



Marcher Apple Network

APPLES & PEARS

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Autumn 2016



*The Worcester Black Pear at
Cripplegate*

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

www.marcherapple.net

MAN's official business: Chairman's report

AGM 2016

Having tried holding an AGM in June, there was consensus that it is better for this to take place in November as has generally been our practice. Our next AGM is therefore at the CIDER MUSEUM, on Saturday, 26th November at 11:00. Members are cordially invited to attend. The purpose of the AGM includes receiving and, if thought fit, accepting the annual report and accounts, and electing Trustees to the Board. Coffee will be available from 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of 21st AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report
5. Presentation and Adoption of Accounts
6. Other Reports
7. Election of Directors
8. Exemption from examination of Accounts 2016/17
9. Open Forum
10. Any Other Business

Current TRUSTEES:

Peter Austerfield
Mike Porter
Jim Chapman
Jackie Denman
Nick Dunn
Sir Andrew Large
Andy Pillow
Stephen Ainsleigh Rice

Two trustees, Nick Dunn and Andy Pillow, are retiring: both are willing to be re-elected.

Current MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

(Officers):

Peter Austerfield
Daniella Bergman
Wade Muggleton
Sheila Leitch
Andy Pillow
Chris Porter
Mike Porter
Stephen Ainsleigh Rice
Charlie Searl
David Smith

Our VISITING SPEAKER, at around 12.15 p.m. is **Steve Oram** of the People's Trust for Endangered Species. A lively presentation of how PTES is working to conserve traditional orchards and their associated wildlife was

published in Apples and Pears last year (volume 2, number 9). PTES has found there are many thousands of traditional orchards around the UK, and they are continuing mapping these. Essentially, if we don't know what is there, how can we help them be conserved? For that purpose they have introduced small grants for enabling sympathetic development and improvement be made to orchards. PTES has galvanised public interest in conservation, so here's an opportunity for members to find out more about conservation opportunities and how we can contribute to preserving top fruit varieties, improving habitat and wildlife.

If you have friends who may be interested in Steve's talk, there may be space for them to join us, but please do let us know before the meeting.

Contents

In this issue of "Apples and Pears" you can read about MAN's activities over the last year, of changes we're thinking of making to MAN, of Black Worcester cullinary pears, of finding lost varieties, of activities in our neighbouring organisations, and of the first campaign for DNA analysis of our apples and how it may help with identification and characterisation.

Forward Planning Meeting

The Management Committee decided that we needed to take a look at the future of the Marcher Apple Network.

A number of issues have been bubbling and it was time to address them. There is wide recognition that MAN activities on identification and orchard maintenance are becoming increasingly demanding for the ageing active members. We must encourage new folk into

attending at shows and carrying out ID. There is need to distribute parts of our collection and rationalise those varieties held at Tredomen in particular. It is considered that attracting new members is key to enabling this to happen, but how?

Sixteen from among Trustees, Committee members and our active Membership discussed this at a "Forward Planning Meeting" held at The Cider Museum, Hereford on Saturday, 30th January 2016. The main suggestions were for Committee to work on:

Public Profile

- MAN should not retrench its presence at Shows, critical for MAN's future
- attend local shows and events outside the "peak" autumn season for gaining new members
- encourage members who are not yet expert at ID to go to such shows
- Consider running a course on setting up and maintaining an orchard, perhaps via Common Ground, TCTOP or Land Organics, with grant assistance.

Identification

- Continue training new members in Identification
- Consider relocating ID workshops places and times more convenient for potential identifiers, e.g. to Cider Museum on a Saturday.
- Produce a video of ID process (with grant funding)
- Be prepared to engage in national campaigns of apple variety characterization by DNA analysis (with guidance from Matthew Ordidge).

Conservation

- Paramor has MAN's prime collection and it must continue.
- MAN's preferred inventory of varieties to be based upon:
 - heritage varieties,
 - those found (historically) successful in our area,
 - regional varieties not in Brogdale collection,
 - temporarily, those uncommon varieties out-of-area pending distribution to regional orchard



Here's a group of members working up ideas

groups, and, to research of unidentified varieties.

- Work on rationalising our collection at Tredomen (etc.).
- Accept Nick Dunn's generous offer to host (the valued and unique parts of) MAN's collection on cordons as a second copy.
- Decide whether a longer term second copy of the collection is best preserved at Tredomen or elsewhere (e.g. at Brogdale, National Trust properties, Regional Orchard groups and a new site)

Communication

- As with attendance at shows, good communication is crucially important for attracting new members and demonstrating the Public Interest.
- Our website must be revamped, with more up-to-date information about MAN, help for the public, useful contacts and details about sister organisations.
- We should have more literature about MAN's activities, and be less "careful" husbanding our finances.
- If we can attract interest, produce helpful videos for the public.

This is quite a tall order, don't you agree? But as you'll see in this Newsletter we're making real progress already. Good time this, then, to invite members to join the Management Committee for sharing the fun (**Contact:** ainsleigh_jennifer@btinternet.com/01497-820332). Or if you see things you'd like to do with us please shout "APPLE" and send Charlie a message on Facebook.

Courses

Pruning

This year, at the Tredomen orchard on Saturday 13th February, Paul Davis of Dolauhirion Fruit Trees nursery, introduced twelve participants to the reasons for and approaches to pruning apple trees. As in previous years, there was much enthusiasm, goodwill and excitement generated. We needed it, as the sleet and wind encouraged activity. Over 40 of our trees were pruned as well, thanks to them. All went away confident they could tend their own trees well. Apologies that no pictures were taken as it was too cold for the photographer! The next pruning course is expected to be at Tredomen orchard on Saturday 11th February 2017, and will be confirmed via our website.

Grafting

Two weeks later we held our fourth grafting

course in Glasbury Village Hall. Paul Davis showed all ten participants how to do it. No mishaps, just 10 satisfied customers with about 40 young apple trees growing in pots. Two participants reported "Huw and I were thrilled to find we had 11 out of 12 successful grafts! Seeing the buds burst on the graftwood in April was great and we took care to rub out the others that opened on the rootstock. We are now the proud owners of 11 Welsh maidens (having selected Welsh varieties) ready for planting out!"

The next course is expected to be at Glasbury Village Hall on Saturday 25th February, and will be confirmed via our website.

Shows

Members of Marcher Apple Network attend events:

- To publicise the aims and objectives of Marcher Apple Network
- To identify local apple varieties brought in by members of the public
- To provide orcharding advice to members of the public who have or intend to plant orchards containing traditional varieties

MAN was present at 9 shows last season, the Beekeepers at Builth Wells and Harper Adams, and the autumn shows in the Black Mountains, the Three Counties, Big Apple, Tenbury, Leominster, Cefn Ila (new) and Chepstow. We shall be at them again this current year. As usual, there was much interest, in part driven by the bumper crops on trees.

It is really great fun to help the public, sharing their hopes and concerns, and then watching in admiration and amazement as apples are identified by Mike and Chris Porter, Sheila Leitch, John Aldridge, Peter Austerfield, John Savidge and Wade Muggleton — sheer artistry!



MAN was invited by the Woodland Trust to have a stand at Cefn Ila, near Usk. The site has recently been opened up following its purchase. Mike and Chris Porter along with Charlie Searl and Ainsleigh set up a stand at the end of a long uneven footpath. But the site is stunning; there were many new folk we'd never met before and who'd never heard of MAN, a very rewarding day.

Stephen Ainsleigh Rice

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Website

Many of you will know that we have lost the indefatigable services of Richard Wheeler, our Webmaster, following his move to Kent. His creativity and hard work was much appreciated, and the MAN website has served us well for many years. Technology changes so quickly so MAN has taken the first steps towards re-designing and re-jigging the format of its website.

The idea is that our new shiny website will complement our new business cards. The cards will be the first point of contact to the public at shows, etc. and will then direct them to our website, for more information on who we are and what we do — and how to support us. The new pages will be technology friendly, as people now browse on their mobile phones, tablets, and laptops, so the pages will look really clear in these new formats. We will also be offering PayPal payments online, so that people can join MAN straight away with a click of a button!

The site will continue to be a valuable resource of information, as it always has been, and these changes will make MAN more accessible. We will also be continuing our Twitter and Facebook posts, with more instant and current tid bits and pictures. We hope that these changes will attract more interest and members to support our on-going work, so watch this space!

Charlie Searl

At the Three Counties Show, Malvern, John and Peter enjoyed one of the quiet moments when it was possible to take a photograph of our stand. Even though it was busy, we did have time to wander around the show ground.

Joint MAN/GOT Day Out – 19th May 2016

Our jolly day out started at Day's Cottage with a brief talk about what they do and the history of their traditional orchards, followed by a guided tour of the old trees there. Helen and Dave, who also run orchard skills courses, manage their orchards in a very natural way, leaving dead trees in situ to continue to provide habitat for birds and invertebrates, bats and bees. One perry tree was planted by Helen's ancestors and was hundreds of year's old, still producing fruit, and home to a natural bee colony who were happily buzzing above us collecting nectar.

Afterwards, we were treated to a tour of the old farm where they press their juice and ferment the cider and perry – with a chance to taste their wares. My favourite juice was a single variety using Tippet apples, a variety from Gloucestershire, and produced a delicious dry flavour apple juice – a very grown up drink!

Cider and perry were available to taste and purchase from their farm shop where it is all produced using traditional methods of fermentation so that nothing is added during the process.

course, the in-situ conservation there which enables the recovery of viable populations of local perry pear varieties. Among the trees we saw a wealth of biodiversity too, in the wetland areas and from the bird hide installed there as well as Ryland sheep and Gloucester cattle. Those of us interested could peruse their brilliant library or the smartly equipped perry and cider making areas – I opted for the latter! They have excellent up to date kit that ferments the cider or perry in a very controlled environment using Italian stainless steel fermentation tanks, regulating temperature, pressure etc. This is very different to Day's Cottage who use oak barrels and a changeable environment.

A great selection of cider and perry was available to purchase again. So the following day we had a taste comparison with a selection from both styles of production – and the jury was split! It is all a matter of personal preference, all

ciders and perrys were drunk and very much enjoyed!

MAN would like to say a big thank you to Ann Smith and GOT who arranged this wonderful and insightful trip, I can't wait for next years!

Charlie Searl



Dave Kaspar and Helen Brent-Smith hosted the visit to their Orchard and Rural Skills Centre,

After lunch at Hartpury National Perry Pear Tree Centre, we were taken on a guided tour around the trees to see the work that they are doing there. The perry pear trial beds, filled with beautiful buttercups too, aid in the research carried out at the centre and, of



Joint MAN/GOT visit to Hartpury Orchard Centre trial rootstock beds. For more information, contact Jim Chapman

Gloucestershire Orchard Trust

Following acquisition of the Longney Orchards and Meadows, situated on the banks of the River Severn, Gloucestershire Orchard Trust is generating excitement with their development works. Below, we've summarised the work underway in the four constituent orchards.

Long Tynning and Bollow:

Good progress is being made for bringing these wonderful orchards back into good condition. With much volunteer support and TCTOP, many of the existing old trees have been pruned, labelled, DNA sampled, freed of wire and checked over. Despite very variable weather, blossom was good and a fair crop looks on the cards. With agreement from the

Environment Agency, a new fenceline has been put in along the entire length of the Severn bank boundary with our orchards; it was funded by the 2016 Countryside Stewardship for bringing back sensitive management to the orchards. Later this summer, further fencing will be put up to enable us to bring in grazing sheep and so manage the under-tree sward more flexibly. Currently we can only top the grass from time to time.

Middle and Lower Orchards:

As a result of hay-cuts and topping the condition of the grassland has been improved markedly. But the big story is the first plantings of the new apple, plum and cherry collection,

there are now 80 growing well in Lower Orchard, with many more to follow it'll become one of the most important collections of local and regional varieties in the Three Counties and wider afield.

If you'd like more information or join GOT please contact Ann Smith <https://gloucestershireorchardtrust.org.uk/>

In support of our sister organisation, MAN is planning to graft a number of varieties in our collection that GOT is interested to have at Longney.

Tenbury and District Millennium Orchard

The orchard was planted on a meadow as a community project in 1999 for marking and celebrating the millennium. A total of 47 trees (37 varieties) on M25 rootstock were selected with help from the local public and Nick Dunn's guidance. They include well known good croppers, a little local influence and a good diversity of dessert and cookers. Pollination of course is well catered for in such a mix. There are some biennial performers as expected but in general there has been plentiful fruit each year.

Some have been slow starters and some have been influenced by large overpowering trees in

the vicinity. Our main enemy has been flooding from the River Teme right next our meadow which is lower than the surrounding fields. Flooding has been bad since 2007, it's not an ideal site but its success testifies to local enthusiasm. Canker and scab has been an issue as expected but generally coped with by pruning out the canker. Three trees have died in the past 2 years; we are replacing them with water resistant M116 rootstock and wait hopefully.

We are fortunate in having a local farmer, Mr Ray Morris and his son Tom, who cut the meadow frequently. It is in good condition.

We have added two hedges with many berry bearing plants and masses of daffodils and snowdrops in surrounding areas.

Our fruit is sold to Appleteme <http://www.appleteme.com/stockists/4588569665> in Brimfield Common for juicing. It is delicious.

A limited amount of pruning is undertaken and this will become more of an issue as time goes on. The group really wants to attract a few younger members to do more of this essential work in the future.

Beryl Bevis

Welsh Perry and Cider Society

The Welsh Perry and Cider Society has secured Heritage Lottery Funding for a two-year project running from April 2016 called 'The Heritage of Orchards and Cider Making in Wales'. The project aims to secure the future of Welsh Variety Cider Apples and Perry Pears and are doing so via three strands.

Community orchards

They are working with 14 community groups across Wales to plant new orchards or regenerate old. The trees planted will be apple or pear, with some Welsh Heritage varieties of cider apple and perry pear. Each site will have a biodiversity plan in place to maintain existing species of flora and fauna, and encourage new. The community group managing the site is being supported through training in Orchard management. Interpretation and events on site will be used as an opportunity to involve the wider community; events planned so far include planting sessions with primary and high school pupils, apple days, wassails and open days.

Welsh Heritage cider and perry fruit

The project aims to devise a list of Welsh Heritage varieties of cider apple and perry pear as there isn't a list currently of all the Welsh varieties. The project will also look for old unidentified cider apple and perry pear trees and conduct DNA testing of leaf samples. If anyone has or knows of an old cider apple or perry pear tree in Wales, but does not know the variety, then please get in touch at heritage@welshcider.co.uk 78 samples were sent off this

spring with the next batch to be sent off Spring 2017, so the project is looking for potential trees now, to test next spring.

The knowledge about juice from heritage varieties isn't widely known. The project will undertake single variety fermentation trials in order to gain a better understanding of the qualities of juice that heritage fruit can produce. This knowledge will enable craft cider and perry makers to make a more informed choice when choosing which trees to plant and will therefore give them greater control over their products. The project will be conducting single variety fermentation trials based on the current varieties in their museum orchard in Llanarth, this will establish a flavour profile for each of the known Welsh varieties of fruit, which will be made freely available.

Digital stories

Capturing the stories of modern day cider-making in Wales provides a human interest across generations. A lot has been documented about the history of cider making, but very little since the 1970s when craft and hobby cider making regained popularity. Communities, businesses and individuals will be interviewed and their stories recorded to create engaging Digital Stories. This element of the project is being carried out by the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at University of South Wales. If any readers here have stories and memories to share, please get in touch at heritage@welshcider.co.uk

The culmination of all this work will be a free online resource detailing all our findings along with orcharding guidance and visual and audio recordings of cider making stories.

If you think you may have an old Cider or Perry tree in Wales, or have any stories you could tell us about Welsh orchards and cider making, then please contact us:

Tel: 01495 240983, heritage@welshcider.co.uk, www.welshcider.co.uk

Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/communityorchardswales>

Follow us on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/orchardswales/>

Follow us on Twitter @OrchardWales

Cider Making in Herefordshire

Here's a handy App and link describing the rich history of local cider production and up-to-date guide to all the ciders being made in the county today:
www.goldenfirehfd.co.uk

National Botanic Garden for Wales

Here at the National Botanic Garden for Wales (<https://botanicgarden.wales>) we have been delighted each year for well over a decade to host the largest display of apples in Wales at our Apple Day event. This display is put together by a small but dedicated team of our volunteers who then staff the event and identify apples brought in by members of the public. We have been pleased to find many unusual varieties over the years and although sadly we haven't found a lost Welsh variety yet, we have been memorably presented with a *George Fox* – a variety that once you have seen you will never ever forget – a stunning variety indeed!

On his first day at work in the Garden our last Curator was known to have said "and where is the Welsh Heritage Orchard?....." Challenging words to the ears of our intrepid Apple Day volunteers so they immediately set about establishing the Welsh Heritage Orchard in the Outer Walled Garden area, almost certainly an orchard in the Garden's heyday. Although in its infancy, we are proud to boast that the orchard has examples of most of the extant Welsh apples, and it is our intention to grow the orchard with a view to showing the public and commercial growers the Welsh varieties which thrive well here, and allow them to taste the fruit before buying trees to plant themselves. We know of no other garden in Wales where

all the Welsh varieties are grown in the same orchard.

Our Apple Day volunteers and Research Librarians have been hard at work for well over two years researching apple history and apple production in Wales and were amazed to discover that no publication has ever documented "Welsh Apples," and although some of the varieties have been included in published pomonas, no Welsh Pomona exists. It is our aim to correct this anomaly! We are thrilled to collaborate with Marcher Apple Network and we look forward to a long

association with an important partner in conserving our Welsh varieties.

Our Apple Weekend this year will be held on Saturday and Sunday 15th and 16th October 2016. MAN member Paul Davis from Dolau Hirion Nursery attends every year with a display of his apples and also brings pot-grown trees along for purchase. We would be delighted to welcome MAN members to the event and to be involved too.

If you'd more information please contact WelshHeritageapples@gardenofwales.org.uk



Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project (TCTOP)

Orchard champions!

In May we held our first Orchard Champions weekend, where seventeen TCTOP volunteers learnt all about being an orchard ambassador for the project. This is a brand new course, delivered in partnership with the national organic growing charity, Garden Organic, and aimed at people with a passion for old orchards. Each Champion 'signs up' for 5 days of training in orchard skills and community development and, in return, gives back 30 hours each year to inspire other people to value our veteran orchards. The weekend was hard work but great fun and the volunteers and trainers really enjoyed it. We'll be running another course later in the year, so if you feel that this could be for you do get in touch to find out more.

Uncovering the past

Orchards are so much a part of the Three Counties that we sometimes take them for granted. Our 'Orchard Detectives' project aims to uncover why they were planted in our project areas and how they've made their mark on the landscape and the lives of the people who live there. Our first 'walk and talk' session in Breinton, Herefordshire was a chance to find out all about the history of Breinton Springs Orchard - a National Trust site where we're helping to manage the orchard. It's also the site of a mound and moat dating from 1150 AD, the possible remains of a medieval village, a drovers route and much more. This was a hugely popular event, led by the Herefordshire historian, Tim Hoverd, together with orchard expert, Tim Dixon., who gave a walking tour of the orchards around the village.

We'll be putting on more of these history 'walk and talks' and encouraging people to get involved with other history projects.

and creating the future

But if we don't plant more trees, then orchards will fade away. TCTOP have already budded and grafted 500 trees from local varieties; planting of them starts this Autumn in project orchards. Then genetic heritage will be better protected, with orchard owners excited to become custodians of some local orchard heritage!

If you wish for more information, learn skills, or volunteer please contact Karen Humphries, TCTOP Orchard Project Officer 01684 560616 khumphries@worcestershire.gov.uk and www.tctop.org.uk

The Black Worcester Pear

Living and working in Worcestershire it is hard to escape the imagery of the Black Pear: it is on the County coat of arms, the Cricket Club badge and, until recently, was the Rugby club badge. All ways round, the Pear and Worcester seem to have an inseparable association. It is even said that the Worcestershire bowman who fought at Agincourt in 1415 had images of pears emblazoned on their standard.

About 25 years ago the County Council in conjunction with Pershore College ran an initiative selling young black pear trees to counter concerns they were becoming endangered. As a result several hundred young Black Pear trees have been planted around the county in the last couple of decades or so, meaning that the sight of the dark reddish fruit hanging on the trees into November is no longer such a rare sight.

Early in 2015 I was contacted by Paul Labous, a horticultural lecturer at Shuttleworth Agricultural College in Bedfordshire. He is researching the historic Warden Pear of Warden Abbey in Bedfordshire. It is claimed by some that the *Bedford Warden* and the *Black Worcester* are one and the same; the pears having been bought to Worcester by medieval monks. Paul was keen to investigate this so he arranged a day to come over and collect some samples. It was only whilst touring round a few known trees that we made a potentially interesting discovery that not all Black Worcesters are the same. Which begs a question: which is the true Black Worcester or are there just simply more than one type ?

All the young trees I know of are the same and most likely the result of the aforementioned scheme when WCC and Pershore College were selling young trees. However, perhaps the best known supposed Black Worcester is the one in Cripplegate park in Worcester City Centre which has a plaque commemorating its planting in 1932 by then Prince of Wales (future King Edward). However on closer inspection this appears to be distinctly different from what one now buys as a Worcester Black Pear tree from contemporary nurseries. So the historic Cripplegate Worcester Black Pear appears to be one version of the Black Pear whilst what all the young trees produce is seemingly another version (see photos). I have found the Cripplegate type on three other trees in the Martley area, all older trees, whilst I have found only one old tree of the more common



Perhaps the most famous Worcester Black in Cripplegate Park planted in 1932



The plaque is evidence that someone clearly believed that in 1932 this was what constituted Worcester Black



[TOP] Fruit from the Cripplegate tree in October 2015

[CENTRE] The more common Worcester Black as produced by the trees sold by the WCC initiative, (what I refer to as the Worcester woods type)

[BELOW] The trees in the Martley Area appear to produce the same fruit as the Cripplegate tree, (what I refer to as the Martley type).

type (which I will refer to as the 'Worcester Woods' type).

Where the graft wood for the WCC / Pershore college initiative originated I have been unable to discover: equally, what Edward planted in the park was clearly believed to be the Worcester

Black of that time (well at least if the future King was planting it, you'd like to think they'd get it right!) The national collection at Brogdale appears to have the Worcester Woods type as their specimen of supposed Worcester Black. This all casts an interesting light on the general view that there is only one type of Warden pear and that the Bedford and Worcester are one and the same.

Today, 'Warden' has been taken to mean a type of large, hard culinary pear that never truly ripens and so has to be cooked. Alongside the Worcs Black are such varieties as *Uvedale St Germain*, *Catillac* *Bellisime de Hiver*, all distinctly different but having in common being large cooking pears.

Doing some historical digging, however, reveals that there was once a great variety of Warden type Pears, many of which have now seemingly become lost. In his 1676 *Flora, Ceres & Pomona*, nurseryman John Rea of Kinlet, Shropshire, lists the following as all very good pears to bake:



Anatomical details of the Martley [TOP] and the Worcester woods types [BELOW]



With storage, they become even more visually distinct

Painted Pear; Tur nip Pear; Canterbury Pear; Quince Pear only; French Warden; Spanish Warden; Great Warden; Parkinson's Warden; Red Warden; White Warden; Bell Pear; Black Pear of Worcester

whilst at the same period, 1667, London nurseryman George Ricketts offered a Red and a White Worcester as well as three types of Warden pear although Forsyth (1810) and Hogg (1884) suggest that the Black Worcester was the original Warden Pear. So for now, the Worcester Black appears to have at least two pretenders to the crown. Which is the real one? Or are they similar — could one be a sport of the other ??? There is of course the possibility of seedling pears being that bit different and so leading to several different types. Pears is a much under-studied subject and I am not aware any work has been done on how true or diverse seedling pears can be. In the case of apples, seedling trees can produce vastly different fruit to their parents, due to the genetic diversity and random nature of cross pollination in the genus *Malus*.



The Cripplegate park type on the tree

Only DNA testing will prove how closely related or how different they are. At the time of writing (July 2016) leaves have been submitted for testing along with nine similar types of Warden pear including the *Bedford Old Warden*, so we should have some DNA analysis later in the year.

Wade Muggleton

Footnote – the use of the term 'Worcester Black' and 'Black Worcester' seem equally split with some references using one and the others the other. For all intensive purposes we mean the same.



The Herefordshire Pomona illustration of Worcester Black.

References

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Hogg. R. 1884. The Fruit Manual, Langford press
Morgan. J. 2015. The book of Pears, Ebury Press
Rea. J. 1676. Flora, Ceres & Pomona. George Marriott

An earlier version of this article first appeared in *The Worcestershire Record*, journal of the Worcestershire Biological Recorders No. 40, April 2016.

News of MAN orchards

Tredomen

Rabbits again made themselves a nuisance in January, spiral guards were placed around trunks affected from January and removed in May.

All trees have been pruned, phew, over 220 of them. Stephanie Coates, Ben Mullen, David Bussel and Charlie Searl did much of this in several sessions, thank you to them all. We had some contract help from Andy Nichols too. A few trees near the walnut had exceeded 6m and many were intermingling with their neighbours; they've been given vigorous haircuts. At last, the campaign of

restorative pruning is pretty well completed and now pruning is more for health, shape and productivity.

Some of the trees are quite stunning in Autumn, with the lovely back-drop of the hills nearby. Shown on the right is *Ben's Red* (yes that's from Cornwall) in the sunshine; an apple that hasn't been bothered by pests or diseases. It doesn't keep beyond September but has a sweet pleasant flavour if perhaps a little dry.

Tredomen orchard is pretty well full, with 224 trees. Are these all ones we want to conserve?

If not what are we going to do about them? As we identify more and more of them it has become apparent that we've got to do something to rationalise the collection.

When planting began at Tredomen in 1995, the main function of the orchard was to provide a site where interesting apples which we could not name might be cultivated and studied. To help with their identification we occasionally imported scions from the NFC at Brogdale, e.g. *Dr Harvey*, *Arthur Barnes*, *King of Tompkins County*, *Scotch Bidget* and *Yorkshire Greening*. At the time there was confusion over the identity of certain

varieties we encountered in local orchards, notably *Scotch Bridget*, *King's Acre Bountiful*, *Catshead* and *Dr Harvey*. We were shown trees said to be "Costards" at Winforton and Eardisland which turned out, after study, to be *Scotch Bridget*. Several "Catsheads" eventually proved to be *Lord Derby*. That's the reason we now have multiple copies of some varieties and also relatively 'common' ones among local traditional ones that we wish to preserve.

There are about 80 varieties that we think are really local traditional varieties either originating here or associated with the region; many are described in the *Welsh Marches Pomona* and in *Apples of the Welsh Marches*. About 24 are not (yet) accessed into the National Fruit collection. And there are also quite a few uncommon varieties from elsewhere in the UK. These are to be conserved, and if we can others that thrive in the local climate.

But there are perhaps 60–70 that MAN does not need to be the conservator, we think. There are multiple copies (e.g. *Bismarck*, *Dr. Harvey*, *King's Acre Bountiful*, *Scotch Bridget*, *Lord Derby*, *Lord Suffied*), common varieties (e.g. *Bramley*, *Cox's Orange Pippin*, *Discovery*, *Lord Grosvenor* and *Sandringham*) and from out-of-area (e.g. *Alexander*, *McIntosh*, *Gloria Mundi*, *Hambleton Deux Ans*, *Hanwell Souring*, *Norfolk Beefing*, *Norman's Pippin*, *Yorkshire Greening*). Maintaining these costs volunteer effort and blocks the planting of duplicate gems to those we're conserving at Paramor.

Identifying the issue is the easy part. Your committee has to wrestle with the task of how

to do this. In time identification conventionally or with DNA analysis (see page 14) will identify more for MAN to conserve, to invite other groups to bud or graft up, or to remove. There's quite a few years of effort ahead.

So, this is the perfect point at which to invite members to join the Management Committee!

Ainsleigh Rice

Paramor

This has been mown four times to date (mid-July). The drainage ditch appears to be working well. Grass in the unplanted area will need to be topped in late summer / early autumn. Blackthorn and brambles, which give good cover for wildlife, are spreading out from the hedgerow and will need trimming back this winter. An entrance gate-post has rotted and needs replacing.

Some of the trees in the Small Orchard, such as *Manns' Keeper*, are producing their first fruit this year. We hope it will be possible to name some of these youngsters from the DNA results.

We are grateful for the help which the Cwmdu Support Group provide – they keep a watchful eye on the orchard, replace posts and ties and help in formative pruning, most of which was carried out in early spring 2016.

A most enjoyable experience on a visit to the orchard this spring was hearing a cuckoo filling the valley with its call – first from one hillside and then from Fedw Wood just above Paramor orchard.

Chris Porter



Croft Pendarren

Some of the trees here are now 20 years old and the orchard is beginning to look quite mature. This year the crop looks promising. *Pig Aderyn* was laid low by the winter winds and had to be helped by cutting some of its boughs to reduce its canopy and hauled upright by an able-bodied pair of lads (son and grandson). It looks much better now and is even producing a light crop.

Chris Porter

Westhope

This small orchard with 15 standard trees has some interesting varieties but has not done well in terms of fruit this year. Most could be considered 'poor', for example, *Duke of Devonshire*, *Pomeroy of Hereford*, *Domino*, a few 'fair', *Pig's Nose Pippin*, *Severn Bank*, *Scotch Bridget* and the exceptions with a good crop, *Stoke Edith Pippin* and, remarkably, *Lady's Finger of Hereford*. This last has a split trunk and 50% was cut away leaving the tree decidedly lop-sided. The good side has a decent crop. The trees are robust enough and big enough to withstand the deer nibbling the ends of lower branches and the trunks are protected with chicken wire up to five feet or more. The orchard has received its summer trim and looks all the better for it.

Peter Austerfield

Donnington

This orchard is strange in terms of the growth of trees. Planted more than a decade ago some are fine specimens while others are weak and spindly. Of the former, American Mother, Adam's Pearmain, Blenheim Orange, Betty Geeson, Hanwell Souring and Twenty Ounce have fair to good crops, are sizeable trees with a good canopy. On the other hand, Schoolmaster is virtually dead with no fruit at all this year, Lady's Finger of Shropshire is bent and twisted with a very weak trunk and, strangely, has quite a few fruit. Several others come into this 'weak' category and will probably be best removed gradually. As has been mentioned before there is a drainage problem in parts of this orchard and replanting is probably not an option without remedial work. The grass has been strimmed around and under the trees and the contractor has done a good job in topping the rest of the field.

Peter Austerfield

Identification workshops

Through much of the UK there was a very good apple harvest during 2015, markedly better than in 2014, resulting in more apples being offered for identification. The statistics are given below, with previous six years for comparison.

Some of the more unusual varieties that were identified during the autumn include: *Brithmawr*, *Cellini*, *John Norman*, *Pomeroy of Herefordshire*, *Sandlin Duchess*, *Schoolmaster*, *Striped Beefing* and *Welsh Pitcher*. Possible identification of varieties include *William's Favourite*, *Coronation*, *Gabalva*, *Dr Hogg*,

Scarlet Pearmain and *Domino*. The *Striped Beefing* specimens were quite beautiful examples. It was only the second time that *Brithmawr* has been offered, and that was at Cefn Ila, thereby reinforcing our interest continuing there.

Mike Porter

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	
Identification panel meetings	9	5	7	4	8	9	7	
Events at which MAN offered ID	10	8	10	7	9	9	10	
Total identification sessions	19	13	17	11	19	18	17	
MAN hours involved	465	310	350	267	350	380	268	
Number of varieties identified	618	375	420	150	550	545	322	
Exhibitions staged	3	4	5					
Most productive ID events	1	Tenbury 108	Leominster (62)	Malvern (94) (94) (2 days)	Marcle (31) (2 days)	Hergest Croft (94) (2 days)	Chepstow (114)	Malvern (65) (2 days)
	2	Malvern 79 (2 days)	Tenbury Wells (56)	Marcle (73) (2 days)	Leominster (27)	Chepstow (94)	Marcle (84) (2 days)	Marcle (56) (2 days)
	3	Marcle 76 (2 days)	Marcle (55) (2 days)	Chepstow (50)	Malvern (18) (2 days)	Malvern (77) (2 days)	Church Stretton (60)	Leominster (36)

Identification took place at the following events attended by members of MAN. There is always the hope of finding a rarity. The most unusual varieties encountered this autumn are shown in column 3:

Events at the Cider Museum during 2016

- Herefordshire Pomona is a permanent exhibition.
- John Evelyn (1620-1796) Famous Diarist and Author exhibition has been extended throughout this year
- No Cidermaking Festival this year.

<http://www.cidermuseum.co.uk/>

Show (2015)	Date	More interesting varieties encountered
Malvern Autumn Fruit Show	26-27th Sept	Welsh Pitcher, Striped Beefing, William's Favourite?
Tenbury Apple Fest	3rd Oct	Sandlin Duchess, John Norman
Big Apple, Much Marcle	10-11 Oct	Cellini, Pomeroy of Herefordshire, Domino?
Leominster Apple Fair	17th Oct	Sandlin Duchess, Scarlet Pearmain?
Cefn Ila	18th Oct	Brithmawr, Coronation?, Gabalva?
Chepstow Show	25 Oct	Schoolmaster, Dr Hogg?

(Re)-Building an Orchard Network

The National Trust recently invited about 20 regional orchard groups to a meeting at their Swindon Office in July, with the objective of preparing the case for a more formal network than hitherto and one that may attract funding. The prime objective being to find ways for the existing regional collections to be more formally curated and aligned into a UK-wide distributed collection that the better preserves biodiversity against future risks such as climate and other changes, as well as finding more

reasons for making old varieties more useful today. Renowned experts joined us, including Dr Arbury (RHS), Liz Copas (formerly of Long Ashton Research Station and orchard adviser to NACM), Dr Matthew Ordidge of Reading University (Brogdale curator), Steve Oram (Peoples Trust for Endangered Species), Dr Nigel Maxted (Birmingham University), Peter Laws and Bob Lever (FruitID).

There are a few organisations from whom

to get funding, e.g. DEFRA in the event that regional groups reach a necessary and accepted standard of curation for conservation of the genetic varieties, or Heritage Lottery Fund for the preservation of "Heritage" fruit varieties. Julian Hosking of Natural England kindly agreed to work up a proposal with help from Matthew Ordidge, Steve Oram and Peter Laws.

Now we can travel hopefully at last...

Seeking lost varieties

As Mike Porter stated in last year's *Apples and Pears*, sometimes the mills of apple identification grind slowly. Indeed, looking for a variety that has been lost for decades, of which we have perhaps only 130-year old descriptions, is an extremely difficult process, some may even say impossible. Having spent much time looking at the varieties of Worcestershire including a list of seemingly lost ones, aside from Peter Weekes's rediscovery of the *Chatley's Kernel* back in the late 1990s, there had been little other successes to write about. However, using *The Fruit Manual* by Robert Hogg (1884) as a starting point, I extracted a list of varieties supposedly of Worcestershire origin or with some strong county connection. But if any of them still existed and if so how to track them down was another matter altogether.

On the basis that many varieties have a strong association with a certain parish or village, this seems as good a place as any to start. So I began by pitching short articles to the parish magazines of the villages that one or two were said to be from, and in one instance this yielded a result. The variety *Martin Nonpareil* is cited as originating in the parish of Martin Hussingtree on the northern edge of Worcester city. Introduced by the then vicar the Rev George Williams in 1795, I could seemingly find a record of it in the 20th century. So when a lady got in touch to say she had seen the article and had two trees in her garden that "sounded a bit like that", it was a start of the slowly moving process. In this instance *Martin Nonpareil* is in the *Pomological Britannica* of 1841 with a colour illustration, so there was a possible visual comparison to go on as well as descriptions from Hogg.

To cut a long story short, samples were collected and looked at by RHS Wisley as well as several identifiers and none could identify it as anything they had seen before or could put a name to. So on the basis that probably no-one had seen an MNP before, the conclusion seemed to be they had no reason to believe it was not the said apple as per Hogg's description.

In a detective sense two elements were critical here; having a pair of trees in the garden of an old cottage in the village of origin. The pair rules out a seedling: these are clearly the same variety on two trees of the same age, intentionally planted and thus definitely

a variety. If they are not MNP, then we have an apple that looks incredibly like MNP in the village of origin, which no one can identify as being anything else. So what are the chances of an unknown lookalike being in that location on two identical trees? Thus on circumstantial evidence it looked good. Add in the visual and descriptive comparisons and I for one am convinced this is *Martin Nonpareil* of Hogg's Fruit Manual — shape, skin, eye, stalk, keeping quality — are all a good match.

We tried the same approach with *Red Splash*, supposedly of the parish of Newland near Malvern, but no luck; despite it being described and illustrated in the *Herefordshire Pomona*, we seemingly cannot find it today.

A contrary tale is that of the *Jones's Seedling*, a Teme valley apple that you will not find in any Pomonas, National Registers or other books, but that four octogenarian farmers, all independently verify was grown in and around the Tenbury Wells area up until WWII, as an early to mid-season dessert. The only surviving tree we could find was on a farm in St Michael's, owned by one of our Teme valley apple group members, John Edwards, who had one ancient specimen. In summer 2014 I managed to bud six onto MM106 rootstocks and amazingly, despite the lack of quality budwood, all 6 took! It has since been taken up by Walcot Nursery (www.walcotnursery.co.uk) and will be available from Nov 2016.

John Edwards sadly passed away in Feb 2016 and, as a bachelor farmer, the future of his orchard is unknown and we have effectively lost access to the old tree. Hence my 6 budded trees were a case of getting the variety in the nick of time. Those 6 trees have supplied the scion to Walcot, as well as two to my own collection, one to the MAN collection and one back into a private collection in the Teme Valley, planted in John's memory. DNA testing would be interesting to see if *Jones's Seedling* is a synonym for anything else recorded.

Such are the frailties and vagaries of seeking rare and lost varieties, time is against us but once every now and then we might get lucky. The other Worcestershire varieties that are in Brogdale but that we have failed to find at all in the county are *Dewdulp Seedling*, *Haughty's Red* and *Queen Alexandra*. All have been propagated by Walcot nursery from scion supplied by Brogdale and will be available in

Nov 2016, so we can re-establish them in the County of origin.

At the time of writing the following Worcestershire varieties are believed still lost: *Barn Apple*, *Jones's Favourite*, *Knott's Kernel*, *Red Splash*, *Sytchampton Russet*, *Pitmaston Golden Pippin*, *Pitmaston Golden Wreath*, *Pigeon Heart* (although this could be a synonym for *Pigeon de Jerusalem*), *Worcester Fillbasket*, *Worcestershire Russet*, *Worcester Russet*.

The difficulty in identifying apples

How many different varieties are there in the photo below — Three ? Four ? Five ?



Actually they are all off the same tree gathered on the same day, from a 90–100 year old tree in a derelict orchard in Worcester. And for all their variation what are they then ? Well the first person I asked 10 years ago came up with *Maidstone Favourite*, two or three years later another identifier suggested *Miller's Seedling*.

Having viewed them over a number of seasons I suspect they are just plain 'ole *Blenheim Orange*. But the ridiculous variation shows just how easy it is to be misled by any given specimen and how to even have a slight chance of getting it right, a sample of 6, 8, 10 or even 16 is really required to get any handle on what is likely to be representative of the type.



Sometimes an apple may not even look like an apple: when the deep purple specimens above were exhibited at Martley Apple Day, many

The MAN Virtual Orchard Data Base

assumed they were plums at a first glance. They are an extreme specimen of *Malus*, a real curiosity of an apple. I have only ever seen the one tree, probably 20– 30 years old, growing in the grounds of a Worcestershire school. I am told that Frank Mathews have it in their collection as *Malus Robert's Red* but I have failed to find it anywhere else under that name. I am sure it is crab yet they are quite edible. The tree has stunning purple blossom and even the wood is purple through its section as well as the fruit. One for the collector: I have grafted a couple up.



The final picture is of three apples that someone brought along to a course I was teaching and claimed that they are from three separate trees that were grown from three separate pips out of the same apple. I have no reason to doubt the authenticity of their claim. If true, it is visual proof that the genome variation of *Malus* really is one of the most extraordinary and diverse in the plant Kingdom.

Wade Muggleton

a reminder.....

The Little Owl Project

With encouragement from the Gloucestershire Orchard Trust, Emily Joachim has set up a project in collaboration with the People's Trust for Endangered Species <https://ptes.org/> to help arrest our declining Little Owl population. <https://ptes.org/news/little-owl-orchard-project>.

Little Owls like to nest and hunt in traditional orchards; they mainly eat worms, earwigs, beetles, spiders, moths and small mammals. They hunt on bare ground, in short and rough grassland, and along hedgerows, and they nest in pre-existing hollows. Managing orchards for Little Owls may increase and maintain habitat heterogeneity and biodiversity, which could help to support local Little Owls. There would be a limited number of free Little Owl nest boxes available for anyone who'd like to join in the project.

Since our inception in 1993 MAN has done much to highlight the local, heritage and rare varieties of the Marches. However, now 23 years on, we don't actually know to what extent many of these varieties have spread and are now being cultivated in gardens, allotments, small holdings and farms, i.e. are they really still that rare or have we done our job of making them less rare ?

For instance, both Herefordshire & Worcestershire Council ran Heritage Fruit Tree schemes, selling the county varieties for the best part of 20 years, thus in theory some of them should now be far more widely spread across the region.

So as a committee we at MAN have decided to try and set up a virtual orchard data base among you, the members. If you are prepared to send in lists of what varieties you have we will build a data base of how many locations each variety is known to be at.

We will keep all locations confidential and simply use a numbered system known only to us, so the data base will simply relate varieties to number of places they occur. This will start

to give us a picture of how successful our work in preserving the varieties of the region has been, as well as possibly providing knowledge of where scion wood may be obtained. So if you are prepared to send in your records, please e-mail contact@worcestershireorchards.co.uk. All we really want to know is what varieties you have growing and living at this time and where in the region you are. If you have additional information on types of rootstocks, please feel free to include that, but it is not essential.

This initiative will only work if MAN members are happy to input their information. The results will be highly valuable. We look forward to receiving your records. We've made a start: Ainsleigh has already given his list.

PTES (People's Trust for Endangered Species) are just about to try a similar scheme at a national level and Steve Oram of PTES will be speaker at our AGM on 26th November at the Cider Museum in Hereford so why not come along and find out more.

Wade Muggleton
MAN Committee

Advance Notices

Joint visit to Tredomen, this summer:

MAN has cordially invited Members of the Brecknock Wildlife Trust to join with Members of MAN for visiting our Tredomen Orchard on **Sunday, 16th October 14:00– 16:00**. We'll give a guided tour of our collection of over 100 varieties including explaining how we went about finding old varieties of apples that might otherwise have been lost, and how we've carefully identified [some of] these. Members will be welcome to take samples of the apples, and place orders for graftings too. There is also an opportunity to view the habitat and make suggestions how we may enhance its value to dependent wildlife. There is parking conveniently nearby; we do encourage car-pooling wherever possible. There are no toilet facilities at the Orchard. Further details from Stephen Ainsleigh Rice, Tel. 01497-820332 or Stephanie Coates scoates@brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk Tel. 01874 625708.

and to F P Matthews, next summer, 2017:

Following a very successful visit last year to F P Matthews with Gloucester Orchard Trust, Nick Dunn has kindly invited us again to visit F P Matthews tree nursery at Berrington near Tenbury Wells <http://www.frankpmatthews.com/>. It will likely be a Saturday in September, when they are less busy. Many tens of thousands of trees to see, lots to discuss and a myriad varieties of trees to buy. Already overwhelmed? It promises to be an incredible day. You won't need to walk much as we can be hauled around behind a tractor.

If that has already got you excited please contact Ainsleigh or Jilly Rosser jilly_rosser@icloud.com to let us know of your interest and reserve a place. More details will follow in our Spring News Sheet.

MAN's involvement in DNA Fingerprinting Scheme

We mentioned in the Spring Newsletter an exciting initiative from Peter Laws of fruitID [HYPERLINK "http://www.fruitid.com/"](http://www.fruitid.com/) ["http://www.fruitid.com/#main"](http://www.fruitid.com/#main), in conjunction with East Malling Research <http://www.emr.ac.uk/commercial-services/dna-testing/> and Matthew Ordidge (University of Reading) Curator of the National Fruit Collections at Brogdale, has provided MAN the opportunity to record the DNA profiles of many of the trees in our orchards. In addition fruitID have agreed to sponsor the comparison of the DNA profiles of our varieties with those in the national database. We are looking forward to some interesting results which will no doubt pose further problems but also help us to plan the future conservation of our collection.

Our 170 samples in five categories were selected for analysis on the following criteria:

- 1 Named varieties of general distribution (i.e. not local), but some not in NFC.
- 2 Named local varieties mostly not in NFC.
- 3 Varieties with an element of doubt about their identification.
- 4 Varieties studied for several years but still with question marks over identity.
- 5 Varieties requiring further study.

With help from Charlie Searl, Wade Muggleton, Mike and Chris Porter, Ainsleigh coordinated the collection of eight dry, unblemished leaves from each variety which were sent to East Malling Research. The results are eagerly awaited.

And what will we find out? Lots! If the DNA fragments from two or more samples are sufficiently similar that is strong evidence that they are of the same variety. It might reveal that a variety that we have is actually the same thing as one in the NFC. If so, we can confirm our naming. Perhaps it is a variety that we have not yet identified or for which we have a local name in the Welsh Marches, which matches an accession in NFC. Again, its identity is established. Perhaps it matches with a variety in another regional collection but it isn't in the NFC collection. That will help with ID too. But perhaps the DNA signature is unique? Then it's a unique variety and we'll have to rely upon classical identification until someone finds a tree whose DNA signature is found to match ours.

In the future, when DNA analysis methods have

developed sufficiently for revealing parentage, it may be possible to link such unique varieties to parents and thus reduce our uncertainties.

It's all about knowing or not, whether its the known unknowns, unknown knowns or the unknowable knowns..... well you get the drift. Anyhow we think this will be very revealing, exciting and hope you will be waiting eagerly to read of first results next year in the Spring News Sheet. A good reason to confirm your contact details!

Now the cost of carrying out DNA Analysis has reduced so markedly, especially when doing it in bulk, to just £24 including VAT per sample. Your Management Committee agreed this was too important an opportunity to lose, and we should cover the cost from MAN reserves supported by some member donations. We look forward to reporting the results next year

To give you a flavour of the results that arise, consider the following:

DNA Analysis of NFC accessions of *Betty Geeson* and *Broad-eyed Pippin*

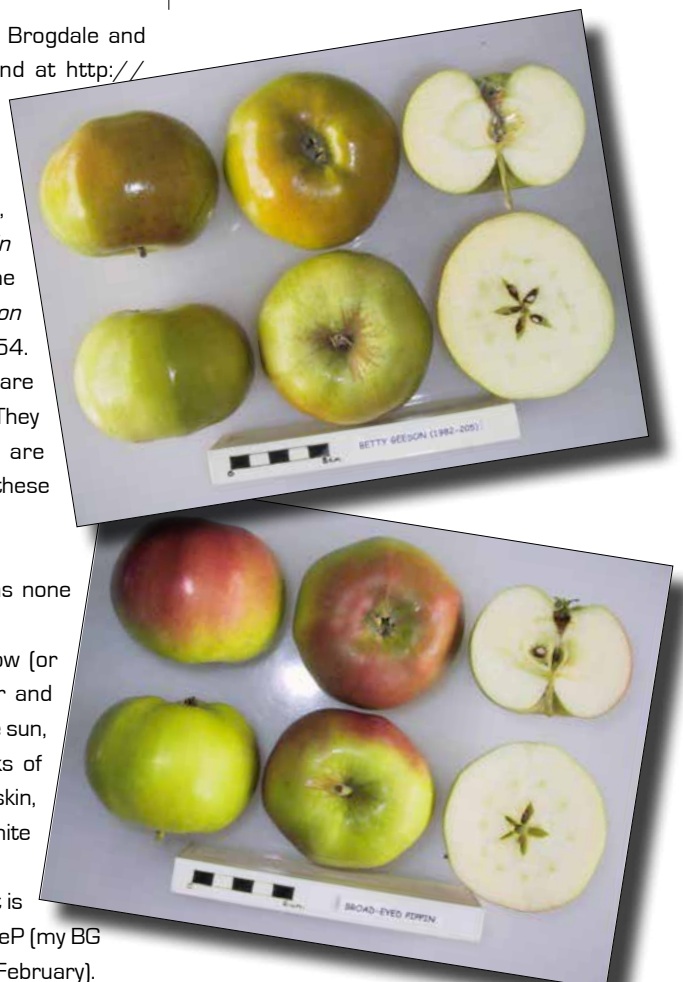
Both these are conserved at Brogdale and their accessions can be found at <http://www.nationalfruitcollection.org.uk/search.php> These two apples are accessioned as 1982-205 and 1929-029, respectively. *Broad-eyed Pippin* (B-eP) is thought to date from the late 1600s while *Betty Geeson* (BG) can be traced back to 1854. NFC photos of both are shown here (with permission). They indeed look similar but there are differences. From Hogg, I take these to be that

- BG has obtuse ribs whereas none are mentioned for B-eP,
- though they both have yellow (or yellowish green) skin colour and red flush on the side next the sun, the latter has some streaks of red on flush and non-flushed skin,
- flesh of B-eP is yellowish-white and for BG it is white, and
- BG keeps until April and that is three months longer than B-eP (my BG does not keep beyond early February).

In an unpublished paper Matthew Ordidge and Penny Hales of the University of Reading, remark that both accessions were found to match closely the descriptions of Hogg and Bunyard of *Betty Geeson*. Is this similarity either real because they are the same genetically or just as a result of local factors such as soil, tree situation, age, climate/season? For several years in his orchard at Aberhoywe MP has grown Broad-eyed Pippin (of Bultitude) and Betty Geeson, both sourced from National Fruit Collections at Brogdale. He finds the two to be morphologically indistinguishable. They resemble Hogg's description of Betty Geeson

DNA analysis reveals that they are so similar that they are almost certainly the same! Ordidge and Hales continue that further visual examination found neither to match Hogg's description of *Broad-eyed Pippin*, hence they describe the accession 1929-029 to be one that is actually *Betty Geeson*, not *Broad-eyed Pippin*. Oh! then NFC doesn't have *Broad-eyed Pippin* in its collection. It is likely that MAN also doesn't have one either. Does anyone know of a regional group who may have found it?

Stephen Ainsleigh Rice & Mike Porter



Choice of varieties for Espaliers

As I write this it is just a few days over the year since I left Herefordshire to live in Tenterden in Kent. We moved to a rented house somehow squeezing in all sorts of possessions including about 500 daffodil bulbs and several gooseberry cuttings which I had potted up. 'Rented' because the house we thought we were buying had been withdrawn from the market and we had to find somewhere to live at short notice.

But apples, what am I going to do about apples let alone pears? There is not a lot of room for apple trees. What about restricted forms? Cordons or espaliers? Cordons have never really grabbed me but espaliers, yes, I rather fancy espaliers. With a four tier espalier you could have eight varieties from one tree. Sufficient to appreciate each variety without ending up with a huge glut. I should be able to find space for an espalier or maybe even two – one for eaters and another for cookers – or even three with pears on the third.

But which varieties of apples and pears? There is no point in growing anything you can easily find in the shops. Which knocks apples like *Cox*, *Discovery* and *Egremont Russett* off the list. And from a growing point of view no tip bearers. That's *Bramley* out then. Also the eight varieties need to work together. With eight varieties there should be no worries about non-overlapping flowering periods. It is the picking that matters. Ideally the eight varieties would ripen at fortnightly intervals from, say, the start of September through to early December. Although, as later varieties keep longer it is really the September to mid-October ripening period where the overlaps matter. And, like the colour of gooseberries, it is nice to have apple varieties which are recognisably distinct. With about 2000 apples on the National Apple Register which should I choose to satisfy these criteria? In Spring I asked the MAN membership for their suggestions. I would like to thank everybody who took the time and wrote to me. I had hoped to find a consensus on outstanding varieties. Unfortunately no, there was virtually no overlap between the lists. Which only goes to show how people's tastes differ and what a range of apples there is.

Cookers – if I am only to have one espalier it will be cooking apples. All you can ever find in shops is *Bramley*. Not that I am complaining about *Bramley* but it is nice to have something

different to savour every now and then. I used to have a *Lane's Prince Albert* and that is just such a flavoursome apple. My grandfather grew it on his smallholding and my mother planted a tree in her previous garden. Ainsleigh recommended *Lane's Prince Albert* so it goes top of the list of cookers. I also grew *Grenadier*, *Tom Putt*, *Mere de Ménage* and *Howgate Wonder*. There was an old *Mere de Ménage* in the garden when I moved to Herefordshire. It had lovely deep maroon apples with yellow streaks. The replacement I planted when it died was never as attractive (and suffered from water core). So I am of two minds whether to keep *Mere de Ménage* but Tom Froggatt recommends it so for now it is still on the list.

23 Culinary apples were recommended in all. There are no 'stand out' apples with multiple recommendations so I am having to work my way through them all to make a short list and then a final list. A few are easy to reject – too small, unsuitable as an espalier, tip bearing etc. For example, Mike Porter recommends *Newton Wonder* however I have that in reserve against *Howgate Wonder*. *Newton Wonder* is a parent of *Howgate Wonder* but does not grow so large (not many apples do!). I have not said that Mary's main criteria for a good cooking apple is size. So small cookers should not be making the list. On the other hand a few apples seem to be jumping out for inclusion. *Reverend W. Wilkes* is an early season cooker (and has such a lovely name). I recall it not appearing at a MAN display at Abergavenny as the apples carefully stored in a kitchen larder had appeared the previous evening in an apple pie. Such a recommendation plus Mike Porter's blessing makes it a strong candidate despite a tendency to biennialism. Mike Porter also recommends *Warner's King* as a mid-season cooker. A Kentish apple it seems appropriate to grow it in Tenterden whilst the Herefordshire Pomona says "it succeeds admirably as an espalier".

Eating Apples are even more of a problem to me. I was never that satisfied with my varieties in my Herefordshire orchard. *Fortune* (Laxton's *Fortune*) I would have again as also *Ashmead's Kernel*. *Ashmead's Kernel* was the most recommended of all varieties and I am sure that Gloucestershire folk would say that was only right and proper. *Wheeler's Russet* has not much going for it apart from its name. The skin is so rough that you can use it for sandpaper. I am of two minds about *Pitmaston*

Pine Apple. A Worcestershire apple (as the Pitmaston in its name shows) its size, shape and colouring make it readily distinguishable. But I did find it a bit mealy. And as for *Sam's Crab*, I would consign it to the pits of hell. Soft, pappy, mushy and flavourless and it bruises with the least provocation. You cannot really like one apple unless you have another to hate. And *Sam's Crab* is the apple I hate. So there.

With six more varieties to find I started looking through the long list of recommendations – 35 of them. *Adams Pearmain*, recommended by Wade Muggleton, headed the list alphabetically. The Herefordshire Pomona says "it succeeds well as an espalier" so it is a strong candidate. Another three Laxton's varieties are favoured – *Epicure*, *Exquisite* and *Superb* to go along with *Fortune* which I have already mentioned. *Superb* I recall picking (and eating with relish) at Leslie Howarth's fruit farm at the Yeld in Cheshire. (Leslie was a noted morris dancer with Manley Morris). *Holstein*, *King's Acre Pippin*, *Ribston Pippin* and *Rosemary Russett* all had multiple recommendations. That is eight already for six places.

With pears I had but five recommendations which did not give me a lot to work from. All of *Williams* (bred by a Mr Wheeler), *Doyenné du Comice* and *Conference* (readily available in shops) proved popular. David Oliver recommended *Glou Morceau* and *Josephine de Malines*. I need another three! However, I suspect there will be no room for a pear espalier and I will stick to the apples.

I have a lot more work to do to winnow down the lists. Once in my new house all my reference books will be to hand and I can check flowering seasons, harvesting season, etc. and come up with my final decision. Meanwhile, I have the daffodils to plant in their new homes, four (or more) beds to prepare, fruit cages to build, the hedge between the garden and field to replant (with blackthorn – think sloe gin), a damson to plant (think damson jam, damson cheese and damson gin) and a bronze elder to fit in (for pink elderflower cordial). Oh, and the raspberries, maybe some strawberries (despite all the slugs and snails) and I did see some really, really cheap cherry trees in Aldi a few weeks ago. . .

Richard Wheeler

Major apple events

* = Apple display and MAN ID service.

* Saturday/ Sunday, 27-28th August. Black Mountains Festival, Talgarth, Powys. MAN will be in the Cattle Market on the Sunday, from 11.00-5.00pm. Display of early apples & identification of ripe early varieties. Tastings and fruit for sale.

Saturday and Sunday 27-28th August. Witcombe Cider Festival
www.witcombeciderfestival.co.uk 50 different cider & perries and a great range of activities

Friday-Sunday 2-4th September. Ross Cider Festival. Ross-on-Wye Cider & Perry Company
<http://rosscider.com/events/cider-festival/>

Friday to Sunday 9th to 11th September. The Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival. There is always a good selection of local cider makers and fruit juicers in attendance.

* Sunday, 11th September. Entertainment under the Apples at Penlanole, near the Vulcan Arms, south of Rhayader, Powys. Please note that for safety reasons, the approach will be to the back of the farm and will be signposted from the A470. From 2.00-5.00pm. For details Tel. 01597-811487. <http://www.penlanole-organics.co.uk/events.php>

Sunday 11th September. Frampton-On-Severn Country Fair, www.framptoncountryfair.co.uk Gloucestershire Orchard Trust will have a stand and apple display.

* Saturday/Sunday, 24th/25th September. Autumn Show at Three Counties Showground, Malvern <http://www.threecounties.co.uk/tradestands/malvernautumn/>

* Saturday, 1st October. Applefest. Tenbury Wells, held on the town's Burgage Recreational Area, from 10:00-17:00, Further details: www.tenburyapplefest.co.uk

Saturday 1 Oct. Culture Club Orchard Talk 13:10-13:50, Gloucester City Museum & Art Gallery, Brunswick Road, Gloucester GL1 1HP, 01452 396131 www.gloucester.gov.uk/citymuseum Martin Hayes discusses apples in a talk based on modern orchards. Price: £3, concs/OAP £2, advanced booking required.

Thursday, 5th October. [tbc] Trumpet Ploughing Match & West of England Fruit Show. (No apple display.) Details of venue from Mrs. J. Green, Warren Cottage, Lower Eggleton, Ledbury HR8 2UJ. Tel. 01531-670608.

Saturday 8th October. Apple Day at The Green Wood Centre, Coalbrookdale nr. Telford, from 10.00-5.00 <http://www.shropshireappletrust.co.uk/appleday.php> . Apple pressing using the large community apple press, fresh juice for sale; hog roast, live music, apple display and apple trees for sale, cider bar, WI stalls, craft demonstrations and hands-on opportunities to practise polelathing, pottery, etc. Contact: 01952-433594 or 432046.

* Saturday/Sunday, 8-9th October. 'THE BIG APPLE'. Weekend rural events in and around Much Marcle <http://www.bigapple.org.uk/>. £2 entry to historic grounds of Hellens, from 11.00-4.45 where there will be apple and pear displays, ID services and tastings of a selection of cooking apples. Further details of talks, demonstrations and other events, from Jackie Denman, Tel. 01531-670544. <http://www.bigapple.org.uk>.

* Saturday, 15th October. Leominster Apple Fair at The Priory, Leominster. 10.00-4.00. Parking nearby in Bridge Street Car Park. Various stalls, apple display and ID by MAN. Details from Felicity Norman, Tel. 01568-780886.

Saturday and Sunday 15-16th October. National Botanic Garden for Wales, Llanarthne, SA32 8HN, 10:00 - 18:00, Apple Weekend <https://botanicgarden.wales/visit/whats-on/>. MAN member Paul Davis attends every year with a display of his apples and also brings pot grown trees along for purchase.

Sunday, 16th October. Tredomen Orchard open day for members of MAN and Brecknock Wildlife Trust 14:00-16:00. Parking nearby. Details from Stephen Ainsleigh Rice, We hope MAN members be willing to make a small donation for apples collected, such as £1/small carrier bag, £3 per bag for life. Tel. 01497-820332 or Stephanie Coates scoates@brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk Tel. 01874 625708.

Friday 21st October. National Apple Day <http://commonground.org.uk/projects/orchards/apple-day/>

* Sunday, 23rd October. Cefn Ila Orchard, near Usk, Open day organized by Woodland Trust. MAN Apple display; others: Apple juice, cider and perry tasting. For further details see www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

* Sunday, 30th October Chepstow Apple Day, organized by Chepstow Town Council at the Drill Hall, Lower Church Street, Chepstow. Admission free. 11.00-4.00pm. MAN Apple display, apple juice, cider and perry tasting.

Saturday 26th November 2016 at 11:00 in the Cider Museum – MAN AGM, with guest speaker Steve Oram of the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species.

Events in 2017

Saturday 11th February 2017 (weather dependent, alternative Sunday 12th) 11:00 - 15:00 at Tredomen - Pruning Course.

Friday 17th February 2017 from 10:00 - 15:00 at Tredomen - pruning (practice) for orchard maintenance.

Saturday 18th February 2017 from 10:00 - 15:00 at Paramor - tree planting and pruning (practice) for orchard maintenance.

Saturday 25th February 2017 10:00-15:00 at Glasbury Village Hall or elsewhere if more convenient to participants - Grafting Course Agricultural Shows and other Events

Visit to F P Matthews late summer 2017, details to follow later on our website and via News Sheet.

Full details of all our events, and others that we hear about, are given at:

www.marcherapple.net/diary.htm

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.

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 previous issues are now available as PDFs — see web site for order form with full details of prices.

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 Membership Secretary, Marcher Apple Network, 25 Grange Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire S&3 9DG. Cheques should be made payable to Marcher Apple Network.

The **PARAMOR ORCHARD CWMDU** an illustrated flora, 2014. Includes the history of the acquisition of the orchard. With detailed, botanically accurate black & white illustrations which could be coloured in by children. The original black & white drawings by Dr Margaret A V Gill, have been deposited in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

Price £3 including p and p in the UK.

The **AGM** is at the
THE CIDER MUSEUM,
RYLANDS ST.,
HEREFORD HR4 0LW
(01432 354 207)
on
Saturday, 26th November at
11:00.

Coffee will be available
from
10.30 a.m.



APPLES AND PEARS

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Company No 3787303

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Apples & Pears Autumn 2016