secretary of the 'Big Apple Association', on 01531-670544.

Saturday, 16th October. Another 'Blue Remembered Hills' event. Community juicing at Crown Inn, Clunton, from 12.00am–4.00pm. You are advised to bring your own fruit and a receptacle for the juice. Further details from John Tucker, Tel. 01588-674092.

Sunday, 17th October. Marcher Apple Network's annual event to celebrate Apple Day. This year we will be at the Baskerville Hall, Clyro and, for the first time, we will be holding the event on a Sunday, so please note. We hope members will make a day of it and the general public will come too and learn something of our aims. The AGM, for members only, will be held from 11.30am–1.00pm. This should give time for discussion. It would be helpful, if you have points you wish to raise, if you could drop a line in advance to one of the addresses at the end of the Newsletter. There is no charge for members who attend the AGM. Lunches and bar snacks will be available for those who require them. It would be helpful if you would book lunch in advance, if possible, Tel. 01497-820033. The venue, which used to be known as Clyro Court, has beautiful grounds with a view of the Black Mountains for those who would like to picnic. The drive entrance is well signed, on the A438 Hereford to Brecon road, on the west side of the River Wye at NGR SO 208428. The event rooms will then be open to the general public from 2.00pm-5.00 pm, to enjoy all the usual attractions associated with Apple Day, including a display of old apple and pear varieties and also a small informative display of cider apples. There will be apple and apple juice tastings, and bottles of single variety apple juice will be on sale, which make most acceptable Christmas presents. An identification panel will try to name your unknown fruit. £1 per variety on the day. If has to be taken away and done later, the charge is £3 for Non-members. (Bring at least 3 specimens of each variety please.) Tea and home-made refreshments with an apple theme will be on sale at the Baskerville Hall, which will leave our helpers free to enjoy the event. Admission, at the door, Single, £3, Family £5. There is plenty car parking space. Paul Davis will send some trees for sale, in pots. If you want to order a particular variety, contact him in advance and he will send you a list of what he has available, and on which rootstocks. Tel. 01558-668744. [applewise@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:applewise@tiscali.co.uk)

Saturday/Sunday, 16th/17th October. Apple Event at The National Botanic Garden of Wales, Middleton Hall, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire from 10.00am–6.00pm both days. This is a first time this venue will be holding an Apple Event. There will be a very large display of up to 300 varieties of apples, including cider. There will be apple identification and tastings. Paul Davis will be demonstrating grafting. For more details Tel. No. 01558-667148/9

Saturday/Sunday, 16th/17th October. Cidermaking Festival at the Cider Museum, Ryelands Street, Hereford. For more details, contact the Cider Museum on 01432-354207.

Thursday, 21st October. Apple Day. Events countrywide. Programme available from Common Ground. Send SAE to Common Ground, Gold Hill House, 21, High Street, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 8JE. Tel. 01747-850820. Or use the Web Site: [www.commonground.org.uk](http://www.commonground.org.uk)

Saturday, 23rd October. Leominster Apple Fair. At Lion Ballroom, Broad Street. From 10.00am–4.00pm. MAN will be holding an identification session. Details from Felicity Norman, Tel. 01568-780886.

Saturday/Sunday, 23th/24th October. Apple Weekend at Acton Scott Working Farm Museum, Shropshire, organized by 'The Blue Remembered Hills Project'.

On the Saturday, Mike Porter, helped by his wife, Chris, will be there to identify apples (three specimens of each required) and it is hoped that Paul Davis will be giving a public demonstration of restorative pruning. Information from John Tucker, Tel. 01588-674092.

On the Sunday, Paul Davis will be holding a Restorative Pruning Training Session from 10.30am–1.00pm. This course is now fully booked.

Sunday, 24th October. Church Stretton Apple Fair at Sylvester Home Institute, High Street, Church Stretton, Shropshire, from 11.00am–4.00pm. There will be a display of local apples. Details from John Lloyd, Tel. 01694-723143.

Tuesday, 9th November. Mike Porter will be holding two Identification training sessions at the Secret Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms at 10.00 am and 2.00pm. Run by 'The Blue Remembered Hills Project'. Details from John Tucker, Tel. 01588-674092. Booking essential. You may bring your own apples for identification, three specimens of each.

Tuesday, 30th November. Restorative Pruning Course to be held at Ashford Carbonell Village Hall, near Ludlow, from 10.30am–1.30pm with Paul Davis. This course, arranged by 'The Blue Remembered Hills Project', is now fully booked.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

The financial year for *MAN* begins 1st August, to coincide with the beginning of the apple season. We send out the Newsletter to all those on our address list for the previous year, trusting they will wish to continue supporting *MAN*. PLEASE SEND YOUR SUBSCRIPTION of £5 NOW, for this year, while you read your Newsletter No.10, unless you are a Life Member or pay by Standing Order. Slips are inserted in this Newsletter, reminding members who pay annually by cheque that subscriptions are now due.

### SPRING NEWS SHEET

Any items for the Spring News Sheet would be welcome, to arrive before March. Brief updates and advance notice of summer events etc. can be included on this double-sided A4 sheet.

### NEWSLETTER NO 11

Material for Newsletter No.11, preferably typed, as opposed to hand-written, or on IBM compatible floppy disc, (suitable for Word), will be welcomed throughout the year, but please send articles, or at least an indication of length, to the Editor, Sheila Leitch, by the beginning of July, 2004, at the latest. Dates of events and small news items and 'fillers' can be accepted in early August. If you have access to e-mail, please send your article as a Word attachment with the letters MAN in the title to my neighbour: [traverse\\_b@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:traverse_b@yahoo.co.uk)

Grateful thanks to the team of keen-eyed proofreaders. We should point out that the views expressed in the Newsletter are those of individual contributors, not necessarily those of *MAN*.

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