



Marcher Apple Network

# APPLES & PEARS

## AFALAU A PÊR

Volume 2 No 4

Non-members £2

Autumn 2010



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

[www.marcherapple.net](http://www.marcherapple.net)

# Launching Welsh Marches Pomona

The launch of Welsh Marches Pomona into the wide world took place on May 3rd, Bank Holiday Monday. This auspicious event well demonstrated the co-operative spirit of the apple community: Big Apple very kindly allowing Marcher Apple Network to use their annual Blossomtime celebration for our book event. We are most grateful to them for this support and also for the help of Ian and Rebecca Jones, owners of the beautiful cruck barn at Aylton, which provided a very appropriate venue.

Publishing this Pomona is quite an achievement for our small organisation. We are fortunate in our area to have the artistic talent of Margaret Gill: a lady who has worked carefully with Mike Porter in order to paint not only beautiful pictures, but also accurate and authentic depictions of special apple blossoms and fruit, which the text, after many years of research, aims to describe.

MAN is conscious of following the historical tradition of this area of England and Wales. Several wonderful pomonas have been published in the Welsh Marches. The most recent (1987) is Bulmer's Pomona, in which enthusiasts find a splendid range of cider apples known to have been successfully grown locally for many years. It provides an

historic record and is particularly useful for identification.

Next year (October 2011) will celebrate the bicentenary of the publishing of Thomas Andrew Knight's Pomona Herefordiensis. Two of the apple varieties in Welsh Marches Pomona (WMP) were raised ("invented") by him. Previously, *Bringewood Pippin* and *Onibury Pippin* had never been adequately described and indeed had been overlooked since Victorian times. It is exciting that they have been rediscovered and propagated, for both are delicious little eating apples.

To have local apple varieties positively identified and described is extremely helpful, especially as in the wider apple world they would probably be classed as 'unknown'. *Bridstow*

*Wasp* is an example of a variety known to the legendary Victorian Herefordshire pomologists who compiled The Herefordshire Pomona, but they left it out of their book. When over 100 years later MAN encountered a well-loved local apple called "Carnation" around Glasbury-on-Wye, research had to start at the beginning. It was almost a decade later when, researching the library of the Hereford Cider Museum, Mike Porter recognised their *Bridstow Wasp* was actually the apple we had been calling "Carnation".

Not even the National Apple Collections at Brogdale can hope to get every identification right, as the history of *Sweeney Nonpareil* illustrates. An apple sent to Brogdale as *Bringewood Pippin* was fortuitously grafted and planted in our orchard at Aberhoywe in 1984 where Mike was trying to build up a collection of local apple varieties. When it produced fruit it was eventually recognised, after several trips to the Lindley Library, as *Sweeney Nonpareil*, which readers of WMP will see is a very individual-looking apple – green, covered with a latticework of brown russet. This was known to Victorian apple buffs, but had fallen out of favour and knowledge in the ups-and-downs of the 20th C. Now it has a description and illustrations it should be easier to recognise.

Selecting the 31 varieties presented plenty of problems and research will go on because we still have many un-named apples in our museum orchards, which may be local to our area. The WMP "31" have been planted in Paramor Orchard.

The book, we hope, will be successful and will delight all apple enthusiasts. The layout was taken in hand by graphic designer, Wayne Summers (Presteigne) who we think has done a fine job. Gomer Press must be congratulated not only for producing such a beautiful book, but also for their extreme care and helpfulness in its creation. MAN is proud of its Pomona whose success surely will be measured by its usefulness.

Chris Porter

## Marcher Apple Network Accounts for year ended 31.07.09

### EXPENDITURE

Events	312.93
Library & equipment	746.04
Orchard maintenance & equipment	1339.84
Purchase/sale books	583.52
Paramor orchard exp.	644.00
Admin exp.	4029.48
Surplus for year	3149.03

10804.84

### INCOME

Subscriptions	1881.00
Apple IDs & speaker fees	728.00
Donations	664.20
Pomona project	849.61
Purchase/sale trees	216.22
Grants	5887.00
Misc. receipts	578.81

10804.84

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31.07.09

#### LIABILITIES

Accumulated fund 60389.99

60389.99

#### ASSETS

Goods for sale items at cost	7254.00
Orchard equipment at cost	
less 20% p.a.	700.00
Planting and exhibition materials	890.00
Library & reference books & equipment	2045.00
Computers	100.00
Land at cost + improvements	36000.00
Bank balances	13400.99

60389.99

# Notes from the Chairman

The event of the year was of course the publication of *Welsh Marches Pomona*. Four years in the making, the book is a credit to all those involved, none more so than Mike Porter and Margaret Gill. Those of us who have been closely associated with the book know only too well how much work and dedication they put into its production. I would also like to mention Wayne Summers, our graphic designer and Pit Dafis of Gomer Press who were responsible for the final appearance of the book. We are, of course, extremely grateful to our Patrons, Sponsors and Subscribers whose generosity has made our project possible.

I have received e-mails and letters from many places about the book and will reproduce selected extracts below. I feel like a copywriter for a film company selecting bits from what the critics have written. I think they have tightened up on the rules now but you know the kind of thing. ...'Reaches new heights' (which in the original the critic had followed by 'of banality'). I can honestly say that my problem was what other good bits to leave out. Here are a few examples of what I have received.

'I am delighted with it (WMP) but I shall elaborate on this after I have spent more time with this precious book'.  
'.....how pleased you must be with the Pomona – it is first class in every respect'. 'The WMP is a joy to have'.  
'.....the portions of the book which are directed to identification are very helpful indeed, more than any other publication I have seen to date,.....'the WMP will be of enormous

assistance [in identification]'. 'The line drawings of leaf and apple anatomy are without peer.....' people were interested in the book because of the beautiful paintings but those receiving copies are interested in the beautiful as well as the informative'. 'The book is a remarkable achievement and deserves every success'.

The book was officially launched at the Big Apple Festival in May and Mike was presented with a suitably inscribed copy by members of the committee. This was followed by a short talk by Mike on 'The search for the real Ten Commandments' There was a good turnout and it was nice to mix with members and others over refreshments generously provided by the organisers. As Margaret was not able to attend we arranged a mini-launch in July so that we could thank her formally for all her hard work. Margaret was also provided with a suitably inscribed copy of the book.

While we concentrate on all our 'museum' orchards, our own Paramor orchard is a particular focus as it is new and still being developed. More trees have been planted with help from members and the local community. The village school is involved with nesting box installation and bat boxes are on the agenda. A great deal of work is scheduled from hedging, fencing and drainage, all made possible through grants from Environment Wales. Mainly through the hard work of our Project Officer, Sylvia O'Brien, supported by a small sub-committee, we have been successful in our recent grant applications and can now plan our work programme accordingly.

As always we have a full programme of events this coming autumn and once again the MAN 'Apple Day' will be held in conjunction with the Herefordshire Food Festival, 23rd-24th October 2010. The AGM will be a separate event this year, probably in early December. One future event that is gradually gaining more publicity is the bicentenary of the publication of Thomas Andrew Knight's '*Pomona Herefordiensis*' in 2011. Various events are being planned but there are no firm details yet. We will keep members informed.

Members attending our events from last autumn will have noticed our new 'pop-up' display boards. These are a great improvement on the heavy boards we have been carrying around for years. The new boards are very bright and colourful and certainly catch the eye.

Our national and international contacts remain many and varied and I would like to mention in particular the National Orchard Forum (NOF). This voluntary umbrella organisation represents some 20-30 heritage orchard groups, acting as an exchange house, publicity forum and alerting members to national orchard issues. A small number of officers do a fantastic job keeping participating groups in touch with relevant events and producing informative newsletters and 'flyers'. Anyone interested in a variety of orchard issues can contact NOF at [www.nat-orchard-forum.org.uk](http://www.nat-orchard-forum.org.uk)

**Peter Austerfield**

## News of MAN Orchards

### Tredomen Court

This year the crop at Tredomen is very light, possibly the result of a frost at blossom-time. In June several trees were festooned with webs of Ermine moths, which were also frequent in 2009. Last autumn some of the "unknown" apples were examined by the ID panel. The apple from the "Hotel Metropole", Llandrindod Wells, grafted some 10 or 12 years ago, looks increasingly like *Baumann's Reinette*. Two of our unknown apples, "Glasbury Farm 3" and "Checkley Rymer" were sent to Dr. Joan Morgan at Brogdale for examination and she agreed that they are the same variety, but we are no nearer to finding a name. It is likely to be a local variety, so we must continue to

keep our eyes open at apple events and when we visit old orchards – just in case. We may be a little nearer to naming the little apple we call "Mary Crichton's Reinette". By a process of elimination several names have already been discounted but we are now following another lead and are cautiously optimistic of the outcome.

Bryn continues to do a good job controlling the grass. The very dry weather in May and June may have put some of the trees under stress as a visit to the orchard in late June highlighted quite a lot of die-back on some of the trees. We need to spend more time looking after them. So if you live nearby and would like to help in a work party, please get in touch.

Keeping records of our museum orchards, especially one as large as Tredomen, is quite a task and we hope that the forthcoming database will help.

**Mike & Chris Porter**

### Croft Pendarren

Last year's crop yielded some lovely fruit which was used in our exhibitions at various events. Here, as at Tredomen, some of the trees still have 'manuscript' names, like "TA 59", a long-keeping apple which still had a good flavour in April, when it was cooked. Our ID panel was heartened when, this winter, some of these difficult-to-identify fellows were returned from Brogdale as "unknown".

Another spring of glorious blossoms this year seems to have set fruit on the older trees and shows the success of 2009 pruning. However, back in April, we were worried that although there were plenty of bumblebees and hoverflies around the orchard, hive bees were scarce. The old pear tree which again was covered with blossom, now has an offspring planted to carry on its line. *Pig yr Wydd*, having suffered wind damage, has a youngster too.

Spring was colourful at Croft Pendarren with really blue bluebells and white pignut enhancing the apple blossom. Orange-tip butterflies were seen visiting the milkmaids in late April and early May. Now, in June / early July, the early-flowering brambles are attracting Comma and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies, but we haven't seen any common blue butterflies this year in spite of golden-yellow carpets (and rugs) of bird's-foot-trefoil. Earlier when the sorrel and sweet vernal grass were fresh, there were more Large Skippers than we have ever seen here before. Lots of Speckled Woods, Ringlets and Meadow Browns are patrolling the orchard now, as the grasses, knapweed and hawkweeds flower.

To birds: Chiffchaffs were welcomed back on March 22nd this year and can still be heard proclaiming their presence together with Willow Warblers, Garden Warblers and Blackcaps. Song Thrushes were competing in mid-February and are still trying to out-shout each other. A Hobby was seen late one May evening above the oak trees catching (perhaps?) the large mayflies that hatch at that time.

May, June and July, so far, have been drier and sunnier than usual, so the outcome of the apple crop will depend on the amount of rain we receive during the summer holidays. I expect!

**Chris Porter**

## Westhope Orchard

Cropping this year will be varied, from very good (for example *Stoke Edith Pippin*), good (*Scotch Bridget*), modest (*Gascoyne's Scarlet*), to poor (*Pig's Nose Pippin* and several others in this category).

One of the problems with the Westhope orchard, with its 15 standard trees, is that it is situated in a heavily wooded area and tall trees, up to 50 feet high, surround part of the small field where the orchard is situated. The owner of the land has thinned out one tall hedge but on another side (with different owner), there is a stand of very tall ash trees which results in some of the apple trees taking on a distinct

lean. Several trees have this natural habit as obviously they move towards the light. Two trees have quite a serious lean due to a combination of light seeking and the way they have grown over the last 15 years. However, this does not seem to affect growth as they flower and fruit reasonably well in most years. It just looks alarming and maybe some support will be needed in future.

**Peter Austerfield**

## Lower Ffordd-fawr

There were no new plantings last winter at this small nursery orchard which contains 56 trees. Seven air frosts in April and a further two the following month, the severest on 12th May, have resulted in poor fruit set in many orchards, including Tredomen Court. Whereas the blossom there suffered badly, well over half of the dwarf trees at this small sheltered site are bearing fruit and the hard winter has benefitted the young growth as there is no sign of aphid damage, which happened last year. The crop is heavy on some trees and a work party is needed to do some thinning to reduce the strain on the branches and at the same time summer pruning can be done. We look forward to having a crop from some of the varieties which have been planted here, grafted from interesting unknown trees located on our orchard surveys and garden visits over the past few years. We hope some may turn out to be varieties listed in The Herefordshire Pomona, but not yet found.

**Sheila Leitch**

## Paramor

We are now into our second year of Environment Wales funding for the Paramor Orchard and with their valuable help we have been able to make considerable progress, not only with the planting of trees but also with many other improvements.



*MAN members and friends 'pose' for the camera during the Paramor work day – perhaps seen not quite at their sartorial best...*



*With the first few trees now in place, the Paramor orchard begins to take shape*

During a volunteer day in February more than 30 volunteers from MAN and the local community gathered at the orchard for a range of tasks. Some helped clear the copse of a skipfull of rubbish ranging from plastic bottles to rusting tractor axles, while others planted apple trees and made wire guards for them. Children from Cwmdy primary school had made bird boxes with two committee members earlier in the year and now they fixed them high up in the alder trees in the copse.

On another occasion volunteers planted native hedging and permanent fencing has been installed to protect this. Moveable fencing has been purchased to regulate sheep grazing in the gradually decreasing un-planted area.

The early spring 2009 planting of the apples featured in the Welsh Marches Pomona was followed by another group of apples grown in the Welsh Marches. Some, such as *Pig Aderyn* and *Pig yr Wydd* are unmistakably Welsh, others such as *Herefordshire Beefing*, *Kings Acre Pippin* and *Worcester Pearmain* display their English heritage. There are now nearly sixty trees planted on M25 rootstock in the Paramor orchard and meanwhile others have been grafted and will be ready for planting, weather permitting, before Christmas. In the 'pan handle' part of the orchard we have also created a small nursery area where we have half a dozen or so apples under investigation. These are planted on M9 rootstock which will provide the quickest fruit

As planting progresses steadily northwards across the site we will soon approach a wet area that is currently unsuitable for fruit trees but luckily we have secured funding from Environment Wales to improve the drainage there





Clearing the copse of rubbish was a big task



this year. However, the copse and another area of damp grassland where we have seen common spotted orchids will remain undrained to preserve the wildlife value. Other funded projects for this year include more hedge planting, building and erecting bat boxes with the children, carrying out environmental surveys, creating a database of all our apples, buying tripod ladders for the first pruning and putting up a wooden name board at the entrance.

Sylvia O'Brien

## My favourite apple

Our Chairman, **Peter Austerfield**, has kindly offered to tell us what influences his choice.

As a Yorkshireman (and I have been bought a t-shirt that says so), it might be expected that I would choose a 'Yorkshire' apple. And so I shall, choosing as my favourite apple the *Ribston Pippin*.

Sometimes known as the *Glory of York* it is certainly Yorkshire's most famous apple but its origins stretch beyond our shores. In about 1688 Sir Henry Goodricke of Ribston Hall near Knaresborough, brought back and planted three pips from Rouen in France. It is said that only one survived, the resulting tree known to be still standing in 1810. This then was the origin of the apple although different dates are given in other accounts.

Robert Hogg went to considerable lengths to trace the ancestry of *Ribston Pippin*, a parent, as it is, of *Cox's Orange Pippin*, often regarded as the quintessential English apple. He found it listed by a well known nursery in 1785 but few trees were sold. By the 1840s the same nursery was selling 2,500 trees per year so the apple had certainly attracted the attention of growers and the public.

As an apple it has a good size with a strong aromatic taste and is at its best a month or so after picking in early October. It can also be used for culinary purposes having a sweet/sharp juice. It is often compared with its offspring but it has a stronger and more



robust flavour and is said to be 'less refined' than the Cox. Whatever the comparisons, I grow and enjoy eating this apple and have had more success with it as a tree than I have with my Cox. I think the Ribston tree knows where I'm from but it would not be happy if it knew it

had a serious rival for 'my favourite apple' and one raised at about the same time by a certain medical man living much nearer to these parts. It was a close run thing but on balance the rival was pipped at the post by Ribston.

### What's on?

A list of regional apple events is included with this issue of the newsletter but note that

[www.marcherapple.net/diary.htm](http://www.marcherapple.net/diary.htm)

contains the most up to date information

# ORCHARD GLEANINGS 2010

## The Local Apple Register “Local Apples need your help”

Following publication of *Welsh Marches Pomona*, it is hoped that more of our local apples will be recognized and cultivated. However there are still many local varieties lacking descriptions and official names. A recent trawl through a list of the apples cultivated in the MAN museum orchards revealed more than fifty apples lacking official names, and every autumn during identification sessions at shows and orchard visits further un-named varieties appear.

After extensive research some of these may turn out to be long lost sorts better known in former times, as was the case with *Bridstow Wasp* and *Chatley Kernel*, but most will be local varieties without names. Some of these will be of recent origin from discarded cores; others perhaps ancient denizens of derelict orchards. From manorial surveys, old maps and charters, we know that apples have been cultivated in these parts since the Middle Ages. But, although we know the names and locations of some of these orchards, we know almost nothing about the varieties of fruit grown in them.

Probably a similar state of affairs exists in many parts of Britain, with a few notable exceptions such as Gloucestershire, where a detailed study has been carried out by Charles Martell who has published descriptions of the local varieties and their distribution. Quite apart from their historical associations, some of these local varieties may possess special qualities, such as a distinctive flavour or resistance to a specific pathogen, and may be well-adapted to particular local conditions. Such features might be useful in future breeding programs.

The Local Apple Register (LAR), a project initiated by the National Orchard Forum, aims to locate, record and preserve local varieties. In 2009 the Northern Fruit Group carried out a pilot scheme to evaluate ways of finding and recording information about these apples. This investigation incorporated knowledge from surveys carried out by the Peoples' Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and Natural England. A report by Dr. Simon Clark on the progress of this project, published in Newsletter 15 (Winter 2009) of the National Orchard Forum, provides details of their recommendations and discusses some of the local apples being considered for the Register,



Fig.1 'Cow's Snout' – a local apple from Yorkshire

such as 'Cow's Snout' from the Beverley area of Yorkshire (Fig 1) and 'Jenny Lynn' from Lancashire. A checklist for recording information about candidates for the Register has been sent to other Orchard Groups. The RHS has agreed to form a collection of local varieties of apples at Wisley.

In our area, and probably elsewhere, local apples without official names which might be considered as candidates for the Register can be assigned to various groups based on the known distribution. Some varieties are already fairly well-known and have a wide regional distribution, such as 'Welsh Pitcher' (Fig.2) which has been reported from sites across South Wales from Pembrokeshire to the English border near Hay-on Wye.



Fig.2 'Welsh Pitcher' - a local apple



Fig.3 'Pig Aderyn' – another Welsh apple which roots from cuttings

This medium-sized, round, yellow apple with patches of russet, has a refreshing flavour when it ripens in September, but does not keep well. Like several other Welsh varieties such as *Pig-yr-Wydd* and 'Pig Aderyn' (Fig.3), it roots readily from detached branches and this property, which allows the variety to be propagated without grafting, will have helped its survival. 'Herefordshire Quoining' (Fig.4) is a local representative of the ancient group of quoinings or queenings which has been found



Fig.4 'Herefordshire Quoining' – a fragrant apple with an unusual flavour

in several places in Wales and the Welsh Borders. It is a colourful, angular, fragrant apple with a distinctive flavour. In the Golden Valley in Herefordshire it was known as "Ten Commandments", but that name belongs to a different variety! In the National Apple Register by Muriel Smith it is placed as a synonym of *Crimson Queening*, following its treatment in the Fruit Manual by Robert Hogg, but although the two varieties are very similar, and clearly closely related, there are differences in flavour, aroma and ripening time.



A second group of candidates for LAR includes varieties with a more restricted distribution, perhaps found in only two or three orchards. Examples are 'Lady's Finger of Shropshire', 'Downway Costard' and 'Checkley Rymer'. The latter is a large, round, red-striped apple with a short stalk and a distinctive goblet-shaped tube. At the Malvern Show in 1995 this apple was included in a display of twenty unknown varieties which visitors were invited to identify and an elderly gardener suggested it was an old variety called *Rymer*. Further study has shown that 'Checkley Rymer' is a distinct variety which resembles *Rymer* in appearance.

Unknown varieties which are grafted and then cultivated in museum orchards for further study are assigned provisional, unofficial names which recall their place of origin, the name of the person who brought them to our attention, or some distinctive feature of the fruit. 'Checkley Rymer' was collected from an orchard at Checkley containing a wide range of apples, reputed to have been planted by Frank Holland. It would be interesting to learn more about his activities. An apple growing in our museum orchard at Tredomen, collected from a farm orchard at Glasbury and called 'Glasbury Farm 3' has recently been found to be the same variety as 'Checkley Rymer'.

A third group of local apples is composed of those which have been found only at one site, though they may in the past have been more widely distributed. Examples of these include 'Machen' from the Chepstow area (Fig 5), 'Pig Aderyn' from St. Dogmaels, 'Tedstone's Red Cooker' from Kingsland, 'TA63' from Llanwrda and 'Trevithel Small Russet' (Fig 6)



Fig.5 'Machen' – a colourful local apple from the Chepstow area



Fig.6 'Trevithel Small Russet' – found in a farm orchard near Three Cocks

from Three Cocks. 'TA63' was collected from a large orchard, on a farm called Tir Allen, planted in the 1930s with a mixture of well known varieties such as *Blenheim Orange* and *Newton Wonder* and local varieties like *Marged Nicolas*.

The museum orchards, where unrecognized varieties are cultivated under controlled conditions, provide opportunities for studies which have helped to solve many identity puzzles. For instance we now know that 'Lothlorien 1' (Glasbury) and 'Hawthornden?' (Norton Canon) are both *King's Acre Bountiful*, 'Plas Wye 41' (Llyswen) and 'SBPL1' (Llangatock) are *Tower of Glamis*; 'Penmaes 20' (Bronllys), 'Arrow Costard' (Eardisland) and 'Winforton Costard' are all *Scotch Bidget*, and 'Weeks' Red Dessert' (Chatley) and 'Waters Upton 5' are *Tydemans Early Worcester*. Local museum orchards can play a useful role, but careful documentation is essential.

As Simon Clark points out in a subsequent report, local varieties are most likely to be found in cottage or farm orchards especially in traditional fruit-growing areas. Our region is particularly rich in local varieties and the discovery and conservation of these is one of the fundamental objectives of MAN. We are already cultivating a considerable number of local apples in our museum orchards and would welcome the help of members in researching these and making further discoveries.

NB. Unofficial names of local varieties are shown in inverted commas.

**Mike Porter**

## Snippets from the shows

A few years ago, and it must have been an early season, I took 18 blossoming twiglets in OASIS to the British Beekeepers convention at Stoneleigh to show how the blossoming period is quite long. One cider apple had almost set while *Newton Wonder* was still quite tight. This display raised some interest and I said that blossoms could help to identify an apple and showed my copy of Rosanne Sanders. Next year an American lady hove in sight bearing a handful of blossoming twigs. She said, "Last year you said that apples could be identified by the blossoms. I have had these in the airing cupboard for a few days and they are still not open. Can you help me please?" As there were several other people at our stand, I gave her a diplomatic reply, suggesting that perhaps she should send samples of apples by post for identification.

Last year, again at Stoneleigh, a young man asked how he could prevent slugs and snails climbing his few trees. After some thought I suggested that perhaps a copper band round the trunk would act as a deterrent. Lo and behold, this year he came to the stand to say that the idea worked. Another satisfied customer, free of charge!

One year a man from Coventry bought a CD at the Malvern Show. He came back the next year to say that it would not work on his DVD player. I am not a technocrat but said that should work on a computer. Another reasonably happy customer.

A couple of years ago at the Royal Welsh Smallholder Show at Builth Wells, Paul Davis and I were extolling the virtues of a CD to an interested visitor. At the end of our spiel, we asked if she had a computer and she replied, "I haven't got electricity". What next??

Attendance at the shows is always pleasing and it is surprising what varied questions and comments arise. We are always looking for help at the shows, so why not look at the list and consider a day out. We pay travel expenses and usually provide a ticket for the show. If more helpers were available, we would be able to look around as well as manning our own stand. Please contact Sheila Leitch on 01497 847354 or Tom Froggatt on 01584 831650 with offers of help. Thank you.

**Tom Froggatt**

# Forgotten Characteristics

These days we can keep apples chilled in refrigerated storage for months, possibly even years, so the original characteristics of individual varieties are over-looked. Yet wind back 50 years and remove the supermarket and the chilled storage and the characteristics of our fruit were far more relevant, says **Wade Muggleton**

Some apples and pears were grown not perhaps because they were the tastiest varieties but because they kept. There would be little point in having an orchard full of say, *Worcester Pearmains*, undoubtedly a beautiful apple for a few weeks in September and early October but no use beyond that.

However, whilst *Scotch Bridget* as its name suggests is believed to be a Scottish apple in its origin, it was grown extensively in North Worcestershire and the Shropshire borders and remnant trees of 70 or 80 years can still be found in old orchards. It is a good example of an apple which is not perhaps the finest in flavour and texture (although by no means bad) but which has great keeping qualities. From what I picked last October and stored away in ex mushroom baskets I had good fruit through until the end of April when I finally used up the last of my stored Bridgets in one final crumble. Yes they had changed considerably since the day I picked them and were by April a bright yellow, softer in texture and possibly a little less juicy due to their months in store, but none the less still highly useable and 50 years ago would



*Scotch Bridget in April*

have been invaluable at that time of the year; often referred to by gardeners as the hungry gap due to the distinct shortage of home grown produce in late winter and early spring.

Another example of this keeping quality is the *Worcester Black Pear*. The notion that pears keep at all is alien to many people as the majority of varieties don't keep at all. Yet here is a culinary pear that will store for months way into the following spring. It first came to acclaim in Elizabethan times, for in those days that was its wide spread appeal, its amazing keeping qualities providing an invaluable source of fruit in the depths of winter and through into that hungry gap.

So whilst the work of maintaining our heritage varieties from a genetic point of view is invaluable, it may also be that in the years ahead, as factors like peak oil and energy descent mean all energy and transport will become extremely expensive, if possible at all, then we might again look at the characteristics and suitability of these varieties from the past. It may well be that a New Zealand apple in terms of transport, cost and carbon footprint is such a preposterous notion that a *Worcestershire Scotch Bridget* or *Black Pear* may again have their day.



*Scotch Bridget and Worcester Black Pear in store*



*Scotch Bridget on the tree*

## Found in the Orchard

I was making a tour of inspection around my orchard, removing caterpillars and other nasties, when I noticed deep in the foliage on one tree a large dead black leaf hanging down. I stretched my arm in to pull it off when – it moved! After I had got over my shock I had a good look at what I had disturbed. Imagine my surprise when I saw two hawk moths with prominent “eyes” on their rear wings. A quick check in the reference books told me they were Eyed Hawk Moths (*Smerinthus ocellata*). Not something I expected to find in an apple tree. Eyed Hawk Moths are a large moth, with a wing span which can be almost four inches. They are actually well camouflaged as the eyes only shown as a defensive mechanism – and are a distinctive identification feature. Normally found from May to July, the caterpillars are found from June to September. The caterpillars are large, up to three inches long, feeding mainly at night on willow, aspen, apple and (rarely) poplar. They are bluish-green with whitish diagonal stripes on the side often with a red dot on a spiracle near the base of the stripe. The caterpillars have a blue ‘horn’ at one end which distinguishes them from the otherwise similar larva of the Poplar Hawk Moth.

I do not recall Eyed Hawk Moths described as a pest of apples even though all the entomological descriptions list apple as a food plant. The thought of three inch caterpillars munching through my orchard terrifies me. Looking up Palmer & Percival, Pests of the Garden, Orchard, and Farm & Forest I found that “its larvae are occasionally found on Apple trees, they are never sufficiently numerous to be regarded as a pest, their chief food plants





Photo: Mary Wheeler

being Willow and Poplar". They also say "The larvae are found from June to August, when they pupate in the soil, emerging as moths the following May. The eggs are laid on the upper surface of leaves. Usually the caterpillars are few enough to be picked off by hand". So I will keep checking to see whether I am the lucky one to get an infestation of these attractive moths.

**Richard Wheeler**

## Bits and Pieces

Richard Wheeler, as Webmaster, receives most of the contacts from members of the public, but as Network Co-ordinator, my phone often rings with unusual enquiries. Last summer 2008, a request was for a display of apples to be on show at an August wedding. The reason for apples as a theme turned out to be that the bride-to-be had been proposed to under an apple tree! Early though it was, I managed to collect colourful fruit from six interesting old varieties and, duly labelled with some history of each, and in spanking new baskets, they were collected by the bride's parents. They looked good on the photos sent to me later and the happy pictures of the bride looking lovely with her young husband in splendid green waistcoat, all portrayed an unusual 'green' wedding.

A recent call this summer was about publicity for a circular 12 mile 'Russet Ramble' in October, starting from Bishops Castle. The idea is that it should serve to bring this old favourite type of apple to the attention of walkers, and raise money for a good cause locally. MAN hopes to supply plenty of Egremont Russet apples to be available to the walkers when they stop for a coffee and cake break. The organiser has already bought one of the Apple Recipe books and will put out some of our publicity

material and sales at this rest point. If the ramble is popular, it may become a regular annual 'apple event'.

**Sheila Leitch**

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5<sup>th</sup> April 2010

To MAN Newsletter

The prospect of a new book detailing apple varieties of the Welsh Marches was exciting – not least because it was to be produced by members of MAN whose reputation as orchard experts and enthusiasts is well-known. Kemerton Conservation Trust (KCT) has had an association with MAN stretching back several years. Although we are remote from the main area of MAN's activities and therefore rarely attend events, nevertheless we remain staunch members. When the appeal for sponsors of *Welsh Marches Pomona* went out KCT was keen to help and awaited publication with considerable excitement. We were not disappointed – the book is just superb. It is beautifully designed, very well written, with excellent illustrations – and very informative. However, the book has had an unforeseen effect on KCT here at Kemerton. It has inspired us to expand our collection!

The book details 31 apple varieties and I realised that many names were new to us. In our collection we have more than 200 varieties but on checking I found that we were lacking 20 listed in the book.

The publication of the book came as the Trust was halfway through a grant scheme awarded to it by Natural England via The National Trust – 'Conserving and Restoring Traditional Orchards in England'. Our project under the scheme encompasses a range of activities based around the restoration, establishment and promotion of orchards. The addition of 20 new 'local' varieties of apple fits perfectly in it. We decided to try and achieve it in two stages – obtaining 10 in a first tranche. But how?

I rang a couple of MAN members and was directed to Mike Porter. I had not known that he has most of the varieties in his own collection! Mike was extremely helpful. We had left getting graftwood very late but the harsh winter had slowed things down enough to leave a small window. I contacted Kevin O'Neal of Walcott Organic Nurseries, who does all our grafting work and he held back his last few rootstocks. Mike was fantastic – within 48 hours of my phone call the graftwood arrived by post and I took them across to the nursery at Drakes Broughton. Knowing that these varieties are unusual to rare Kevin has grafted as many as possible. KCT will take two trees of all 10 varieties but if Kevin is successful he may have some surplus. I mention this because there may be MAN members out there who have been similarly inspired to obtain the varieties included in the book. If you are, then may I suggest that you contact Kevin to register your interest: tel. 01905 841587, [walcotnursery@btconnect.com](mailto:walcotnursery@btconnect.com).

If all goes well I will be contacting Mike next winter to enquire about scions for the other 10 varieties. I believe that our experience demonstrates the value of the book. It clearly provides important historical information, excellent illustrations and keys to aid identification but it is going to play a big role in the conservation of many uncommon and rare varieties. Huge congratulations to Mike and to MAN!

*John Clarke*

Conservation Advisor to Kemerton Conservation Trust

# Recent orchard training courses

This last year has been a very busy one for MAN committee members with the final publication of the Welsh Marches Pomona our main concern. However, a couple of informal training courses were arranged in members' orchards, with a few friends invited and both were very successful. Numbers have to be restricted to about 15, depending on the site and the subject, but we must try and repeat them, with all members given the opportunity to attend.

## New Forest Farm, winter pruning & grafting

I'm very proud of these two youngsters you can see in the photo below. The experienced orchardists among our readers will wonder why: the close-up shows that they're not very good examples of grafting techniques. However, I did these on the first day of the Orchard Course organised by Sheila at New Forest Farm, above Hay, on a rather bleak day in early March. Our course instructor was Cormac Griffith and after some quite concentrated 'hands-on' pruning practice, as a special treat, we were shown how to prepare scions and rootstocks, using sample material that Cormac had brought from Ireland (in his suitcase, to avoid confiscation by RyanAir!).

To my amazement, my two puny little twigs have survived and are growing well. I will now have to find room for 'Rawley's Seedling' - apparently "a seedling of Cox with similar taste but hardier, fruit medium, oblong and soft flesh" (as it says on the Irish Seed Saver's web site) and "Greasey's Pippin" which is an Irish cider apple.



Cormac's pruning advice was clear and most helpful and I went home to practise on my own trees. The pears in particular needed some drastic action, so I am delighted that a much better crop seems to be coming along (but that might just be the good growing weather we've had this year). Also in use on the course was a Niwaki ladder that our Chairman, Peter Austerfield, had brought along. I'm fairly rugged but no spring chicken so the advantages of its super light weight and independently adjustable tripod legs were much appreciated: the firm subsequently got an order from me. The whole day was extremely enjoyable and our thanks go to the hosts for the splendid refreshments in their friendly farmhouse kitchen. I hope their trees have benefitted from our administrations!

Celia Kirby



## Wye View, winter pruning & grafting

There is a range of fruit trees, of all shapes, sizes and ages at Wye View which I thought would present Cormac with any topic he chose to discuss! They include young maiden trees planted against a south facing wall in 2009 and which will be fan and espalier trained (hopefully) over the next few summers, some cordons planted against an old metal gate in the vegetable garden about five years ago, an orchard of half-standard apples and plums, planted far too closely in 1974, (before we moved here) and including two old *Blenheim Orange* trees, one demonstrating how an ancient fallen tree can be propped up and allowed to show the life force still there, and a garden of old espalier-trained trees, planted soon after the house was built in 1890, in constant need of restorative pruning, but still cropping well.

The members on Sunday, not all the same who were present on Saturday, ranged from keen beginners to experienced pruners and Cormac obviously enjoyed answering all questions as he demonstrated pruning techniques, with interesting discussions going on all the time. Two members on Cormac's course, Paul Evans and his wife Sandi, (see opposite for the course held at his orchard) had been at Wye View on a winter pruning course back in January 2003, followed in July by a summer pruning course, with our member, Fred Essex-Clegg, from Birmingham, a very experienced horticulturalist, acting as tutor. Paul, on his return visit to my orchard, recalled tips and words of wisdom he had learned then from Fred Clegg. As on the Saturday, Cormac later demonstrated grafting again and the trainees had a go, and each had two Irish varieties, potted up, to take away. After a long day and a warm-up tea, he was flying back to Ireland, leaving some very enthusiastic pupils, all with the confidence to have a go at their own trees. We all learn so much at any training course we attend, from the tutor, the venue, and each other and we hope to hold more courses and, as members gain confidence, they will want to come to work at our own 'museum orchards' and put their skills into practice.

Sheila Leitch

## A summer pruning afternoon

So many of us are locked into the idea of pruning apple trees in the winter that it was quite an eye-opener to watch Nick Dunn, Managing Director of Frank Matthews, demonstrating pruning on a sunny July afternoon., reports **Sylvia O'Brien**.

MAN member Paul Evans had invited us along to an event at his eight year old orchard near Leominster where he felt that the trees, all planted in traditional rows on M25 rootstock, were ready for some taming.

Summer pruning has many advantages, not least that we can judge the health and character of the tree when it is in leaf and cropping. Nick felt it was important to get to know our individual trees in this way.

Young trees should be allowed to crop before attempting any pruning and at this stage the only pruning should be to promote wide angle branches rather than narrow ones, primarily because they are much stronger. Nick favoured the centre leader style rather than the open goblet style as this allows us to always cut back to the main stem, cutting single branches out rather than trimming perimeter growth and allowing less congestion and more strong new growth.

For those with limited time to spare, summer pruning can be combined with thinning. As everyone there admitted to not thinning their fruit enough the prospect of making it part of the pruning process may even encourage us reluctant thinners to be more ruthless.

Another myth Nick dispelled was the importance of making clean cuts with secateurs. He explained that a blade goes straight through the cell walls whereas hand twisting the laterals does less damage to the cells, leaving the wound less prone to disease.

For stone fruit such as plums and cherries, peaches and apricots summer is, of course, the only time to prune. After September 1 the risk of causing infection with diseases such as silver leaf is too great. Thinning is even more important with plums than with apples as not only are branches often broken under the weight of too many fruit but disease can spread rapidly through touching fruit causing much of the crop to be lost. Commercial growers of Victoria plums remove 8 out of 10 fruit which may seem a bit excessive to amateurs but is

certainly an indication of the direction in which to go. General pruning of stone fruit trees should be more conservative, with no more than 8 or 9 cuts made in a year.

It was certainly a fascinating and unusual afternoon and our thanks go to Nick and Paul – and also to Sandi for the lovely tea and cream scones.

**Sylvia O'Brien**



*The traditional gardens at Powis Castle, where even the fruit trees must be regimented*

domes echoing the shape of the famous yew hedges and underplanted with ornamentals. I have no idea what the crop is like but that is probably of little importance in this setting where the accent is on a grand aesthetic design.

As I said, it all depends.....!

One of the questions I often get asked at apple events is 'How do I prune my apple tree?' It's a very difficult question to give a helpful answer to as so much depends on the owner's expectations, the rootstock, the health and well-being of the tree, its fruiting habits, the allotted space, previous pruning and so on. And of course, all the experts have their own theories and favourite ways of doing things.

Invariably I am reminded of the image of apple trees at Powis Castle, pruned into elongated

### **The National Orchard Forum**

This most useful site, at [www.nat-orchard-forum.org.uk](http://www.nat-orchard-forum.org.uk) features many items of interest to keen orchardists, including a twice-yearly Newsletter.



# Cider Apple and Perry Pear Group

The cider apple crop last year was very poor in most orchards. The fruit was very small which meant that more apples had to be picked up to the tonne! Conversely, the perry pear crop was very good. However, this year's apple crop seems to be much better, despite the extremely dry weather.

In 2007 I purchased an *Eggleton Styre* maiden tree from Bernwode Fruit Tree nursery that had been grafted from a tree imported from Tasmania. Last year it produced fruit and after careful study find that it fits the description given in the Herefordshire Pomona. Graftwood has been taken to further propagate this variety which was thought to be lost. We are grateful to Bernwode for this find.

Displays of cider fruit and perry pears were produced at the Big Apple (Much Marcle) and cider fruit at Leominster Apple Day and the Herefordshire Food Festival. All attracted considerable interest from the general public and we heard many tales from childhoods spend in cider orchards that have now been destroyed. The grubbing out of these old orchards is the main cause of old varieties of fruit being lost to future generations.

East Malling Research is carrying out DNA analysis of all the perry pear varieties in the National Collection at Hartpury. This is wonderful news as it will make identification easier and more certain. It is to be hoped that a similar study can be done on cider fruit.

I understand that some work is being done in this field but so far I have been unable to access it.

It is our continuing task to try and find 'lost' varieties. In addition, it is vital to find as many as possible of the varieties introduced subsequent to the publication of the early Pomonas, particularly those grown on the Welsh side of the Marches. Those of you who have an ancient tree, the name of which is unknown but was used for cider-making, may have a variety that is of interest. We would like to hear from you. A brief description of the tree and the fruit would help.

Richard Cheshire

## 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** £16.00 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. 3) 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 and 3, £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](http://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.**

### APPLES AND PEARS

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