



Marcher Apple Network

APPLES & PEARS

Volume 2 No 7

Non-members £2

Autumn 2013

Pupils' tree planting project



The tree planting takes place at Crossgates Primary School. Picture: Ernie Husson

CHILDREN from Years 3 and 4 at Crossgates Primary School have planted a 'family' apple tree which, in time, will hopefully yield three different varieties of apple. They were assisted by Chris and Mike Porter from the Marcher Apple Network and their teacher, Claire Jacques.

Apple enthusiasts of the future?



Bring on the bees please

CHILDREN from the eco committee at Cefnlys County Primary School in Llandrindod Wells planted a family apple tree last week which in time will hopefully yield three... The project aims to raise awareness of the relationship between bees and trees and the important role bees and other insects play in pollination. Eight Radnorshire primary schools feature a range of activities including role-playing trees, interviewing giant model bees, matching unemployed bees up with job vacancies at the Honeybee Jobcentre and making...

Full story inside

Reviving the old varieties of apples and pears in the marcher counties

www.marcherapple.net

Schools pollination project

Last summer, Jenny Stevens from Presteigne, asked whether we could help her with a project to help teach primary school children throughout Radnorshire about bees, trees and pollination: what it is and its importance.

We offered a small donation of £60, which ultimately seeded (pollinated?) a grant of £100 from the Forest Enterprise Initiative. With this Jenny was able to purchase Family Apple Trees from Paul Davis. He kindly provided all his stock of nine at below normal cost. Each had three grafts, many were familiar Welsh varieties.

Then what happened? Well we had fun planting one tree each in the grounds of nine schools: Mike and Chris Porter, Sheila Leitch, Tom Froggatt, Ainsleigh Rice and Jennifer Halliday watched youngsters become orchard workers for a short time. Perhaps one day they'll tend Paramor?

Jenny says that all but one tree are doing well and she's planning to get children to watch the bees and flies pollinate the flowers next spring. For more details, please see: www.beetlesandbees.co.uk/beetlesandbees-past-projects.php.

It was such fun that we'd like to do this again. We have some trees that Tom Allen has kindly grafted for us, which have not as yet been sold to members. We can plant these next winter. And we could ask for more trees to be grafted ready for winter 2014/15 and even ask Paul to graft up more family trees ready in three years. What do you think we should do? Do you have local schools that would be interested? do let us know if you can help.

Overall, we think it makes for the sort of activity to show yet another nice aspect of MAN.

Ainsleigh Rice

MAN's 21st Birthday celebrations

Next year see's MAN's 21st Anniversary. Lots of ideas are bubbling about how to celebrate it. Please contribute your thoughts for making an exciting programme. Here are some, but more are encouraged:

- A BBQ for members in one of our orchards (no, we won't roast one of you), with a wonderful range of apple and pear based recipes to finish the day....
- A "jamboree" cum conference at the 'Three Counties' show with theme to see how we can improve collaboration and share burdens,
- Sale of two handled Apple mugs,
- More of our local apple tree varieties grafted for members purchase.
- Writing, reciting of apple poems, with them captured onto postcards (for sale, obviously),

- Special low price sale to members of our two CDs: *Vintage Fruit* and *Herefordshire Pomona*.

+ more details/suggestions?

Preliminary notice

AGM.
Saturday, 16th November
2013
Cider Museum, Hereford
from 10.30 a.m.

The guest speaker this year will be **Johnathan Blair**, chief cider-maker at Westons, Much Marcle, Gloucestershire.

[more details?]

Notes from the Chairman

Marcher Apple Network Accounts for year ended 31.07.13

EXPENDITURE		INCOME	
Orchard maintenance & equipment	2246.15	Subscriptions	1178.50
Committee admin. + expenses	13881.86	Life members	300.00
Newsletters	767.43	Apple IDs	421.00
Misc. payments	702.11	Bank interest	1525.75
Paramor Orchard	2022.80	Donations & Gift Aid	1230.05
		Pomona project	800.45
		Purchase/sale books	1025.04
		Events	167.85
		Speaker fees	70.00
		Grants Rec'd	3373.20
		Anniversary trees	45.00
		Surplus for the year	1618.98
	8813.84		8813.84

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31.07.13

LIABILITIES		ASSETS	
Grant	3373.00	Publications at cost	5579.00
Anniversary trees	45.00	CDs and cards	5800.00
Accumulated fund	70348.98	Orchard equipment at cost less 20% p.a.	2500.00
		Planting materials	8250.00
		Library, reference books. stationery & equipment	4014.00
		Land at cost + improvements	36000.00
		Bank balances	17255.96
	72173.96		72173.96

The Three Counties Traditional Orchards Project

Information for the Marcher Apple Network

This is a Heritage Lottery Funded project, covering the whole of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. A wide range of partners is involved but the AONB is taking the lead role. The overall aim of the project is to conserve and restore existing traditional orchards for people and for wildlife and we hope to do this by getting more people involved in managing them and using them.

We are currently in a development year, which we are using to shape the final project before making a final 'bid' for a programme we've already submitted. Although there is no guarantee that we will get the money for the project, the HLF have already said that they like it and we are confident that we can make a good case for funding. This year is our opportunity to show that the project is needed, that nobody else is already doing what we propose and that we have volunteers, experts and orchards ready to take part in the project.

About the project:

We're aware that some of the skills needed to manage orchards are vanishing with the old 'orchardeers' so we are hoping to train volunteers in all aspects of orchard management — from identification to practical pruning and grafting and even through to cider and juice making! We will match volunteers with orchard owners and they will then manage or even 'adopt' an orchard to renovate. We are looking at old orchards which are poorly managed or unmanaged with a view to bringing them back into production, making them more accessible to the local community and improving their wildlife value. Over the three years of the project we hope to make sure that we have a new generation of traditional orchard enthusiasts, some of whom may go on to become orchard experts in their own right.

The volunteers, owners and orchard groups will be supported by three orchard knowledge and skills 'hubs' — one in each County — to raise awareness and deliver training to owners and volunteers. A development officer will be able to help volunteers form a community group but the orchard skills training will be delivered by experts, probably in the orchards themselves.

Before the project starts we have to decide on two areas per County to focus on. We are

using data supplied to us from a variety of organisations about orchard fauna and flora, orchard densities and conditions, etc. to make sure we are choosing areas which most need attention. We are also attempting to match these up with orchard owners needing help and with likely sources of volunteers. And finally we are attempting to make sure that no-one else is doing the same thing in these areas and to see if we can be of help. At the moment in Herefordshire we are looking at the areas around Garway and to the west of Hereford City.

What are the project targets?

Over the lifetime of the project, across the whole of the Three Counties project area, we want to do the following:

- Renovate or restore 25 traditional orchards;
- Develop 5 orchard trails;
- Write 40 management plans;
- Carry out 40 wildlife and archaeological surveys;
- Run courses on e.g. orchard management, beekeeping, first aid and apple juicing;
- Produce orchard heritage leaflets for Parish Councils;
- Support 15 new orchard groups and 100 volunteers;
- Support the 'hubs' so that they can mentor, train and inform volunteers;
- Develop an accredited course for traditional orchard management.

There are several other aims which we are keen to achieve:

- We are hoping to develop accredited traditional orchard courses for both volunteers and professionals.
- We want to identify documentation about the orchard industry — from archaeological information through to oral histories — and look at how it might be recorded.

Project funding

We are asking the Heritage Lottery to provide funding towards the project. This funding will cover the recruitment of volunteers, running training courses and buying tools and equipment, as well as producing leaflets, etc. for local parishes. The trees for 'gapping up' and replanting will be funded by a separate bid to a landfill trust and, since the local and rare varieties are harder to source, may be grown on in advance by local growers.

How can MAN be involved?

We need your knowledge, enthusiasm and expertise! We have less volunteers and experts towards the west of the project area and would like to build our skills base there. We may occasionally ask if someone could give support or mentoring to new orchard volunteers — mainly by way of encouragement or telephone advice — and there may be opportunities for MAN to organise (and earn money from) training which is funded by the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project.

We hope that the benefits will be two-way and that we may be able to recruit new members for MAN. And whilst pomology is not a skill that can be acquired overnight, this project may help to find and encourage the next generation of pomologists.

Karen Humphries

If you would like to know more please feel free to contact me on :

khumphries@worcestershire.gov.uk
or telephone 01684 560616

STOP PRESS

Pollinating insects - Good News!

We understand that the Welsh Assembly is interested in promoting ways of encouraging these important creatures, following an initiative already active in England.

Royal Welsh Agricultural Show

MAN had a stand at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show (RWAS) for the first time, this year. We hadn't planned it, it just sort-of happened, through a chance noting in a newspaper article that RWAS still had some stands.

We decided upon a collaborative project and teamed up with the Gloucestershire Orchard Trust, the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project, Paul Davis and Welsh Perry and Cider Society to run it. MAN was represented by Shela Leitch, Jane Kent, David Smith, Tam le Bailley, Tom Froggatt and Ainsleigh Rice.

Sales of books and peelers were fairly good, the heat on Monday 22nd was high, and the collaboration was most enjoyable, thanks to our partners. We had many interesting discussions with folk many of whom don't go to the 'regular' apple shows. And several live quite close to our orchards...



An apple a day....

I bought two apples a couple of months ago. Not something I do very often, and certainly not in the summer. They had neat little labels (yes, they did come from a supermarket) and they were wonderful: evenly matched in size, shiny, and a cheerful colour. They were very crisp and juicy. They tasted of nothing.

So it came as no surprise to read a recent article* saying that Britain's appetite for apples is diminishing and changing. Apparently our fruit consumption is down but the decline in popularity for apples is particularly sharp. Lots

of reasons are put forward, not least rising prices. However, it was the comment that it is tastes that are changing that caught my eye. *Gala* and *Braeburn* are now particular favourites as are the new 'designer' apples such as *Jazz* and *Pink Lady*. Growers like them because they are high yielders and consistent and will grow in lots of places round the world.

Well, we know that *Cox* can be difficult so can understand why its losing its popularity in the UK commercial markets. My initial

reaction was 'how sad' that uniformity, yield and standardisation has to rule the day. But, being a 'glass-half-full' sort of person, I now think that this will make our traditional apples become even more special, that the harvest period will be looked forward to eagerly — like the short British asparagus season.

Surely a bright future for MAN!

Celia kirby

* *The Economist* (2013), 408 (8843), 31.

What's on?

A list of regional apple events was included with the spring newsletter and an updated version is enclosed now but note that www.marcherapple.net/diary.htm

Heritage - MAN's Museum Orchards

Next year MAN celebrates 21 years of existence. In Dec.1993 we became one of several associations of folk around Britain anxious to halt the trend of grubbing up orchards which had for hundreds of years been a wonderful landscape feature and wildlife habitat in many parts of our country. The fruit grown in these orchards was under threat — fruit which had such memorable flavours and did not have to travel thousands of miles to reach our shops. It seems incredible as we look back that these orchard trees, whose fruit so many country and townspeople valued and enjoyed, were being consigned to the bonfire and the land planted with crops perceived as more commercially viable.

By the turn of the millennium five orchards were being established by MAN, thanks to enthusiastic landowners/farmers who shared this concern for the possible extinction of local apple varieties.

Every apple has to have a good reason for its place in a MAN orchard. In the early years we collected graftwood from well-known and well-established local varieties of apple, but as we visited old orchards it became obvious how difficult it is to identify old crabby, misshapen fruit from an ancient apple tree. So the collection of graftwood from these unrecognisable unknown varieties was begun, in the hope that in (possibly) four or five years a young grafted tree might produce good identifiable fruit. The orchards now growing at Tredomen, Croft Pendarren and Westhope therefore have a mixture of well-known 'locals' and also quite a few now identified varieties, mostly from the counties of the Welsh Marches: Welsh and English apple varieties found by foraging local people and from our own visits to old orchards, remnants of orchards and special odd trees recommended by people visiting local shows. There are still 1 or 2 trees which defeat even the experts of MAN and Supermen/women like Dr. Joan Morgan, but we keep an eye on the crop and bring these awkward specimens to our ID group each autumn and are slowly, as we gain experience (after 20 years or so!), determining these problem varieties. Now we have a wide selection of known local varieties growing in our area which helps when checking the unknowns. Determination must be one of our key words....

In 2007 one of MAN's very generous members gave money to buy land for our own orchard at

Cwmdu, near Crickhowell. It is named 'Paramor Orchard' in memory of this member's family. What an opportunity this has given us! The trees planted on this land should, we hope, have a real chance of surviving present-day members if we can establish the right means for the orchard's continuity. The village of Cwmdu has a small active community with people who are interested in helping MAN form a longer-term management group. Planning for the future is always difficult, but we must try to ensure the apple varieties planted here with such thought and after so much care and research has been expended into their provenance will survive and truly make Paramor a lasting Heritage Site in this part of the world.

In November 2008 and February 2009 the first 31 trees were planted with help from MAN members, Cwmdu school children and interested local people. All are to be found in 'Welsh Marches Pomona' where they were described for the first time. Subsequent years have seen further apple varieties planted — all having close links with the Welsh Marches area. Many of these are not represented at Brogdale, so it really is up to us to cherish and maintain a collection of our own local varieties.

Over many years MAN's team of experts and enthusiasts have researched and verified the provenance of these apples. How many visits have been made to consult and study the apple literature of Worcester, Hereford

and Shrewsbury libraries and the RHS Lindley Library in London! With names like *Bridstow Wasp*, *Chatley Kernel*, *Tewkesbury Baron*, *Tillington Court*, *Pig Aderyn* and *Pig yr wydd*, we are led around the Marches area, and *Gennet Moyle*, *Severn Bank*, *Gypsy King*, *Blacksmith* and *Lady's Finger of Shropshire* take us deep into apple history and folk-lore. Apples like *King of the Pippins*, *Tyler's Kernel*, *Machen*, *Gloucester Underleaf*, *Landore / Monmouth Green* and *Dodden* are remembered by local people whose reminiscences have delighted us at shows like Malvern, The Big Apple, Church Stretton, Leominster and Chepstow. Very often it has only been after several years of study and deliberation that some of the more puzzling apples have been recognised. The various Quoinings, *White Castle*, *Waters Upton*, *Summer*, *Aeron*, *Colwall* and *Herefordshire*, are being grown together to try to disentangle their relationships.

Now, all of these local apples are growing in Paramor Orchard — together representing the wealth of this area's orchards and carrying on its history. MAN in its 21st year can celebrate with other thriving orchard organisations in East Anglia, Cornwall, Gloucestershire, the North of England and the Midlands that our local apple varieties are grown and treasured.

We hope our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy an apple or two, perhaps *Pitmaston Pineapple* and *Herefordshire Quoining*, many years from now.

Chris Porter



Machen



Bridstow Wasp

Doctor delayed, repays patience!

If the title of this piece sounds like a cryptic crossword clue, that is not its intention. Rather, this is a tale of fortitude; of success against all odds; of making good despite early upheaval and abuse — a parable of our times, maybe. But specifically, it's the brief story, to date, of my *Doctor Harvey* apple tree, currently aged 10 and a quarter.

The story starts just a little further back. In October 2002 I found myself in Faversham in Kent, accompanying my wife on her business trip. Whilst she was occupied, I passed some time by visiting Brogdale; it was Apple Week, and there were displays and a fine collection of picked fruit for sale. I bought a large bag of what I thought were Bramleys, but learned they were actually the product of that old East Anglian favourite, a *Doctor Harvey* tree.

They cooked beautifully, falling almost into purée when you showed them a pan, and they tasted wonderful. It took little to persuade this would-be orchardist that a tree of this variety would be an asset to any orchard — indeed, that we should buy one now, to start that orchard!

But you don't find them commonly in garden centres. In the event, it was March 2003 when the tree was 'conceived' by graft at Brogdale, and they nursed the infant until, some time later, it was deemed fit to travel to me in Lincolnshire. Immediately on arrival it was heeled into the ground, and after longer than perhaps it should have been — due to my travelling — planted into what was intended as its permanent position, in the garden of a bungalow adjacent to our main home, which we had bought and renovated, thinking we would move into it in due course.

But no. In early 2005 we sold that property but I was not prepared to leave *Doctor Harvey* behind. He was pruned back, and then up he came, to be heeled into the ground of the main garden until we found the 'perfect spot'.

About that time we acquired a little cottage in the extreme south-west of Ireland. Ah, I thought, this is where the tree should be. I should have thought

harder, and known better. It's an East Anglian tree, where the weather is relatively cool in winter, and dry; County Kerry / West Cork is quite warm in winter, and extremely wet. Then there was the wildlife... We've seen hares nibbling the bark; deer eating the new shoots; errant and stray cattle destroying the cage we built to protect it — the forces were not with the good Doctor then, and we were not on site often or long enough to monitor and protect it effectively. After about three years, the tree was in very bad shape.

There comes a stage when there are two choices — radical intervention, or abandonment to its fate, accepting that either can result in terminal failure. So in 2009, six years after the graft, once again the tree was pruned right back to a single stem, wrapped in a black bin liner, and repatriated to the UK and planted in the garden of our current home — neither of the earlier two houses as both these were gone. So this was now the still-young *Doctor Harvey's* fourth 'permanent' site.

Here in Lincolnshire we've been able to protect the tree better, but our garden sees wildlife from muntjac deer to squirrels: both of these, and no doubt other of our many visitors, from pheasants to foxes, have chosen to inflict insult on the tree from time to time. It's been nibbled;

branches have been broken; and — possibly most destructive from an owner's point of view — the squirrels steal the blossom and break the younger shoots in their efforts to reach their reward. We have seen little enough blossom anyway, and until this year, no fruit.



Count 'em! Two fruit top of picture, one more lower down...

But now, three apples, checked and counted daily! Whether the tree is merely celebrating its longest period in one place; whether it's reached some critical mass that allows it to mark maturity by setting flower and fruit — or whether the old wives' solution of scented soap hanging from the lower branches to deter

the squirrels is actually working, I can't say. But these three apples are treasured as the first crop, and we look forward with unreasonable anticipation to enjoying them when the time is right — a few weeks yet, I believe [it's now mid-August], and with confident hope of more and better next year.

Is this a success story? We'll see. And is it the end of the story? Well, maybe not. There's a discussion now about whether *Doctor Harvey* — mine and others — isn't really that variety at all, but rather a Waltham Abbey tree, or indeed whether these two are the same thing. But there is some evidence that differences exist even while carrying the same name.

I'm fortunate in living within walking distance of Lincoln's famous Cross O'Cliff Orchard, where an old tree is



Now touching on eight feet tall, and growing well... The inset shows the stump of the original (and broken) leading shoot, along with anti-squirrel measures — scented soap in sawn off tights!



An apple that would tempt any Eve, surely!

listed as a *Doctor Harvey*, so I'll be over there looking at that tree, its leaves and fruit, and comparing them with mine. I'll take pictures and pass them round.

I was going to say "but that's another story". But really it isn't for the turmoil and troubled adolescence of my tree, but rather a continuance of the parable of our times referred to at the outset. Youngster survives despite difficult upbringing, and makes good; after a while the questions start as it looks for its true progenitors. Watch this space!

Chris Taylor

Wanted

recently delivered a *Catillac* pear tree to a recently joined member of MAN, Roger Morris. During our conversation, Roger mentioned that he is hoping to locate a small piece of land to purchase and plant up as a mixed orchard in memory of his parents, the Morris family of Hay-on-Wye. This new orchard would have apples, pears, stone fruits, nut trees and be a wildlife refuge. Unfortunately, his own smallholding in a steep-sided dingle above Hay is already full of orchard plots and natural woodland. An area between Hay, Talgarth and Crickhowell would be preferable and although several have been viewed, nothing suitable has been found as yet.

I remembered that Life Member, Chris Taylor, had put a similar request into the 2001 edition of our small MAN Newsletter which I edited for 12 years. Describing himself as 'a wet behind the ears new member', and heading it 'Wanted: Space to Fulfil a Dream', he had had several responses from members. I suggested that Roger should write up his search for the next issue of *Apples and Pears*, but he thought I could do it more quickly to get it in before the deadline. I liked his concept so here it is. Any thoughts from members, please contact Roger direct at, Morris's Cider, Hay-on-Wye, Hereford, HR3 5RL (07779 406829) or let or me know (01497- 847354).

Prompted by this reminiscence, I recently phoned Chris Taylor, in Lincolnshire, regarding his search for an orchard and, after 12 years, there was much to catch up on. His entertaining article on Dr Harvey is one result (see page xx), plus very helpful forward thinking ideas for MAN.

Odd shapes

We thought it would be jolly to share pictures of unusual shaped fruit. So to start, here is a photo of a siamesed '*Major*', a bittersweet cider apple from Richard Wheeler's orchard.

We'd be delighted if you'd share pictures of any you have this autumn.



Current members of the MARCHER APPLE NETWORK Committee

Siir Andrew Large.....	President
Ray Boddington.....	Hon. Vice President, Director & Trustee
Dr Peter Austerfield.....	Chairman & Director & Trustee
Tom Froggatt.....	Company Secretary, Treasurer & Trustee
Mike Porter.....	Director & Trustee
Diggory Kempton.....	Membership Secretary
Dr Celia Kirby.....	Editor
Sheila Leitch.....	Network Coordinator & Librarian
Gillain Menzies.....	Member
Andy Pillow.....	Member
Chris Porter.....	Archivist
Ainsleigh Rice.....	Member
David Smith	Member
Richard Wheeler.....	Vice Chairman & Webmaster
Marie Ward.....	Secretary

News of MAN Orchards

Tredomen Court – what has happened here?

A lot. We've had a new entrance made that runs parallel with the pan-handle, it's even got scalplings on the track so you won't get stuck on muddy days. Please use this route in preference to the old one over the in-by field.

Last year, the committee recognised that volunteer effort alone could not keep up-to-date with winter pruning. So this winter Emma Gardner spent ten days pruning, helped by another 15–20 days from volunteers pruning and tidying up. Over 80% of the 230 trees have now been pruned, and they look much less leggy. This year's crop has been prolific, much better than last (It couldn't be otherwise!). Indeed some thinning has been necessary.

We've planted another 13 trees, some from grafting taken at Lower Ffordd-fawr. There are only about 10 empty spaces for new plantings, most in the YZ pan-handle.

We are sad to report that Tony James, who had taken over grass cutting using MAN's ride-on-mower, has been unable to work this year on account of a bad back. While we were looking for an alternative, the grass grew fast. It ended up with us having to get help from a local groundcare company, OTM, to top it with their powerful Kubota mowers. It looks neater now. As at Paramor we've got a couple of very willing men to cut the grass,

The Orchard Management Plan is now having ecological reports added. And then it'll be time to update it again! C'est la vie! We'll use it as a template for Lower Ffordd-fawr.

and at Lower Ffordd-fawr

It is looking neat and tidy. All trees about which we have a particular interest have been grafted onto MM106 or M111 rootstock and now planted up in Tredomen Court.

Despite that, we are continuing caring for it. Three staff from Drover Holidays of Hay-on-Wye are keen to take a few hours out of their office 3-4 times a year to work here. They've checked stakes, made notes, strimmed, pruned etc. It's an exciting collaboration, developing local orchard skills and making our life easier.

Aylton Pears

This orchard was established over ten years ago by Colin Henderson. When Sheila and Ainsleigh visited last year we found some trees were not in the best of condition. The Committee felt that it would be prudent to take grafts of the rarer and less readily available varieties. Thus, in mid-March, Sheila, with Gillian and Ainsleigh, took 19 cuttings from 14 trees and delivered them to Keith Turner of the Gloucestershire Orchard Trust. Despite many having buds just beginning to open, all but one graft has taken. So we think this will secure them a second home. Apparently this may be seeding the idea of establishing a culinary pear orchard in Gloucestershire: to corrupt: from small cuttings to do mighty orchards form.

Meanwhile, we plan to continue helping the current owner look after the orchard, with help from Richard Hunt of the West Midlands Fruit Group.

Ainsleigh Rice

Paramor Orchard

Twenty-five apple trees were planted in the Spring, bringing the total number of standard trees in the main orchard to 110. In the main orchard at Paramor we are trying to assemble trees of all the surviving eating and cooking varieties originating in Wales and the Welsh Marches. The batch planted this year included *Limelight*, *Gabalva* and an old Quoining from Shropshire. *Limelight* is a new eating apple bred by the late Hugh Ermen and introduced by F.P Matthews of Tenbury Wells. *Gabalva* (see below) is a late eater similar in appearance to *King's Acre Pippin* but with a texture and taste reminiscent of *Blenheim Orange*. It was introduced in 1901 by Messrs. Tresider and Son of Cardiff, having been grown



on the Gabalva Estate of the Marquis of Bute since about 1840. It is one of the old local varieties for which MAN has been searching for several years.

Until now all the varieties planted in our main collection at Paramor have been cookers or eaters but, it is hoped, future plantings will include local cider apple varieties such as *Eggleton Styre*, *Frederick* and *Joeby Crab*. In the small orchard there are now 58 varieties which are mainly "unknowns" under investigation, together with a few duplicates for insurance purposes.

Moth and wild flower surveys have continued this year and several additional species have been recorded. Margaret Gill is compiling a guide to the wildlife in Paramor Orchard.

There were some problems with grass cutting last year so a local farmer 'topped' the field in late Spring and both orchards have been mown during the Summer.

A Paramor Support Group has been set up after initial discussions with MAN. It will be invaluable to have local volunteers keeping a watchful eye on the orchard and helping to tend the trees by weeding, checking posts and ties, thinning fruit, etc. The Friends of Paramor also plan to hold special apple-events in the orchard. They have already been in action chasing out invading sheep and repairing the fence through which the pests had entered!

Croft Pendarren

This MAN orchard, where the first trees were planted in 1996 / 97, has good fruit this year, especially the Welsh varieties. All the apples are grafted on M25 stock and many of the older trees now have fine sturdy trunks. We are lucky that the maintenance of the actual land and hedge boundaries is carried out by the owner at no cost to MAN. We do all the pruning, try to keep a check on the health of the trees and the quality of the fruit being produced. The 50 apple trees all seem to be thriving at the moment, although those nearest the old oak and ash trees, which form a boundary above the River Usk, do find it hard to compete.

The medal for the tree with the best crop this year must go to Ashmead's Kernel, closely followed by Duke of Devonshire, Twll tyn gwydd,



Brith mawr

Pig Aderyn and Ross Nonpareil. The blossom, late this year, was quite remarkable because the earlier varieties came out later coinciding with the mid-season bloomers.

The Bluebells along the banks attract lots of insects which must in turn help apple pollination and the Milkmaids were visited by their Orange Tip butterflies, which is always a lovely sight. Now the apples are being attacked by Jays, whose squawk has not the most pleasing effect on the ear.

Chris Porter

Westhope Orchard

Fruiting this year could be described on a scale from poor to fair to good. Of the first, *Sam's Crab*, *Gascoyne's Scarlet*, *Annie Elizabeth*, *Pig's Nose Pippin*, *Stoke Edith Pippin* and *Newland Sack* (never prolific thus far but younger than the others) are decidedly thin. *Duke of Devonshire* and *Prince Alfred* are fair while *Severn Bank*, *Pomeroy of Hereford*, *Scotch Bridget* and *Domino* are good.

One tree, *Lady's Finger of Hereford*, has lost a branch some 4 inches diameter resulting in a split trunk, a split you can put your fingers into. There is a fair crop of apples but I fear for the tree.

All the deer cages have been removed from around the trees and there has been some extra nibbling at low branch ends. This, to a certain extent, was happening before but it is not a major problem. The trunks are covered with chicken wire to a height of 5-plus feet. The removal of the cages certainly makes grass cutting easier.

One other problem at Westhope is that the orchard is surrounded by trees which, over the years, have grown taller and some of the

fruit trees have taken on a decided lean as they move towards the light. There are two or three that are far from vertical.

Peter Austerfield

[Article coming on varieties that are known to be successful in difficult locations]

Do you like creepy-crawlies?

The restorative work on Wye View, which is feeling its age, has been going on for several months, during which time the team of workers have learnt of some of my interests. In August one of them mentioned he had seen a big hairy caterpillar crossing the path to the pear tree by the kitchen window, a very old espalier, *Louise Bonne of Jersey*, which has many shoots arising from the base. I went over with him to see if we could spot it, but instead saw a small spectacular beastie on a nibbled leaf. I picked the leaf and went inside to see what it might be, using 'The Illustrated Book of Insects' published by Peerage Books. I find it a very useful and easy to use starting point for the vast field of British Insects. Having identified the caterpillar as the larva of a Grey Dagger Moth, I then tried putting the name into Google and found a site called Ron Bury's Wildlife, which had the following text:

"Every so often I come across a bug of some kind that captures my attention, either because of its appearance or behaviour, and I couldn't resist this spectacularly colored caterpillar. Problem is that on nearly every occasion I have to do a search to find out what it is. I've looked through a couple of books, one being the Collins *Field Guide for Insects* and the only caterpillar that comes close to this one is the Grey Dagger (*Acrionicta psi*); but the colouring isn't right. The illustration shows white below the red spots and grey up to the yellow, whereas this specimen is black; so if anyone can help I'd be grateful. When I do identify it properly I'll amend the post.

My thanks to the warden at Pencychnant Conservation Centre and Nature Reserve in North Wales who offered this information: "It is a Grey Dagger caterpillar. It is not too surprising that it doesn't concur exactly with the illustration in your book because caterpillars vary considerably between instars, making identification difficult. Grey Dagger is a common moth but this is an uncommon record because Grey Dagger is virtually indistinguishable from Dark Dagger, so it is usually recorded as Grey Dagger agg. However the caterpillars are not alike so we can be certain that this is the Grey Dagger *sensu stricto*"

Below were three beautiful photos of the caterpillar. My find also was black along the sides. I contacted Julian, the Warden, who had run moth courses at the Conservation Centre, but the photos were not by him. On phoning Ron Bury in Scotland he freely gave permission to use one of his photos — see below. Anyway, this is a caterpillar to watch out for on fruit tree leaves. It also feeds on many types of trees and shrubs, including birch, lime and hawthorn. All sightings of this very distinctive little caterpillar will help fill out the records of the Grey Dagger Moth, (*Acrionicta psi*) as distinct from the Dark Dagger Moth (*Acrionicta tridents*), the caterpillars being markedly different.

To sum up this information, Dagger Moths are so named because of the marks on the wings, but the two species are very difficult to distinguish. Here we all have the chance to add to the knowledge of the distribution of these

two moth species by the striking appearance of this caterpillar. So please keep your eyes open and let us know if you come across one on your fruit trees or elsewhere. It is not to be regarded as a pest. These days naturalists use moth traps, and are constantly having the thrill of adding new species to county records. Their records will probably only show as Grey Dagger agg. (aggregate). As a child I used to love collecting interesting caterpillars and, on finding a new one, would take it home together with fresh leaves of the vegetation it was feeding on. I would rear and feed my caterpillars as carefully as my pet mice until I had the thrill of seeing what emerged from the chrysalis, weeks or months later. MAN members with children can ask them to keep a sharp lookout for these unusual-looking caterpillars and, if they spot one, they could be noted as a recorder for their county.

Sheila Leitch



Photograph: Ron Bury (www.ronburyswildlife.com)

Forthcoming Course

Apple Identification:

On 3rd October 2013 (10am – 3pm) there will be a short refresher course on apple identification at The Harp, Glasbury-on-Wye.

Tutor: **Mike Porter.**

If you would like to attend please send booking fee of £10 (cheques payable to MAN) to Marie Ward, 8, Nant-y-Felin, Three Cocks, Brecon, LD3 0SJ, or e-mail marie.t.ward@googlemail.com by 25th September 2013. Light lunches are available at The Harp.

Library Additions

THE HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF PEARS

Proceedings of a Meeting at RHS Gardens Harlow Carr, Yorkshire, 16th/17th November 2011. Hardback copy kindly donated by Simon Clark of the Northern Fruit Group.

Contents:

Day 1.

Joan Morgan. Pomologist and Fruit historian. The Story of the Pear.

Crispin Haynes. Ecoconsultant CWHaynes Associates. Pear Orchards in Scotland and the Auld Alliance.

Peter Brears. Dip. AD., F.M.A., F.S.A. Museum and House Consultant. Food Historian. Pears in the Kitchen; a brief history.

Day 2.

Jim Arbury. Fruit Officer Royal Horticultural Society. "The History of Pears in the UK emphasising Varietal Characteristics and Fashion Changes."

Jim Chapman. Trustee of the National Perry Pear Collection. Perry Pears.

Walter Hartman. Akademischer Oberrat. Champagne Bratbirne and some other important historical perry pears.

Chris Wedge. Gloucestershire land management team and orchard specialist. Traditional Orchards.

Catherine Lloyd. Tayside Bio Diversity Partnership and Central Core Orchard Network with minor assistance from Simon Clark. Summary and Conclusions.

Simon Clark and Jim Arbury. The Way Forward.

Acknowledgements.

List of Participants.

Available from the Marcher Apple Network

Welsh Marches Pomona is written by Mike Porter and illustrated by Margaret Gill. It contains beautifully illustrated descriptions of 31 varieties of local apples, some of which have never featured in the apple literature. Life-size views of ripe fruit and blossom at both pink bud and fully open stages, plus line drawings of leaves and sections of fruit make this a truly unique reference work.

Hardback format, 300mm × 230mm; full colour throughout. 96 pp.

Price £25.00 + £5.00 p and p (UK)

Apples of the Welsh Marches describes 54 old varieties of apples cultivated in the traditional orchards of the region, plus 24 further varieties grown here extensively in the past and still found in local farm orchards.

Price £5.00 inc p and p in the UK.

The Herefordshire Pomona CD contains copies of all the 77 coloured plates from *The Herefordshire Pomona*, originally published by the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club of Herefordshire in 1885. The corresponding sections and text descriptions of the 432 varieties of fruit illustrated on the plates are included, as are the lists of local cider apples and pears and the lists of varieties which the Woolhope Club recommended for planting.

The Vintage Fruit CD contains 290 separate descriptions of cider varieties and 107 descriptions of perry pears, all taken from hard to obtain reference works.

Prices £16.50 per copy, inc p and p in the UK.

Full Colour Postcard Reproductions Seven plates from *The Herefordshire Pomona*, in postcard format (6" x 4").

Price £2.00 per pack, plus 50p post and packing for up to two packs, thereafter PLUS 15p per pack.

Back Numbers of the MAN Newsletter

Many of the articles featured contain advice and ideas which have stood the test of time and still make an interesting read. Copies of last year's issue of *Apples and Pears* (Vol 2. No. 4) are also available.

Prices Nos 1 to 6 (1995 to 2000) £4.00: Nos 7 to 12 (2001 to 2006) £7.00: All 12: £10.00, all including p and p in the UK. Vol. 2, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4, £2.00 ea. including p and p.

MAN Library List, managed by Sheila Leitch

Price £2.00 inc. p and p in the UK.

To Order: Preferably download an order form from www.marcherapple.net/books.htm — note that MAN now has a PayPal account — or write to Diggory Kempton, the Membership Secretary, Marcher Apple Network, Brook House, Hopesay, CRAVEN ARMS, Shropshire, SY7 8HD. Cheques should be made payable to Marcher Apple Network. **Wholesale price list on request.**

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