

MARCHER APPLE NETWORK

NEWSLETTER No 5

Non-Members £1.00

Summer 1999

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Our Network has now been in existence for 5½ years, and in that time has built up a membership of 250, including 77 Life and Honorary Members. Displays at local venues keep us busy every Autumn, and attract plenty of interest from the public who are pleased, and often surprised, to find a rich culture of old varieties, many of which stir childhood memories not altogether erased by what is on offer today in the supermarkets.

Interest in the nurture and cultivation of old varieties seems to be spreading across the country. Last Autumn we received a visit from a group in Hertfordshire, centred on St.Albans, who came to view the National Trust / NCCPG* collection at Berrington Hall, and our own planted site at Tredomen Court, Llanfilo. Some of our members in Norfolk are now involved in a Norfolk Apples and Orchard Project. We continue to be contacted by other groups similarly orientated.

The show season commenced with our display in the Market at the Talgarth Festival, held on August Bank Holiday weekend. We also held our own specific MAN evening at Talgarth Town Hall, in October, though we were somewhat unfortunate with the weather! Early in September, we participated with NCCPG, Herefordshire, in a horticultural afternoon at Elton Hall, near Ludlow, the home of Thomas Andrew Knight, the 18th/19th century pioneer in pomology and fruit breeding. (A similar event is scheduled for the first Sunday in September this year). The Autumn show at Malvern at the end of September, Croft Castle early in October, and the 'Big Apple' event at Much Marcle, kept us busy with displays and advice to a public thirsting for information about worthwhile apple trees of mostly local provenance, which could be procured. The main planting activity of last year's season was at Donnington, near Ledbury, where two acres of 'set-aside' land had been offered to us by local landowners. Trees are making good growth on the sites at Tredomen Court, near Brecon, and at Westhope in Herefordshire, the former now awaiting a further area to be made available, whereas the latter is fully occupied by what we have planted. Talks and displays were presented to several organisations, including the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, in Hereford, one of the most senior bodies of its type, and publisher of 'The Herefordshire Pomona' from 1876-85.

Site visits included a substantial orchard of ancient trees a few miles east of Worcester, where we were introduced to Worcester Silk, a dessert apple of considerable interest, and the Herefordshire Council's own site at Bodenham, north of the city, where the varieties were successfully identified. A useful relationship has been formed with the appropriate sectors of both county authorities, and we very much welcome the support and interest we are receiving from Countryside Partnership officers, particularly in Herefordshire.

*National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens

As the new season approached, we were able to assist the Herefordshire Nature Trust in training and shaping trees in the newly established orchard of local varieties at its headquarters at Lower House Farm, Tupsley, Hereford. We have been involved in the normal identification work over the season with both apples and pears, including an intriguing collection of the latter, brought from a site in Monmouth town, identities yet to be resolved.

After all this time, and with many fresh avenues awaiting us and projects pending, our core committee remains a small group of dedicated enthusiasts whose talents and physical resources become stretched, particularly during the Autumn, and none of us is getting any younger! We need more enthusiasts prepared to play an active role, whether it be in planting or tree maintenance, or dealing with enquiries from the public, and helping to man displays at the events, to say nothing of the increasing amount of clerical work. We would also appreciate guidance from someone with experience in grant application. Furthermore, we shall soon be concerned with harvesting, transporting and marketing the produce from our various sites. Help is also sought with fruit identification; and here we have an interesting development to report. Following pioneering work begun in 1995 by our member, Paul Davis, on a pilot identification computer program (Newsletter No. 2), our own grant aided feasibility study of a computerised identification system has been commenced by MAN member, John Powell of Llandovery, who is an experienced computer consultant. Work on similar lines, at the University of Oxford, by Dr. Barrie Juniper, Reader in Plant Sciences, came to our notice, and which we were privileged to see demonstrated. John's report reviews the practicality of producing a workable computer program which might simplify and speed up the identification of the varieties which are frequently brought to our attention. See detailed report on P.10.

Ray Boddington

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

MAN again attended the Smallholders Weekend, held in mid-May at the Royal Welsh Showground, near Builth Wells, sharing, as last year, a stand with Paul Davis, whose notes on fruit varieties and growing advice were in great demand. We were approached by a number of interested orchard owners and others keen to plant a new one. In August, we were present at The Brecon Beacons National Park Farming Festival, held at the Mountain Centre, Libanus. Our annual celebration of Apple Day in October, held in the Town Hall at Talgarth, coincided with dreadful weather and, following the April floods in the town which had hit the headlines, this deterred many visitors who had planned to attend. Later in the month, yet another weekend of appalling weather and serious flooding almost prevented our attendance at Usk College, Monmouthshire. This was followed, the day after, when the water was abating somewhat, by a new 'Celebration of the Apple' event held at Llancaich Fawr Manor, Treharris, Glamorgan, which we also attended, with a small display of 17th century apples, in keeping with the age of the impressive buildings.

The idea, mooted last year by the Brecon Beacons National Park, of encouraging local food production and perhaps a Farmers' Market, has resulted in the publication of a Local Food Directory. A well publicised local Food Fair, arranged by BBNP, was most successful.

Sheila Leitch

COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES - ORCHARD AND PARKLAND SCHEME

CCW's Orchard and Parkland Scheme was initiated in 1997. The scheme's objectives are to sustain landscape richness and conserve valuable wildlife habitats through the restoration of traditional orchards and the management of trees within traditional parklands. The scheme is currently in its final year, and provides up to 50% of costs.

The orchard element of the current scheme is designed to protect and restore traditional orchards, namely those containing widely spaced, standard fruit trees reaching a height of 20-30 feet. There is a strong presumption for the replanting of traditional or local varieties of fruit. The types of work eligible for grant aid include pruning or tree surgery, planting of standard trees of suitable varieties (with M25 rootstock recommended), grafting, provision of tree stakes and guards, and renovation of boundaries. The applicant must also undertake to maintain the orchard for ten years from the start of the agreement.

To date, a total of 24 orchards across Wales have been assisted by the scheme, representing just a small proportion of all orchards in Wales requiring restoration. Not surprisingly, over half of the applicants were from South Wales, particularly Monmouthshire. A scatter of other applications came from Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Gwynedd and Clwyd.

One example of a scheme in Radnorshire is an orchard situated on the Upper Wye, between Rhayader and Newbridge. The scheme involved both planting of new trees and pruning of the existing 27 apple and 3 pear trees. Varieties planted were *Pen Caled*, *Pig's Snout*, *Bulmer's Norman*, *Allington Pippin* and *Autumn Pearmain*, also an as yet unidentified Welsh cooking apple, all supplied by Paul Davis, of Capel Isaac, in Carmarthenshire. [Editor's note: Full address on P.13.] The use of fertilisers and chemicals has been avoided, and some areas of bramble and nettles have been retained for the benefit of wildlife.

For landowners and land managers looking for help in the future with the restoration of orchards or parklands, CCW's new agri-environment scheme, Tir Gofal, includes prescriptions for such habitats. Details can be obtained from your local CCW office.

Caroline Moscrop

[Caroline is District Officer, Radnor and North Brecknock, Countryside Council for Wales - Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru].

'TIR GOFAL' - ORCHARD RESTORATION GRANTS

'Tir Gofal', meaning 'Land Care', is a new all-Wales agri-environmental scheme, available on farmed land throughout Wales, which rewards farmers for caring for the wildlife, historical and cultural features on their land. Agreements apply to the whole farm and last for ten years. It builds on the experience of previous schemes, such as ESAs (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) and 'Tir Cymen' and is designed to support the farming community in protecting the rich heritage of rural Wales, reflecting the public's aspirations for environmental benefits and providing greater opportunities for enjoyment of the countryside.

The scheme is run under the Common Agricultural Policy agri-environment measures, funded by the UK Government through the Welsh Office/Assembly and by the European Union. The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is responsible for delivering the scheme throughout Wales in partnership with the Farming & Rural Conservation Agency, the National Park Authority in Snowdonia and with the support of the National Park Authorities for the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast.

There are four elements to the scheme; land management, creating new permissive access, capital works and training. Grants are available for the management of key habitats, establishment and management of new habitats and existing features, permissive access and any capital works involved.

In many areas, traditional orchards are important landscape features and provide excellent wildlife habitats. As a result, 'Tir Gofal', offers financial assistance for establishing, renovating and managing such orchards. Old trees should be pruned where necessary to maintain a reasonable level of health and productivity. New trees should be traditional standards and varieties should be local to the area. These must be supported by staking and protected from damage by stock with tree guards. There are also grants for replanting boundary hedges and for fencing. The grassland in the orchard should be maintained by light grazing and/or cutting and no herbicides, pesticides or artificial fertilizers should be used. I may be able to help you choose varieties suitable for your area and supply these on standard rootstocks. Capital grants are based on standard costs and the maintenance grant is currently £80 per hectare. For an information pack, please contact your local CCW office.

Paul Davis

ORCHARDS IN THE DINEFWR AREA OF CARMARTHENSHIRE

There is no doubt that there is a renewed interest in growing apples in these parts. This has been helped to a large degree by the 'Tir Cymen' scheme for farmers to re-plant orchards that have, over the years, been neglected or bull-dozed out of existence for the building of large sheds.

Whenever we have put on courses on Apples, they have been fully subscribed. The interest in the old Welsh apples has been paramount. In addition, we get asked for the suitable varieties that will grow in these parts where the rainfall is high. In this wet climate, Cox and Blenheim just do not prosper; they go down with canker very soon.

Of the 'class' apples that prosper locally, we have Allington Pippin, American Mother, Ashmead's Kernel, Lady Sudeley, May Queen and Mère de Ménage. There are some others, but naming them all would take a lot of space.

Of the Welsh apples, many are named after a locality or the person who grew them. D.J. Williams, in his book 'The Old Farmhouse' (1961) mentions his grandfather planting, about 1840, Afal Vicar, Afal Nicolas, Afal Bwen Bach. Who the vicar was, we do not know. Afal Nicolas is probably now known as Marged/Morgan Nicolas. Bwen Bach was the land agent for the Edwinstford Estate. The name Nicholas crops up in the Williams-Drummond family who owned the Estate comprising most of the parishes of Talley (Tal y Llychau) and Llansawel, and

half of Caio (Caeo). *Marged Nicolas* is still grown in these parishes, and also in Llanwrda. *Afal Glansevin* is named after the Glansevin Estate.

The other very popular Welsh apple *Pig yr Ŵydd* (Goose beak) is grown in a more limited area, i.e. in the parishes of Conwyl Caio and Cil-y-Cwm. One big problem in identifying and naming Welsh apples, is the number of synonyms that some of them have, e.g. *Cwrt Pendu Plat* has 165 synonyms, including, of course, *Court Pendu Plat!*

The 'big' houses nearly all had orchards e.g. Middleton Hall has 4/5 trees remaining in a large double walled garden. The gardeners cultivated the better varieties in their own small gardens, and many of these are still in existence. The other source for the 'importation' of the better apples came with the return of West Wales farm workers who went annually to Herefordshire to help with the grain harvest.

Trees bearing two or more varieties are fairly common in Carmarthenshire. Until recently, one local tree had 5 different varieties grafted on it. Interestingly, the varieties were not chosen to flower at the same time, nor as cross pollinators. One explanation is that the sheer number of varieties in the locality in the old days, together with the large number of bees kept in skips, ensured trouble-free pollination.

Commonly found around here are the thickly russeted apples referred to as 'Leathercoats'. One theory is that they are *Pomme Grise* of Bunyard. One big snag with some of the tree planting schemes is that they are on M25 rootstocks which are trained into standard trees and therefore delay the cropping. Quite a few want MM106, which bears fruit earlier.

An urgent task is the recording of the flowering time of the old apples. This is an exercise which should be repeated over several years, because of the variability of seasons.

My interest in apples stems from living in Suffolk for a few years. While there I had apple trees and root stocks from Jack Matthews (of *Discovery* fame). One Christmas I was given a box of *Cox's Orange Pippin* from Essex, grown on Crab stock. The flavour can only be described as superb! [Editor's note: Perhaps partly due to the fact that they were grown in Essex.]

Henry Ferguson-Thomas

ORCHARD GLEANINGS

One of the highlights of last Autumn arose from a request by Colin Gardiner, a member of MAN, to identify some puzzling apples he had encountered in his search for unusual local varieties to convert into his famous single-variety apple-juices. After travelling along narrow country lanes we reached a farmhouse near the village of Llanarth, in deepest Monmouthshire, and received a noisy, boisterous welcome from the farm dogs. Mrs. Watkins, the farmer's wife, led us through the farmyard and past a range of barns to a large, traditional, rather tumbledown, orchard of old standard apple and pear trees of various shapes and sizes. In the surrounding

hedge were tangles of blackberries with ripening fruit. A late panicle of bright pink flowers revealed one as Rubus ariconiensis, named after the Roman settlement of Ariconium in this district. The region later became the kingdom of Irching, or Archenfield, where now this bramble is widespread. There were also several bushes of Elder with flat-topped clusters of greenish-white berries, instead of the normal purple-black colour which gave rise to the Elder's scientific name Sambucus nigra. Had these been planted in the hedge or spread by birds from one ancestral white-berried bush? In the orchard we met Mr. Watkins' uncle who had cycled over to act as our guide. He had worked here after the trees had been planted by the grandfather of the present farmer. The apples were nearly all cookers or eaters, rather than cider varieties, and planted by someone who was an enthusiast. The eaters included Charles Ross, Blenheim Orange, Lady Sudeley, Lord Lambourne and Laxton's Superb, also Wyken Pippin, encountered for the first time in this area, sharing a tree with Worcester Pearmain and Bramley's Seedling. The cookers were represented by Emneth Early, Lord Derby, Monarch, Newton Wonder and Mère de Ménage. The latter was a splendid spectacle with a fine crop of large, handsome, purple-red apples. Tasting some apples from a tree nearby, which at first sight resembled Tom Putt we were surprised to find them much sweeter and more flavourful than expected. Later, when our guide pointed out a tree of Gascoyne's Scarlet as Joybells, we realised that the superior Tom Putt was probably Joybells - another first!

A little further on we were shown three trees which our guide called Underleaf. These had medium-sized, rather tall apples, coloured pale green with an orange flush. For some time there has been speculation within MAN about Underleaf and whether it is the same apple as that known locally as Monmouth Green, which we have come across in orchards at Aberedw, Bronllys and Talgarth. Folk in the Talgarth area esteem the variety as a dual-purpose fruit which keeps well until after Christmas. None of the old apple books consulted mention this variety, though the 'National Apple Register' records that a small, green, late-season apple called Monmouth Green was exhibited at the Great Exhibition organised by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1883. 'The Orchardist' (1873) lists Underleaf and Herefordshire Underleaf, but gives no descriptions. 'The Herefordshire Pomona' (1876-1885) also includes the latter in a list of cider varieties, noting that it was a medium-sized, green, long-keeping apple used for cider or as a table fruit and that the name alluded to the way the foliage hid the fruit. Four types of Underleaf (in addition to Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Underleaf) are listed in the 'Apple Register'. One of these, which is also mentioned in 'The Apples of England', was said to be still in existence in 1946, and appears to be similar to the Llanarth variety, except for the lenticels. None match our local Monmouth Greens. The Gloucestershire Underleaf noted in 'The Apple Register' was a mid-season, roundish, ribbed apple of medium size with a green skin and red flush. It was also exhibited in 1883. Unfortunately, these descriptions are so brief that it is impossible to identify apples from them. With at least six or seven Underleafs at large in the past, there is clearly plenty of scope for further research. It all underlines the enormous value of reference collections such as that at Brogdale. The Underleaf at Brogdale, sent from the Long Ashton Research Station at Bristol, is listed as a mid-season dessert apple flavoured like a Blenheim Orange, but no description of its appearance is given in 'The Book of Apples'. When we visited Brogdale a few years

ago the trees had no fruit! Even here, there are inevitably identification problems. A network of reference orchards could help to promote biodiversity by maintaining local varieties, but would need to be supported by painstaking research to ensure a high standard of identification and avoid compounding the confusion. [Editor's note: We have a number of examples growing of Monmouth Green and Underleaf, including the Brogdale Underleaf, so that we can begin to make detailed comparisons.]

Last October we revisited Tir Allen, Llanwrda, to record a Landmark programme about orchards for B.B.C. Wales. Accompanied by Mr. Thomas, the farmer, and his sheepdogs and Lionel Kellaway and his producer, we explored the orchard, admired the trees of Marged Nicolas with their distinctive fountain-like habit and crunched the slightly unripe fruit to evoke the authentic atmosphere with appropriate sound effects. This traditional farm orchard contains about eighty standard trees, mainly cooking or eating apples but with a few pears and plums. About two dozen varieties of apple are represented, ranging from early codlins to late keepers like Newton Wonder, Allington Pippin, Blenheim Orange, Charles Ross, Duke of Devonshire, Dumelow's Seedling and Rival are among those present. There are ten trees of Bramley's Seedling. Earlier this century the fruit would have been taken to market, providing a useful contribution to the farm income, spread over five or six months. Now most of the apples provide food for winter flocks of fieldfares and other thrushes. We talked about the future of orchards like this and whether, with the revival of interest in Farmers' Markets, such traditional farm orchards might again 'pay their keep' and become more than just beautiful landscape features and havens for wildlife. At this point the discussion was interrupted by ironic? laughter from a nearby green woodpecker.

Michael Porter

NEWS OF OUR ORCHARDS

As our various orchard sites are planted, in due course we intend to produce a leaflet for each, with location details and lists of the varieties to be seen there, so that members can visit and familiarise themselves with specimens of particular interest to them. Budwood may be available in July, or scions obtained in winter, for grafting the following spring, or orders taken for Paul Davis [for address see P.13] to do this for you, so helping to achieve one of our aims - getting the local varieties back, as healthy young trees, into the areas where they once were widespread.

TREDOMEN COURT, Llanfilo, Breconshire

Further planting of the fenced area of this, our first orchard site, was continued during the winter, with two additional rows (another 35 trees), on MM106 stocks, being put in, bringing the present total to 107, including the intriguingly named Nine Square and Hambledon Deux Ans. (One to keep in my cellar when it starts fruiting, to see if it lives up to its name). Also, 14 'unknowns/uncertains', grafted on M9 stocks, were planted in a small section of the plot. One of our unknowns, from the first planting in 1995, was from a very old tree thought by its owner to resemble a costard. Growing near to what he thought was a specimen of the Holy Thorn, we provisionally labelled it the 'Holy Costard'. It has proved, on examination of clean mature fruits on the young graft, to be Golden Spire. This variety had turned up as the sole survivor in a remnant orchard in the Cusop Dingle, for which a planting list

survived, and I immediately recognised it as the same as our Tredomen tree. Gradually, we hope all our unknowns will be named. Roger Williams has now removed the fence which divided the planted area of the 3 acre meadow from the grazed area, and will resite it to allow room for another three rows of MM106 to be added, as varieties are found and grafted. The rest of the field will probably be planted with full standards. We have used 100 metre rolls of 'phormisol', a U.V. stabilised woven polypropylene material, cut into one metre squares, to provide cheap water-permeable mulch mats for the young trees, preventing competition from vegetation, although clearance of overgrowth is still necessary.

Sheila Leitch

CROFT PENDARREN, Llangynidr, Breconshire

Seven additional apple trees, on M25 rootstocks, were planted over the winter '98-99, bringing the total to 26. The varieties were Ashmead's Kernel, Pitmaston Pine Apple, Rosemary Russet, Ross Nonpareil, Edward V11 Afal Pren Glas and Pig Aderyn, (Bird's Bill), which may turn out to be the listed variety Pig y Glomen, (Pigeon's Bill). Can anyone shed light on this? [Editor's note: Welsh word for pigeon is colomen, which mutates to golomen.] The last two apples, found in Cardiganshire, are being tried out in the different soil and conditions of this orchard.

Michael Porter

WESTHOPE, near Canon Pyon, Herefordshire

All the fifteen full standard trees are doing well, producing the occasional fruit. The difficulty of strimming or cutting inside the high and two metre square deer cages has been overcome by laying strips of the woven mulch, 'phormisol', to cover as much ground as possible, leaving only the edges in need of attention. Hopefully this will make maintenance much easier. Regular mowing at appropriate times has removed much of the coarser vegetation but some 'islands' are left as wildlife cover until later in the year.

Peter Austerfield

DONNINGTON, near Ledbury, Herefordshire.

THE AMERICAN CONNECTION

The new orchard at Donnington, between Dymock and Ledbury, has given MAN the opportunity to plant an extremely interesting assortment of old varieties. Some have local origins and others are described in 'The Herefordshire Pomona'. The Victorians also tried out those French and American varieties, which they held in high esteem. We have done likewise. Because of the owners' close association with the USA, especially New York, it seemed particularly appropriate to plant a few of the fine old American varieties originating in the north-eastern states.

Last winter, Phase 1 of the planting programme comprised 29 varieties (including one American variety) and this coming autumn, in Phase 2, we intend to include, amongst a similar number, eight American varieties. Of these, I expect members will be familiar with Mother (syn. American Mother) with its oval shape and distinctive flavour, 'balsamic' to Hogg and 'peardrops' to Bunyard. Blue Pearmain, known before 1800, has been grown in the West Country. The fruit is covered with a bloom, giving rise to the name, and is aromatic and sweet, although it was also cooked in America. Britain seems to be alone in having developed specifically culinary varieties, high in acidity. An American would feel cheated if his pie wasn't full of apple chunks and, in continental Europe, the cuisine usually demands cooked apple to keep its shape, so dual purpose apples have always been required.

Whereas Blue Pearmain is primarily a dessert apple, Twenty Ounce is a culinary apple which is sweet enough to use as a dessert. As the name implies, it is a large apple and was raised in the early 19th century, in either New York or Connecticut. We planted this variety in Phase 1.

Despite Bunyard's (1920) expert opinion that "this apple does not attain the same flavour in this country as in America", we had to have Newtown Pippin in the collection. Raised in the early 1700s on Long Island, it was introduced to this country in about 1760. Its rich pineapple flavour made it popular and, inevitably, its pips were planted. One gave rise to Lamb Abbey Pearmain, possibly another to Grange's Pearmain and, more recently, Yellow Newtown Pippin, (a bud sport) became a parent of Spartan. Joan Morgan writes that Newtown Pippin launched the American fruit export industry. I can confirm that they were still reaching these shores in the 1930s, as I remember my grandfather telling me, years ago, how much he used to look forward to them before the Second World War.

Another variety exported to Britain until about the same time was Golden Russet of West New York, which should grow well at Donnington. It was also planted commercially in Canada and is almost certainly the Golden Russet found in this country too. Referring to the Golden Russet (ie the English variety dating from the late 1600s), Bunyard wrote "I have never been able to obtain this apple true" and, sadly, no authenticated example of it exists in the National Collection.

The orchard is on fertile gently-sloping land and is situated in the most favourable part of our region for apple growing. The varieties will also have the benefit of vigorous M25 rootstocks. These conditions should suit King of Tompkins County, a large and delicious New Jersey apple raised before 1800, Wagener (1791), Wealthy (1861) and Roxbury Russet (syn. Boston Russet), early 1600s, which make up the eight. When the orchard has been fully planted, MAN intends to produce an information sheet describing all the varieties growing at Donnington.

John Aldridge

FURTHER PLANTING AT REDHOUSE FARM, Tillington, Herefordshire.

In last year's Newsletter I described the replanting at this farm, over the previous two years, of 36 new trees in one of the orchards. In December '98, I continued the programme of planting with 20 more trees in the neighbouring orchard to the first plantings. Most were apple, with two plum trees, a damson, and an excellent Broadview walnut, from George Latham. (Address:- Bramley Cottage, Wyck, Cheltenham, GL54 2PN).

Apples were a mixture, as before, of varieties chosen for disease resistance and quality, and trees of local interest. I included the Tillington Court trees, and a Devon Red, propagated from an old tree which still survives on the farm. Other trees of interest include Lemon Pippin, Wyken Pippin, and Dr. Hare's, all from Paul Jasper's Nursery. (Address:- The Lighthouse, Bridge Street, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 8DX). We were able to obtain 50% grants from Herefordshire Council on all planting this year, including the walnut, plums and damson.

Frank Hemming

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS FROM HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Herefordshire Council's Parks & Countryside Service offers grant-aid towards environmental improvement projects in the Herefordshire countryside. These grants are aimed at small landowners, Parish Councils, Community Groups and other individuals. The Council is able to consider a wide range of schemes for grant aid, providing that the sites are in the countryside and the work will benefit local distinctiveness, landscape and wildlife. The restoration of old, and the planting of new, standard orchards is a priority. During the last year over 500 new trees have been planted, and a further 250 old trees brought back into management, supported by Environmental Improvement Grants of some £20,000. To discuss a potential project, or to request an application form, please contact the Parks & Countryside Service Partnership Team on 01568 797305

The Partnership Team

ARIS COMPUTERISATION PROJECT

During last year and this, we have spent considerable time investigating the possibility of computerising some of the work carried out by the Network. The main thrust has been to find suitable software and data to assist with identification of the apple specimens submitted, and so to increase the number of specimens which can be examined each year. It is felt that a computerised identification system will attract more public attention to the subject of fruit history and that (once it has been tested by the main identification panel) it will allow many more interested members to become actively involved in the identification process.

We were very fortunate to receive grant assistance from both Environment Wales and the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, and the project was given the working title of ARIS (Apple Recording and Identification System).

The first step was to completely ignore the software and hardware available, and instead to define what we would want such a system to be able to do - a document known as the 'User Requirements'.

This involved consultation with, and observation of, the identification panel, including video footage of some sessions for later analysis, examination of the main identification texts, and discussions with other *MAN* members. We decided that it would be useful to define a list of the main characteristics which the identification panel used, so that we would be able to compare them against any existing computerised systems. The video footage proved very suitable for investigating this. We also issued a questionnaire, and checked the criteria used in the most useful of the text books. There was a great deal of agreement on the reliability and usefulness of certain characteristics, and a lack of consensus on others - some people seem to have their own favourite likes and dislikes. We incorporated this into the requirements by specifying that any software would have to be flexible enough to allow us to change the rating of criteria.

We saw that identification involves two stages, which can be interlinked. The first involves a 'rough-cut' when the sample is classified into a broad group or groups (such as Reinettes), and any special features (such as hairlines) are picked out. The

objective is to reduce the number of potential varieties as quickly as possible, without throwing away the correct match. It must therefore concentrate on those characteristics which are generally considered to be most reliable or distinctive, but also allow for some problems when examining the samples (especially since fruits sent to *MAN* are often from old trees or neglected orchards).

The second stage we have termed 'differentiation', and involves homing-in to find and examine the special features which will best separate the varieties now remaining on the shortlist. Again, this stage must allow for variable features (such as certain diseases which are more common under wet conditions), so some sort of tolerance factor is essential. In both stages it is important that the human operator, who can see the fruit and quickly spot significant features, should be able to override whatever the computer has decided should be looked at next.

We also decided that, if possible, we should avoid the laborious and expensive task of entering all of the data ourselves, but that the quality of the data is of the utmost importance. There is a strong suspicion that characteristics described for a fruit grown in other areas may be different when the same variety is grown in our own local conditions. It is essential that we should be able to add in some of the local varieties which have only recently been discovered, and are not included in the usual books. Minimum hardware requirements were established which we felt would match those available within the Network now or in the near future.

The next phase of the project was a 'Market Survey'. This is a much simpler task once the first phase has been carried out, since it involves comparing the 'User Requirements' against the software and data available. We spent a lot of time on the Internet searching for apple data and identification (or taxonomic) software, as well as using more conventional contacts.

All foreign databases were rejected, either because the quality of the data was poor or inappropriate for identification, or because U.K. varieties were poorly represented. Very little computerised data is available in Britain. Dr John Savidge, of University College, Aberystwyth, is currently cleaning and enhancing some data which was obtained from a recent publication. This process will take some time, but the data may well prove useful to import into an identification system at a later date. Staff at Wye College, Ashford, Kent, are transferring the old Apple Register into an electronic form, but this is all in text format, which is unsuitable for a computer to use, and there are possible problems with gaining access to the data. Dr Barrie Juniper, of the Department of Plant Sciences at Oxford, has entered data for about 200 varieties, taken mostly from Sanders (one of the better texts), into a general taxonomic system called LucID, which has specialist features for identification of plants and animals.

We concluded that this is the best data available. It was briefly demonstrated last year, but we need to look at the data and the software functions in much more detail to compare them against our 'User Requirements', and would also want to try some practice identifications of our own using the software. LucID is actually one of two possible taxonomic systems which we found on the Internet. The other is a well

established suite called DELTA, but we already felt that LucID gave a better fit to our requirements, so this is quite encouraging.

Another reason to look more closely at the Oxford system is that it was originally thought that it would only be released in a 'read-only' form, but we must be able to update it with our own varieties and other details. Dr Juniper is looking into this, and we now expect to visit Oxford for a much more detailed look during the next few weeks.

If the Oxford system does not prove appropriate, we would expect to use something like LucID, possibly with data based on Dr Savidge's database, or entered by hand, to develop our own system from scratch. However, the cost in terms of time and money would be considerably higher.

I would like to thank the *MAN* Committee and identification panel, plus the many other members who have made a very valuable contribution to the project so far.

John Powell

IDENTIFICATIONS

Autumn is becoming an increasingly busy time for us, with numerous events necessitating collections of various varieties for display, requests for site visits, which, in turn, produce collections for identification, as well as the identification sessions themselves and the ensuing correspondence. May we remind members who wish to have apples identified that we require some information on season, whether eater or cooker, approximate age of tree, under/over 50 years, and the address. We ask for three typical specimens of a variety. Identification sessions involve our 'team' members travelling up to 40 miles to gather round the table, so a charge of £1 per variety for members, and £3 for non-members is made.

Sheila Leitch

DORMANT GRAFTING

In the Spring of 1998, I grafted nearly 1000 rootstocks in pots. Unfortunately, I lost nearly 400 of these to coral spot, and was quick to blame the weather and the Nursery Stock compost I was using. However, my supplier felt that the rootstocks were being stressed in some other way. I therefore decided to conduct an experiment to determine which factors were to blame.

I compared early with late grafting (March 3rd and March 31st), commercial Nursery Stock compost with my own free-draining, low nutrient compost, and several cultural regimes. Two year old, 7-9mm M25 rootstocks were planted in 5 litre pots in January using the appropriate compost, and arranged in 5 replicate blocks in their appropriate environments. On the specified dates, certified scion wood with a length of five buds was grafted on to the stocks, and the pots repositioned according to their designated treatment. A sap-drawing shoot was always left immediately below the graft until I was sure the graft had taken. Ungrafted controls of each treatment combination were also included. The pots were scored for vigour on May 29th.

As might be expected, the time of grafting had a major effect on the vigour of the plants, but there were also interactions with both environmental treatments and the compost employed. The best treatment was to keep the rootstocks outside until they were grafted on March 3rd, and then bring them into the tunnel for the rest of the experimental period. Keeping the pots in the tunnel from late January was also highly effective, but it was necessary to keep them there for at least another four weeks to ensure success. These treatments were superior to all others.

When I grafted early, the Nursery Stock compost was superior to the home-made mix, largely due to the higher fertiliser level, but at the later grafting, my mix was clearly better. In fact, forcing the rootstocks in the tunnel using the Nursery Stock compost resulted in many deaths when these were grafted at the end of March. All the ungrafted controls looked strong and healthy.

Although scions **must** be dormant, one often reads that the rootstocks should be initiating growth at the time of grafting. The results of this experiment show that once rootstock growth has been initiated, grafting is likely to shock the plant and, in unsuitable compost, this can be fatal. **Finish your grafting by mid-February.** Next Spring, I shall be looking at even earlier grafting times.

If anyone would like a full report containing figures and statistical analysis, please could they send me an SAE, Dolau-Hirion, Capel Isaac, Llandeilo, Carm., SA19 7TG or E-mail me at applewise@tinyonline.co.uk

Paul Davis

ISSUES FOR ORGANIC APPLE GROWERS

Interest in organic methods of agriculture is growing fast, and in some respects this is a movement back towards farming practices which existed until earlier this century. The heavy use of chemicals to grow monocultural crops, coupled with the standardisation of the food industry, had a very destructive effect on local diversity and traditional practices. There is much to attract the organic grower to varieties which were grown successfully in their local area before this time.

Among the older varieties will be found not only a greater range of flavours, forms and periods of use, but also late flowering times, disease resistance and hardiness - making some of them ideal for organic growing. Coupled with a few modern cultivars which have been introduced for the same reasons, this can form the basis of a very suitable planting list for those who want to avoid chemicals as much as possible.

If a modern cultivar is consistently failing because of weather or disease, I warmly recommend that you pull it up and burn it. Get some graftwood from a nearby tree which you can see is doing well, and have it propagated. This is exactly what our forbears did, and is how local diversity came about.

In many ways, remnant farm orchards and old individual trees provide a library of material which is highly suitable for modern organic methods. Old orchards can be a kind of proving ground, where trees have been largely left to fend for themselves, and where only the fittest for the local conditions will survive and thrive. They are an inheritance from our ancestors, and should be exploited before they disappear.

With the right marketing, there could be other commercial reasons for following this line. There are signs in the general organic market that high-quality local speciality foods can be used to generate interest and increase both sales and profits. Why not do it with apples ?

This is a transitional period for certified Organic Growers. Currently, they are supposed to look for an approved source of plants before turning to conventional suppliers. Using conventional sources involves obtaining permission from the Soil Association (or other certification body) in a process known as a derogation. Until recently, supplies of approved trees have been strictly limited, and most people have had to go through this very cumbersome process.

After the end of the year 2000, the rules are to be tightened further, supposedly to ban all trees and plants from conventional sources. Many organic growers have been planting conventional stocks hurriedly in the last few seasons in order to avoid what are foreseen as inevitable shortages from 2001 onwards.

However, organic trees have begun to appear in the specialist organic gardening catalogues (albeit at prices which seem to be exploiting the shortage), and a few organic nurseries like ourselves have started to sell a combination of the general hardy varieties and the better quality local ones. These nurseries will be looking to establish the likely demand and expand their operations as the new rules take effect. Having relatively small nurseries producing varieties suitable for their own areas, and building up specialist knowledge, benefits local diversity, the organic movement, and the customer. It would be a terrible irony if organic growers, who generally have a personal interest in traditional methods and local diversity, were held back from planting fruit trees by new rulings of this sort, and it is up to the market to respond.

A list of organic nurseries is available from the Soil Association (01109-290661). We have a small number of organic approved trees available (01550-720599), and can recommend the catalogue of John Butterworth's Organic Nursery (01290-551088) - a MAN member who specialises particularly in Scottish and other northern varieties.

John Powell,
Heritage Growers (Tel: 01550-720599, email:
JDP_MAESYBERLLAN@ompsuerve.com)

SALE OF GRAFTWOOD AND BUDWOOD

Mike Porter, John Aldridge and others, have often supplied propagation material when requested. It has been done on a rather ad hoc basis, sometimes involving swapping. For a one year trial, MAN will formalise an arrangement whereby members can purchase graftwood and budwood. We have access to a large number of varieties, and interesting 'unknowns', but these are widely spread in a number of locations. 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, and budwood by 20th July. Mike Porter, Tel: 01874 - 730354, 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) plus £2.00 p&p. The scheme is geared primarily to personal, rather than commercial, quantities.

John Aldridge

MAN LIBRARY

We are slowly building up a small collection of books, available for reference and held at my home. Living, as I do, close to Hay-on-Wye, the world mecca for second hand books, regular browsing, and information from friends amongst the bookshop keepers, have turned up some very interesting finds. The most recent gem was 'Apples and Pears. Varieties and Cultivation in 1934. Report on the Conference held by the Royal Horticultural Society at the Crystal Palace, Sept. 19-21, 1934'. There are numerous fascinating papers presented by the pomological experts of that time, such as E.A. Bunyard, H.S. Rivers and H.V. Taylor, and at the end there is a nineteen page list of 'dessert and kitchen' varieties of apples exhibited at the Fruit Conference, giving information on the source, use, season, size, shape and colour, followed by a similar five page list of cider apples. Foreign apples were also on display, from the Baltic States, Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland and Switzerland. A list of the contributors, with addresses, shows the countrywide interest in this 'endeavour— to collect together as many of the varieties of Apples now grown in this country as possible.' Six fruits of each variety, with foliage, were staged, and in many instances the variety was shown from two or more different parts of the country for comparison, and to demonstrate variations of colour, etc., which might be attributed to locality and soil.' Oh, to have been there!

Additions to the library in the form of donations of 'pomological' books or old illustrated horticultural magazines will be gratefully received. A list of the library contents is appended and the books will be available at the AGM for consultation:-

Apples and Pears (RHS 1934)

Fruit Year Book (RHS 1949)

Abernethy, Richard, *Fruits from the Forest* (Red Rose Forest 1996)

Arbury, Jim & Pinhey, Sally, *Pears* (Wells & Winter 1997)

Baker, Harry, *Fruit - The RHS Encyclopedia of Practical Gardening* (Mitchell Beazley 1992)

Bonham, Bazeley, *Growing Tree Fruit* (Collins 1990)

Bunyard, George & Thomas, Owen, *The Fruit Garden* ("Country Life" Library)

Crawford, Martin, *Directory of Apple Cultivars* (Agroforestry Research Trust, 1994)

Garner, R.J., *The Grafters Handbook* (Faber & Faber Ltd 1947)

Hessayon, D.J. *The Fruit Expert* (PBI Publications 1990)

Hellyer, A.G.L., *Amateur Gardening Planter's Guide* (Collingridge Ltd. London 1966)

Morgan, Joan & Richards, Alison, *The Book of Apples*, (Ebury Press, 1993).

Orchards of Cheshire (Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes & Alfresco Books 1995)

Orchards - A Guide to Local Conservation (Common Ground 1989)

Palmer, Roy, *Ripest Apples* (The Big Apple, 1996)

Sanders, Rosanne, *The English Apple* (Phaidon, Oxford, 1988).

Spiers, Virginia & Martin, Mary, *Burcombes, Queenies and Collaggetts* (West Brendon 1996)

Taylor, H.V., *The Apples of England* (London, Crosby Lockwood & Son. Ltd., 3rd Edition, 1948).

The Big Apple '89 - A Collection of Apple & Cider Recipes (The Women's Institutes of Much Marcle, Munsley & District, Putley & Woolhope 1989)
Williams, R.R., *Cider and Juice Apples* (University of Bristol)
Williams-Davies, John, *Seidr: Diod Gadarn yr Afallen* (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch 1986)
Wright, J., *The Fruit Growers Guide Vol. 1.* (J.S.Virtue & Co Ltd. 1892)

Sheila Leitch

WANTED APPLES

We are keen to hear of the following varieties of trees which have not been propagated from material obtained directly or indirectly from the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale, so that fruit can be compared with the Kent examples. These include:-

Waltham Abbey Seedling
Wormsley Pippin

Springrove Codlin
Bringewood Pippin

First and Last
Golden Harvey

Others we are still looking out for are some described in 'The Herefordshire Pomona' and include :-

Queen of Sauce Apple
Pearson's Plate Apple

Coe's Golden Drop
Herefordshire Spice

Ord's Apple

John Aldridge

H.P. BULMER LIMITED - DISCOVERING LOST CIDER APPLE VARIETIES

Although actively planting both bush and traditional standard cider orchards across Herefordshire, we are often asked to propagate less 'commercial' varieties which have been forgotten.

In most cases we can refer to our 'Mother Tree' nursery (99 apple and 25 perry pear varieties) - trees which are kept specifically as a source of propagating wood, or in our Museum collection at Hampton Bishop, where some 34 varieties are kept in traditional standard tree form. We also have a collection of 30 flowering *Malus* varieties.

Occasionally we are unable to find the requested variety, and unfortunately some have disappeared for ever. We have in our office, however, planting record books dating back to 1927, which give accurate details of each orchard planted. Following an enquiry, we have, in the last year, discovered the variety Red Norman in an orchard near Hereford. We hope, eventually, to enter all old planting records on a computer program, so that searches can be more rapidly made.

Chris Fairs
Grower's Advisory Manager

A JOB WELL DONE

One of my many ports of call in my research into Gloucestershire fruit varieties was the orcharding department of H.P.Bulmer. I had sent them a list of varieties which I was looking for and they kindly checked them against their records.

Unfortunately, of the list I sent them, there were only two varieties which cropped up under their planting records - Red Styre and Upright Styre. It turned out that they keep records of their plantings going back a long time, in this instance to 1932. The

copy of the planting record, which Chris Fairs of the Orchardling Department sent me, was written in beautiful copperplate writing.

The owner of the land was given as Mr E.Selman of Llwynon, Glasbury-on-Wye, and the planting took place on 23rd and 27th March, 1932. A diagram detailing the orientation of the orchard in relation to the road and the house was given and also the numbers of the rows with the varieties to be found in each row. There were other varieties besides the two I was seeking. I thought this was going to be nice and easy. However, there was no Selman in the local phone book, so I rang the Post Office to find out where Llwynon was. To my dismay, no-one there had heard of it. Glasbury is quite a way from my home, and having plenty of other varieties to be working on, 2 or 3 years slipped by.

When visiting Big Apple at Much Marcle last year, I found myself at the Marcher Apple Network stand and talking to Sheila Leitch. She mentioned she lived in Glasbury and I remembered the two lost apple varieties from there. I told her my story, and was pleased to learn that she was keen on local history. To cut a short story shorter, within 24 hours Sheila phoned me back. She had located the orchard. The problem had been that 'Llwynon' should have been spelt 'Llwynon', and had since been anglicised to 'Ashgrove'. In fact the orchard we were seeking now belongs to a friend of Sheila's, and is known to *MAN* as a cider orchard, and is within sight of her house. What is more, most of the trees are still there and cared for by their owner who, I understand, is pleased to know what the mystery apple varieties are.

Since that time, Sheila has sent me fruit samples, photos of the trees in full blossom and graft wood of the two styres and they should be joining the Gloucestershire Apple Collection this autumn.

After Sheila's impressive performance, under the banner of the Marcher Apple Network, I of course joined as a member and I would like to thank her for her efforts on my behalf.

Charles Martell

FARMERS' MARKETS IN WORCESTERSHIRE

MAN has been asked to inform members of proposals to set up Farmers' Markets in Worcestershire. If any members are interested in selling apples or other produce, please contact the following people for details:-

Jane Dobson, Wychavon District Council, Tel. 01386-565278.
or Paul Summers, Malvern Hills A.O.N.B. Office, Tel. 01684-560616.

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENTS

A number of interesting varieties have been grafted and added to our orchards as a result of letters or telephone calls received from enthusiasts. Other varieties are not yet located, such as the so-called Drover's Apple, and Lady Llanover's Apple, mentioned in last year's Newsletter. However, there was welcome news from the Llanover Trust, that the proposed orchard at Llanover had been planted with apples associated with Monmouthshire.

King Coffee A telephone call from the BBC last year requested confirmation of the spelling of several apples with quirky names, such as Catshead, which they had received for inclusion as a question for the 'Brain of Britain' programme. One, spelt King Coffer was new to me, and I needed time to check it and found, in 'The Book of Apples', a dessert apple named, *King Coffee*, from Worcester, with a hint of coffee flavour, so I rang back with the corrected name. Does anyone know this apple? I missed hearing the broadcast, but the question floored the contestant!

Cider Varieties

While our Committee members do not have much knowledge of cider fruits, the planting lists preserved by Bulmer's and mentioned in the two articles above, lead us to hope that we may be able to 'get our eye in' on some of the cider fruits. It was very satisfying to be able to locate the two varieties of 'style' cider apples, apparently lost from Gloucestershire, but still growing well in this Breconshire orchard. Mr Selman was remembered in the village, and I was told he had his cider press at Llwynon, but no trace of his family name remained, except in the churchyard. Charles wrote saying "It was really good to get the Upright Styre and Red Styre after all these years, thinking they had disappeared". The Bulmer list for this old orchard provides us with a means of identification of the following varieties, as at least some trees in each of the 13 rows, planted in March are still there:- *Bulmer's Norman* (3 rows), *Sherrington Norman* (5 rows), *Red Styre*, *Upright Styre* (2 rows), *Tanner's Red* and *White Jersey*. The trees were planted by Bulmers, at 35' spacing, on a square pattern, so that one can look up the rows, across and along the diagonals. Charles later sent me other lists of cider varieties, from Bulmer's old planting record books, supplied in the 1950s to four other Glasbury farms, who were tenants of Radnorshire County Council. These included the ubiquitous *Bulmer's Norman*, and *Marechal*, together with *Michelin*, *Broadleaf Norman* and *Amer de Torentice*. Chris Fairs would like to locate this latter variety, not now known to Bulmers, and it is hoped to identify it in the Glasbury orchards by a process of elimination, now that the commoner varieties can be compared with the named list. We would be very glad to hear of members with some knowledge of cider fruits and perry pears. Charles Martell confines his interest in the subject to those varieties grown in Gloucestershire, a sensible precaution, considering all his other Gloucestershire interests, including his Dymock Herd of Old Gloucester Cattle and his Gloucester Cheesemaking business. (New Year resolutions to try and restrict my interests to a more local basis always seem to fail). MAN has found itself with a much wider geographical range of survey than envisaged when it began, five years ago. However it is very encouraging that Orchard Initiatives are coming into being in a number of counties, including Herefordshire and the Teme Valley, in Marcher country.

King's Acre Bountiful

A recently recruited member, John Squibb, from Fairlight, near Hastings, has sent the following information about this variety, which has a glowing write-up in the Kingsacre Nursery Catalogue and which we believe we are coming across in several old orchards in East Breconshire.

"In the late 1920s, my grandfather, a nurseryman, chose and ordered from the King's Acre Nursery, varieties of apple trees for my parents' new garden in suburban Surrey. The nursery could not supply one of the varieties and sent, as a replacement (free of charge), a *King's Acre Bountiful*. The nursery said this variety had come from

a chance seedling found in their orchard and they hoped we would enjoy the fruit. As a child, I remember that, when the Cox and Bramley were in blossom, the King's Acre looked dead, but it would suddenly burst into flower a week or more later and give us, once again, an abundance of large, disease-free fruits which were ready for baking long before the Bramley. However, we had to eat them all within a few weeks of picking, as they did not keep beyond November.

My grandfather was so impressed by the taste that he grafted several trees from our King's Acre and we took one with us when we moved. In the 1960s, when we married and bought a house, I could not find a nursery that supplied this variety. I therefore got about a dozen trees grafted from my father's new tree, kept some myself, gave one to Brogdale, and distributed the rest amongst friends and relatives, hoping that at least one would survive for future generations. This year, in case we moved house, I asked Mr John Butterworth of Butterworth's Organic Nursery in Cumnock, Ayrshire, [another member of *MAN*- Editor] to bud a tree for me. He agreed, and also gave me details of the *Marcher Apple Network*. Mrs Sheila Leitch, the Network's co-ordinator, said there was a tree near her home, which was believed to be a King's Acre Bountiful. She kindly sent me copies of old catalogues and books giving many details of the variety which described my tree perfectly - late flowering, abundant fruiting even in poor cropping years for other varieties, oval-tipped leaves, an excellent baker, fruit a good size, BUT the fruit was described in King's Acre Nursery's own catalogue and elsewhere as skin pale yellow with a pink flush, whereas my apple (and consequently Brogdale's) is a light green with a reddish flush.

Have I been worrying needlessly, for the last forty years, that this delicious, bountiful baking apple might die out and be lost to future generations, or has it survived near its native Herefordshire? Are there two different but similar varieties? If so, who has the genuine tree and what should one call the other? Have I sent Brogdale an imposter? In September, I will be sending some fruits from my tree to Sheila Leitch, to compare their colour, and hopefully their taste, with fruit from her neighbour's tree. I await her verdict with some anxiety".

John Squibb

[Editor's note (alias Sheila Leitch): I suspect the skin colour variation may be due to the time of picking, and perhaps the differing location.. The owners of the local trees, which we believe are of this variety, do not know the name of their trees, so we look forward to having the opportunity to compare fruits with a tree from the best source, the nursery itself. The colour of the flush should prove decisive. I would describe it as a cyclamen pinky mauve, on a green base colour which can become very pale. John Squibb has written again to say that John Butterworth has grafted trees from the material he supplied, and these will be in the catalogue next year. Interested members may care to contact Butterworths' Organic Nursery, Garden Cottage, Auchinleck Estate, Cumnock, Ayrshire, KA18 2LR].

Costards Again

Paul Selfe, whose interest in the search for the Herefordshire Costard aroused so much press interest and misinformation last year, received correspondence from several people who read of his 'supposed' find. One lady, writing from New Zealand, sent him some seeds from what she understood were costard fruit bought by the roadside. He posted me three of the extraordinary looking seeds, which were

obviously not from any variety of apple, however ancient. They looked more like seeds from some enormous citrus fruit. After much poring through gardening encyclopaedias, it was decided that they came from the Custard tree, a native of South Africa. Paul later obtained photographs of the leaves of two 'Custards', the Casimora Fruit and the Cherimoya Custard Fruit. He himself has raised a young plant on his kitchen window sill from one of the seeds and awaits fruit with interest.

Sheila Leitch

MORE COSTARDS

Hereford seems to have an insatiable appetite for costard stories. Being a small place, one would have thought that there wasn't a citizen left who was unfamiliar with the outrageous claims of Winter 1998. (See Newsletter No.4). Last time, at least the Herefordshire Costard was mentioned by name - even if the history that followed related entirely to the mediaeval Costard. Now another newspaper, The Hereford Journal, has just published a prominent front page feature, with photograph, describing a fresh local discovery of the Costard of 1292! Only the broadest descriptions of the mediaeval Costard exist - totally inadequate for identification purposes. Such an uncritical view may be annoying to pomologists but I suppose it sells newspapers. Will the next local revelation be the sighting of a distant relation of Nessie in the Bodenham lakes? *MAN* has propagated this apple.

Members are probably wondering why we haven't yet come to a firm decision on the authenticity of the Herefordshire Costard. Well, it isn't a simple matter, and, in taking a scholarly and scientific approach, we must be more patient than the newspapers. For me, the most intriguing apple that we have in the Red Costard group, remains Laurie Chumbley's possible Herefordshire Costard. The fruits can be quite variable, but a few seem to match descriptions of Calville Rouge d'Hiver. Others are strikingly large and conical/long conical, irregularly slab-sided with a broad base, starting deep red changing to bright red with some orange and with stripes. In fact, they are rather similar to 'The Herefordshire Pomona's' description of the Gloucestershire Costard.

Laurie sent me a copy of an illuminating piece of detective work by H.V.Taylor written in the 1950s. In 1890, none other than Charles Ross spotted this variety growing in Miss Pope's orchard near Reading. (When Bunyard described Pope's Scarlet Costard in 1920, which costard had he seen?) He took scions, and planted a tree at Welford Park, Berkshire, which he labelled Gloucestershire Costard. Miss Pope's own tree had been propagated from the 80-100 year old tree known as 'the Red Apple', with which she had been familiar in her childhood in Hampshire. It becomes even more interesting when one realises that Hogg's description of the Gloucestershire Costard in 'The Herefordshire Pomona' matches the description of the Herefordshire Costard in his 'Fruit Manual' (5th Edn. 1884). The probable error in transcription has left the situation confused, but Taylor was inclined to believe that Miss Pope's apple was the Herefordshire Costard.

If you have had enough of the Red Costards, (and, incidentally, the Red Costard was first recorded in 1688, by Leonard Meager, who also mentioned the White Costard) what about the green one? One of our East Anglian members, Bob Lever, sent me budwood of the Green Costard. The original tree had been obtained from

Hanniford's Nursery, Paignton, Devon, and planted in 1918 at Yaxham, Norfolk. In 1842, the Green Costard (syn. Royal Costard) was apparently growing in the RHS garden in Chiswick, and was described by Hogg in 1851 and by the Committee of the National Apple Congress in 1883. The gap from 1883 is not so big but the earlier period is unclear. We don't know whether the present variety is the same as that mentioned in 1629 by John Parkinson, who stated that the Grey Costard and the Green Costard were both known.

Authenticating very old varieties can be extremely difficult, and sometimes impossible, but we are building up quite a collection of Costard type apples at Tredomen Court for comparison and further study.

John Aldridge

CHARITY STATUS FOR MAN - WE'RE LIMITED!

On June 10th, Marcher Apple Network, a Company Limited by Guarantee and numbered 3787303, was officially registered at Companies House. The Directors are Ray Boddington, Peter Austerfield, Mike Porter and Tom Froggatt, who is also Company Secretary. The registered office is at Ashford Mill, Ashford Carbonel, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 4BT.

Although we have received very welcome grants in the past year, we find that grant providers would rather support formally constituted bodies, hence the change.

A Management Committee, as before, will do the day to day running of the Network, via Sheila Leitch, our valiant co-ordinator, and members should not notice much change.

No dividends are payable and in the event of a winding up, all surplus monies must be given to an organisation with similar objectives, e.g. Brogdale Horticultural Trust.

A copy of our Memorandum & Articles of Association will be available for inspection at the AGM on October 9th, at Bodenham Village Hall. See you there.

Tom Froggatt

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday/Sunday, 28th/29th August. Talgarth Festival. *MAN* will have a small display of early season apples, in the Market, on the Sunday.

Sunday, 5th September. Open Day at Elton Hall near Wigmore, NGR SO 458711. The former home of Thomas Andrew Knight, the garden has been recently restored and developed and garden produce and specialist plants will be on sale. Small display of early-season apples by *MAN*. Open 2.00 - 6.00pm. Admission £2, proceeds to NCCPG Herefordshire.

Saturday, 11th September. Kington Horse Show and Agricultural Society. *MAN* will be putting on a fruit display again in the horticultural marquee, from noon to 5.30pm. Local apples have been requested, for identification. Show schedules from McCartney's, Kington. Details from Mrs Evans on 01544-231042.

Wednesday/Thursday 22nd/23rd September. Orchards and Wildlife. A Conference in Herefordshire, organised by Common Ground with English Nature, to be held at Ledbury.

Contributors:- Sue Clifford -

James Marsden - Overview of Orchard Wildlife

Dr Roger Key - Invertebrates in Orchards

Dr Meg Game - The Nature of Kentish Cobnut Plats

Jonathan Briggs - The National Mistletoe Survey

Cost:- £80 for Wednesday & Thursday and £55 for Thursday only. Leaflets with details available from Common Ground, PO Box 25309. London, NW5 1ZA. Advance booking essential, by September 3rd.

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

Saturday, 2nd October. Croft Castle will again be holding an 'Apple Fair' this year. A National Trust property, north of Leominster, with connections with the fruit breeder, Thomas Andrew Knight. Apple displays and identifications by MAN, fruit and cider tastings, orchards to visit, plus sales. For details, Tel. 01568-780246.

Saturday, 9th October. Marcher Apple Network's annual event to celebrate Apple Day. To be held at Bodenham Village Hall, on the A417 Trumpet/Hope under Dinmore road, near England's Gate Pub, NGR SO 543513. Doors open 2.00pm. There will be our first A.G.M. at 2.15pm followed, about 3.30pm, by the opportunity to enjoy all the usual events associated with Apple Day, including a display of old apple and pear varieties, with the opportunity to taste some of them. An identification panel will try to name your unknown fruit. (Bring at least 3 specimens of each variety please). There will be apple juice tastings, and bottles of single variety apple juice will be on sale, which make most acceptable Christmas presents. Later, there will also be a 'Pomological Panel' available for a 'Question and Answer' session. Tea and home-made refreshments with an apple theme will be on sale. Advance offers to provide some food will be much appreciated. On the occasion of this, our first AGM, there will be no entrance fee for the event, which we hope will be well attended. We expect to finish about 6.30pm. Details from MAN officers.

Saturday, 9th October. Apple Fest in Lingen Churchyard, 5 miles north east of Presteigne, on Brampton Bryan road, NGR SO366673, Herefordshire, 2.00-6.00pm. Apple display, demonstrations, workshops for children, games, music and food. Details from Val Taylor, Tel. 01568-770250 or Dorothy Phillips, Tel. 01544-267990

Saturday/Sunday, 16th/17th October. 'The Big Apple'. A harvest-time celebration of English apples and cider in the Herefordshire parishes of the Marcle Ridge. The venue will again be Much Marcle, where there will be one joint weekend combining interest in dessert and culinary fruit with cider fruit. There will be fruit displays, tastings, identifications and apple teas. MAN will be there.

For details of talks, demonstrations and other events, phone Jackie Denman, Secretary of the 'Big Apple Association', on 01531-670544.

Saturday, 16th October. Apple Fair at the Lion Ballroom, Leominster, from 10.00 - 4.00pm. Display of apples, identifications and advice. Stalls and activities. Apple-based refreshments. Details from Peter Blench, Tel. 01568-780886.

Thursday, 21st October. Apple Day. Events countrywide. Programme available from Common Ground. Send SAE to PO Box 25309, London, NW5 1ZA.

Saturday/Sunday, 23rd/24th October. The first ever Abergavenny Food Festival to be held in the Market Hall and in the adjacent Borough Theatre. A celebration of food of the Marches. On Saturday evening a community banquet and on Sunday, an all-day Farmer's Market with local specialist food producers selling delicacies. Festival Debate: Do we need GMOs? chaired by broadcaster Martin Lewis and with a panel of experts on the subject putting forward their case. For further details Tel. 01873-850480.

On the Sunday only, upstairs, in the Council Chamber, from 10.00am-4.00pm Usk College and MAN will have a large display of apples and pears. Tastings and sales of apple juice, honey and wax products. Information on Orchard Grants in Monmouthshire. Panel of staff & ex-staff from Usk College will be available until 3.00pm to identify your unknown fruit (3 specimens of each please).

Sunday, 24th October. Celebration of the Apple at Llancaiach Fawr Manor, Treharris, Mid Glam. Apple juice and cider producers will be selling their products in the Long Barn. MAN will be there, with some 17th century apples, also Welsh apples. For details Tel. 01443-412248.

Saturday, 30th October. Berrington Hall, near Ludlow. Tenth Anniversary Celebration of the completion of the planting of the Apple Collection, instigated by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens and carried out by Stan Baldock. Pruning demonstration in the orchard by Ken Vaughan, retired Gardener in Charge of Westbury Court, near Gloucester. Display of apples and tastings, and apple-based teas, with recipes available. For more details, phone Nick Winney, Tel. 01568-610593 or the Office, 01568-615721.

Saturday, 13th November. Day conference on 'Orchards in the Landscape'. Organised by PLACE Research Centre (a regional centre for People, Landscape and Cultural Environment), College of Ripon & York St. John, York, in collaboration with the Northern Fruit Group and Common Ground. Bookings by August 31st, (too early for this notification), but the speakers and subjects are :-

Sue Clifford - Orchards and local distinctiveness

Barry Potter - Orchards in Yorkshire

Joe Crocker - Wildlife of old orchards

Albert Henderson - Lichens in orchards

Trevor Rogers and Simon Clark - Distribution, mapping and recording old orchards

Dan Keech - Community orchards.

During the day, the Northern Fruit Group will be launching their local database project for recording old orchards. This splendid programme may provide ideas for other area groups to plan a similar conference or set up a database.

COUNTRYSIDE TRAINING

A range of Countryside Training Courses is being run between now and March 2000 by the Herefordshire Council's Parks & Countryside Service. Subjects include Pond Management, Leading Guided Walks, Practical Hedgerow Management and various tree-related courses. We would like to thank all members who supported the very successful Budding day we ran on 7th August 1999 and especially John Aldridge, the inspiring course tutor. From the feedback we received on the day and after, it seems a good time was had by all. Our next courses most relevant to *MAN* members resident in Herefordshire concern Apple Identification - Beginner's Guide, on Tuesday, 19th October, 1999 (date to be confirmed), and Orchard Planting & Aftercare to be held on the 13th & 27th November, 1999. In addition, we hope to run courses on Grafting and Restoration Pruning early in 2000. For further details on all the forthcoming courses please contact the Parks & Countryside Service Partnership Team on 01568 797305. The Partnership Team are:

Fiona Lickorish, Partnership Officer
James Bisset, Partnership Project Officer
Abby Marshall, Interpretation & Promotion Officer
Parks & Countryside Service (Life Members, *MAN*)
Herefordshire Council

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 MINIMUM SUB. of £5 NOW, for the current year, while you read your Newsletter No. 5, unless you are a Life Member or pay by Standing Order. Slips are inserted in this Newsletter, reminding members who pay by cheque that subscriptions are now due. All members who pay by Standing Order will receive another form in case they need to increase their subscription to the current rate.

Material for Newsletter No. 6, preferably typed or on disc, 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 2000 at the latest. Dates of events and small news items and 'fillers' can be accepted in early August. We should point out that the views expressed in the Newsletter are those of individual contributors, not necessarily those of *MAN*. Do you read your Newsletter thoroughly? Prize of one free fruit identification for spotting the fruity pun.

MAN OFFICERS:-

Chairman
Mr.R.B.Boddington
Westwyn
20 Walney Lane
Aylestone Hill
HEREFORD HR1 1JD
☎ 01432-273394

Membership Secretary
Mr.J.Aldridge
Orchard Barn
Ocle Pychard
HEREFORD HR1 3RB
☎ 01432-820304

Network Co-ordinator
Mrs.Sheila Leitch
Wye View
Glasbury-on-Wye
Powys via
HEREFORD HR3 5NU
☎ 01497-847354

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