

Apples & Pears

The Marcher Apple Network

Autumn 2023



**Marcher
Apple
Network**

MAN's purpose and its continuity—a message from the Trustees

Our memorandum of Association describes the Objects of the Marcher Apple Network as

“to further the education of the public by the promotion of research, identification and conserve by any recognised means, old varieties of Apples, Pears and other fruits found growing in the Marches Area of England and Wales, and elsewhere, and to make collected information available to individuals or organisations by displays demonstrations, talks or any other communication system.”

Our concerns

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of MAN, three decades of work on trying to get an appreciation of the orchards of our region and the heritage varieties contained within them. Much has been achieved with varieties found, countless public interfaces and research done, but three decades on it is also time for change. We have arguably found many of the lost varieties that are still out there to be found. As an organization we seem to have been less than successful when it comes to succession with some of our founders now in advancing years or sadly no longer with us. The question arises of who carries MAN forwards from here, and to do what?

We have struggled to find successors for our founders and their exceptional knowledge and passion. It is hard to find folk willing to run the charity. In short what is the future for MAN? Does it even have one?

We ask members to contribute to Newsletters, a good way to tell of successes, ask questions, make contacts, learn new things. Yes we must say a hearty Thank You to those who have contributed. More please next year, else what's the point of this publication? Having rather few contributions offered sends a message to us that MAN no longer is of much interest or use to members. Without some significant help in place by AGM 2024, both Wade and I feel that we will have done all we can for MAN, members and the wider public. We'll give up. This maybe the final edition of Apples & Pears... unless you tell us otherwise.

It is not good that knowledge of our collection resides just with Ainsleigh. Are you interested in learning some more about it? It is rather fun too.

The date for this year's AGM is Saturday 2nd December. Notice of this meeting is given below. It will likely be the most important AGM since our founding. We need members to volunteer or we must begin thinking of winding up the charity/company. You are most welcome to have your say about what we should do via secretary@marcherapple.net and/or to volunteer any time between now and at the AGM.

Financial position

It is stable and we have received several offers of further help contingent upon resolving its direction and volunteering issues. Net current assets (reserves) are £24k. The deficit of expenditure over income was £3k in 2021/22, and for 2022/23 we anticipate a deficit of £5k. Since 2016, two members have made substantial donations to MAN. These have often significantly exceeded all other sources of income combined and usually exceeded expenditure; it enabled reserves to increase. Now there is about 4 years' coverage of future operations. It allows some time for enabling further efforts at succession planning, training, finding a solution for Paramor and re-defining what MAN's purpose is for the future. Otherwise we emphasise that MAN may have to be wound-up in an orderly manner.

Reflecting the new connected world

The 27th AGM in 2022, our first in-person Annual General Meeting since Covid-19 restrictions were lifted was once again held at the Museum of Cider in Hereford and made available to Members to participate via Teams. Changes to our Articles of Association were proposed to members for enabling future general meetings to be hybrid in-person and video conferencing, and also that Trustee meetings may be conducted as Trustees best enables their contribution. Both changes are valued as Members and Trustees live over 100 km apart. Members nearly unanimously voted for these changes. Thank you for spearheading this change, Jackie.

Membership

MAN has welcomed 8 new members. Membership stands at 292, including 24 'dormant members'. The sixteen positive responses to the survey undertaken in February 2021 were followed up by members of the Management Committee to all members, leading to a number of specific offers of help.

Our annual subscription has been £10 for nearly 20 years. It was proposed to the AGM 2022 that it be increased to £20. Members approved it.

Achievements

In this Newsletter you'll appreciate the wonderful achievements of MAN's founders from seeking and finding interesting apple varieties, to identifying and describing them. Thanks to them we now have two well-tended and curated orchards with a fine collection of varieties.

Over the years MAN volunteers have attended many Autumn Shows in the Welsh Marches and beyond. We've given much invaluable advice to members and the public for solving fruit tree problems, recommending actions and varieties for new orchards or restoring old ones, making useful contacts and all for increasing confidence of folk. We've run grafting and pruning courses. All this based upon volunteers giving their time. It has been greatly appreciated by the public. But we're in danger of running out of puff.

How you can help?

By becoming Trustees/Directors, Volunteers and Donors

Following our AGM last November, There have been several changes among Trustees. The continuing four Trustees/Directors (Jackie Denman, Peter Austerfield, Any Pillow, David Smith) co-opted two members (Phil Chadwick and Stephen Ainsleigh Rice) at a Trustee meeting on 3rd April. Jackie Denman resigned as Chair of Trustees also on 3rd April. At the next Trustee Meeting on 26th May, Stephen Ainsleigh Rice became Chair. Jackie Denman resigned as a Trustee on 23rd August 2023; Trustees have expressed their gratitude to Jackie for her guidance and work as Chairman and Trustee over several years of change, the Covid-19 pandemic and grappling with succession planning.

In response to the appeal made during 2022 for new Trustees to come forward, we're grateful that three further members have expressed interest since March 2023. They are considering whether they can assist MAN. Such succession is critical to MAN surviving.

After a few lean years, we now have some encouraging signs of more volunteers contributing in areas they enjoy and we hope building new interest groups. Currently we have about eight Members who kindly volunteer at shows, photography and orchard work in roles other than as Trustees. Their help is much appreciated. Yet we remain very short of help. Twenty years ago active members covered contributions including:

- Network Co-ordinator
- Website manager
- Newsletter editor
- Events co-ordinator
- Grant applications
- and for a while we had a member who covered social media.

Now none. Wade, David, Andy and I do our best but we already cover membership, shows, secretary and inbox, book sales, orchards and curation. Please consider if you'd be willing to take on or help with any of those roles.

What to do with Paramor, the prime orchard - Your choice.

Grass on the 2.2 ha orchard has been mowed every 2-3 weeks in the growing season; it now costs about £3000 pa. Other orchard management costs such as hedgerow and gate maintenance, new trees, DNA and travel have typically been about as much. Now with few new trees grafted and less DNA testing these are decreasing. In a few years we may have to replace our ride-on-mower.

We've looked into other ways to manage grass, by grazing or as wild-flower meadows. For the former, trees need individual protection, likely costing in total between £10,000- £20,000. Cattle might be preferred because they are more disruptive of soil and vegetation, and also control bracken; however, because many trees have main branches at head height cattle are likely impractical. Sheep grazing is OK and there are likely farmers who'd be pleased for grazing another 2 ha of land.

Wild-flowers are feasible. We need to locate someone with small scale machinery that fits easily between the trees (separation in the main orchard 7.5 m, though only 2-3 m in the nursery): topper, tedder and bailer. Buying it makes little sense as we'd use it very infrequently and need somewhere to house it. Do you know someone who might know someone not very far away from Cwmdru in SE Powys who has such equipment...?

Beyond finding solutions to grass management, if MAN will struggle to find new Trustees to run Paramor, what should we do with our prime asset? We've asked various organisations whether they are interested in a collaboration that could even include transferring ownership. These include National Trust, Duchy of Cornwall, Museum of Cider, Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales, National Botanic Garden of Wales. They're able to offer some help contacting their volunteers to see if any are interested and may consider some governance help but have no wish to take any ownership. We have had an expression of interest from Carwyn Graves at the University of Wales who is developing a food course, Tir Glas, designed to break down barriers between academia, communities and business and

the intent of the central course is for offering a blend of traditional academic learning with experiential learning on farms and at production sites. While this is quite exciting, it hasn't started and there is no guarantee of a longer term continuity; it's risky especially ceding any ownership. The recent pruning day at Paramor had ten members of the Cwmdru community helping, it is encouraging, though again longer-term continuity is untested and a concern.

An alternative way of long-term conservation would be to establish a new orchard near existing ones for enabling the equipment and staff working there to be shared for MAN's benefit. Two possibilities have surfaced, land near Hereford and Shrewsbury may become available. Two more opportunities have been muted. Discussions are in progress. Cost will likely include land purchase, grafting, guarding, and maybe an endowment. Some of that could come from a sale of Paramor. We have two or three offers of financial help from members.

Public engagement

If long-term conservation of our collection can be resolved, then what would members wish that MAN does and what should they offer to the public? For instance, training courses can continue, presence at shows is much enjoyed by kindly volunteers, provision of graftwood is welcomed by the public. Morphological description can indeed be completed and made available. Some longer-term studies may be of interest to continue. Perhaps an update to the Welsh Marches Pomona? And what else?

Future decision-making at AGMs 2023 and 2024?

What if we are unable to attract members as trustees and volunteers for continuing 'public-facing' activities? If we haven't a solution for long term conservation of our collection? Does it make sense to continue? If you think we should continue somehow and are willing to help in any aspect, please contact the Secretary secretary@marcherapple.net. If we've missed a feasible option please let us know.

If we are unable to find a way forward then it is inevitable that MAN must wind-up. A final decision we think should be made at the AGM 2024 or 2025.

Under the Agenda Item 8, 'Open Forum', Trustees will present these considerations and further developments and any other options that have arisen to members at the next AGM on 2nd December 2023 in order to inform decision making.

Notice of the 28th AGM

Notice is hereby given that the 28th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at the Museum of Cider, Pomona Place, Hereford HR4 0EF on Saturday 2nd December 2023 at 11:00. Coffee will be available from 10:30.

Members are welcome to attend the AGM online. Joining instructions can be found nearer the time on our website.

For those wishing to join the meeting remotely please email the secretary at secretary@marcherapple.net in order to be sent a Teams / Zoom invite.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. To receive and approve the Minutes of the 27th AGM held on Saturday 19th November 2022
3. Matters arising
4. To receive and approve the Trustees' Annual Report 2022-23
5. To receive and adopt the Annual Accounts 2022-23
6. Election of Directors
7. To determine to appoint Examiners for Accounts 2023-24
8. Open Forum where Trustees will be available to answer questions
9. Any other business

After the formal business is completed, likely about 12:30 MAN member Bridget Rose will talk about how she has established the Harmony Orchard consisting of thousands eating and cooking apple varieties at Pembridge. Followed by Ainsleigh telling the tale of 'Sleuthing a Heritage Apple'

The current Directors and Trustees are Peter Austerfield, Phil Chadwick, Andy Pillow, Stephen Ainsleigh Rice and David Smith. Phil Chadwick and Stephen Ainsleigh Rice were co-opted as Directors/Trustees at a Trustee meeting on 3rd April this year. They now seek election by members. If elected that means there will be just three Trustees; our Articles of Association require a minimum of four Trustees to make decisions and carry on business. We are **appealing** to more members to become Trustees. Indeed, it is now **critical** for MAN's future, the future of your Charity and Company and all that has been achieved and yet to do. For simplicity, we propose co-option for the first year and election by the membership subsequently.

If you are willing to serve, please contact any Trustee or the secretary at secretary@marcherapple.net

Proxy voting

If you are not able to attend the AGM but would like to vote on any motions, you may do so by exercising a proxy vote. A form is available which has to be signed and returned to MAN's Registered Office, to arrive 48 hours before the AGM.

Andy Pillow, Company Secretary, Brock House, Pelham Road, Upton Magna, Shropshire SY4 4UA

Barclays Bank and Virgin Money Accounts

Barclays Bank closed MAN's account on 20th July. It seems this was associated with Barclays getting its records straight as directed by the Banking Regulator requirements rather than because MAN has an ethos at variance with Barclays Bank.

Virgin Money have suspended our account as a result of inactivity.

As noted above we have considerable funds, but now temporarily inaccessible. This came at a very awkward time for MAN, as the annual subscriptions paid by standing order were due on 1st August, barely a week later. It is very inconvenient to members and we're very sorry that is happened. We had to write to over 100 members to ask them to stop their orders, and offer our apologies. In response, though, we've had quite a few messages of understanding and several recounting rather similar experiences.

We're applying to open a new current account with Lloyds Bank PLC and will give details as soon as possible.

New look Apples and Pears

Celia Kirby has for many years been producing our beautifully edited and formatted Newsletters and News Sheets. They are admired and treasured by members and their friends. After so many years Celia is winding down and on behalf of all members we express fulsome thanks for those many lovely editions. Thank you, Celia.

Wade has kindly stepped in with an offer to help produce this year's Newsletter with some publishing software. Now if a member would like to help carry on with editing and producing the Newsletter, we would be most grateful....

Yes, that's how the first Newsletter looked back 28 years ago...

Summary of the main achievements for public benefit during 2022/23

We're delighted to report that during the year MAN continued to consolidate its collection and curatorial notes, again attended some Shows and resumed Identification work.

MAN's collection now includes 240 (about 11%) of the apple varieties held at the National Fruit Collection. There are a further 260 varieties not held at the NFC. In total these include most of those historically associated with Wales and the English border counties. It is a regional contribution to reducing biodiversity risk.

A further twenty varieties were accredited to the Register of Local Cultivars including the historically important variety 'Grange'.



Graftwood material is available to the members and the public, and over 400 sets were taken.

Our Secretary receives and answers many requests for advice via our website. It is a service clearly greatly valued. It builds upon Wade Muggleton's many years of practical orchard and conservation work; further support derives from links with his extensive network of experts.

MAN has supported the Welsh Heritage Orchard project through having in its collection over 40 varieties that have Welsh origins. MAN compiled a listing with over a hundred candidate varieties for being 'Welsh' and assisted at workshops for defining their claims as heritage, associated or modern. MAN is keen to provide scions for the National Botanic Garden of Wales and other groups to establish their own collections. It appeared that we have the premier curated collection of varieties associated with Wales.

MAN has continued to invest time and effort in improving the website and uploading new content. It was completely updated in March 2023. Results of the DNA Campaigns are available to the public via www.fruitID.org.

Marcher Apple Network is a member of PAVO — the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations.

Shows and ID

As Covid-19 concerns eased, the public returned to Autumn Shows. MAN volunteers attended shows at the British Beekeepers Convention at Harper Adams University, Tenbury Wells, Leominster, Craven Arms and the National Botanic Garden of Wales. They were pretty busy with many folk waiting patiently for our volunteers to look at their fruit. Most of MAN's highly experienced pomologists have now retired. Hat's off to the new blood, they are learning the nuances and doing a super job, and enjoying the challenges too. Most varieties submitted were quite popular ones, though 'Herefordshire Beefing' gave them a further interest. Additionally samples submitted at the Malvern Show, Big Apple, via Transition Telford and by post admitted more leisurely identification work. In total over 50 samples were inspected and identified. While it is a little disappointing that the large majority of samples submitted are common (or popular traditional ones), it rather supports the feeling that few unknown rare varieties are yet to be found; MAN probably has now most varieties that remain extant.

The Orchards

Practical activity has been maintained throughout the year, either delivered or managed by our voluntary orchard manager and curator, Ainsleigh Rice.

In total, 37 trees have been planted this year at Paramor and 80 at Ty Glyn. Hedges at Paramor have been encroaching towards the trees for several years, some had become engulfed. In January Sam Stinchcombe and a work party kindly set to with gusto. In places hedges were cut back 5 m. It seems to have been synchronised with a desire by our neighbour to do likewise.

All the standard trees at Paramor were pruned on 17th July by a team again with Tom Adams leading a masterclass training day for members and a large group of volunteers from Cwmdu. Thank you to them all.

There is a new park bench to sit upon, to see the old bench and enjoy the glorious view. The orchard is looking superb. Please do consider a visit there to enjoy its beauty and idyllic setting.

I had been uncomfortable with the conflict of interest between being landlord to the cordon collection at Ty Glyn and being a trustee. On becoming Chair of Trustees I felt this acutely. I decided to give notice that the Lease on Ty Glyn was to be ended from 24th August 2025.





Each springtime the cordons are monitored every few days for observing the time when leaves and blossom emerge, and also whether blossom is more of a spur or tip character. While annual variations are evident, this exercise is intended for building a record over 10 or more years for enabling pollination groups and fruit bud characteristics to be assigned with some confidence. And it's lovely to see insects at work, here a hoverfly is pollinating Holstein blossom.

All summer pruning of 470 cordons at Ty Glyn was completed early in July 2023 with sterling help from two members. Thank you to them.

We encountered four pests that affected some trees. About a third of the trees were badly affected by aphids resulting in severely shrivelled and crinkled leaves. But once the ladybird larvae get going fresh leaves appear within 4-6 weeks. A few trees had greenfly attacking rather later than the aphids had arrived, ladybirds are ready moving in.... About 100 trees had instances of Ermine moth webs that led to some leaves being eaten. We pulled these off and hope birds will find some of the caterpillars.

One tree had some woolly aphid, it was near to but not one of the trees affected last year. A squirt of meths dissolved the waxy covering and enabled birds to access the aphids.



Graftwood and Propagation

During winter 2022/23, Paul Davis grafted 6 trees for Paramor and 33 for Ty Glyn. A further 16 have been grafted for third parties.

Trees for Paramor and Ty Glyn will substantially complete the rationalisation and consolidation of MAN's inventory. It ensures we have many valuable varieties in duplicate, some in triplicate.

Scions were collected and distributed to a number of third parties, including some to members, others for a grafting course at the University of Aberystwyth and for a start-up nursery near Brecon.

F P Matthews Ltd. has kindly agreed to have copied at their expense the entire MAN collection as cordons and maintain them in their nursery orchard. A total of 291 sets of scions were provided in February. There are about another 100-150 to provide for completing this project, and will be undertaken as material becomes available in winter 2023/24 or later. These cordons will then be a back-up copy of our genetic material. In the picture many of these young saplings shown in the foreground will form this collection.



Accreditation

MAN was responsible for 22 of the 55 varieties submitted to a meeting of the Adjudication Panel on 15th November 2022, for accrediting varieties for accession to a National Register of Local Cultivars. One was in collaboration with the National Trust and Irish Seed Savers Association and another with Liz Copas. All were accepted. This



achievement is mainly under the guidance of Mike Porter. A full listing of all MAN's accreditations since the process began in November 2018 can be found on the website. An incidental benefit of this process is the comprehensive descriptions and accounts made of each of these varieties.

Of particular note is the Accreditation of the heritage variety bred by Thomas Andrew Knight over 200 years ago 'Grange'. Morphological and DNA evidence is compelling. Furthermore, as a result of the full information being available on the website www.fruitID.com, a cider maker in New South Wales, Australia, was able to confirm a variety he had recently re-propagated from an 1860s planting was a good match to 'Grange'. Furthermore evidence suggests that it was McArthur of Camden who imported this variety into Australia between 1820 and 1861. Although the records are ambiguous, as the name Supreme Crab has been assigned to what is believed to be 'Grange', it would be odd indeed if it wasn't that see www.hortuscamden.com/plants/view/malus-domestica-borkh.-var.-supreme-crab

We had some lovely samples of the variety that has been accredited as 'Friar'. Incredibly irregular in shape. It is the variety of which Thomas Andrew Knight suggested the following basis for naming "The Friar probably derived its name from some imagined resemblance between its colour and that of the countenance of a well-fed ecclesiastic".

DNA studies

In 2022, MAN submitted 1 pear and 43 apple varieties for DNA analysis by East Malling Research. Nineteen of the apple samples had identifications that matched our internal naming. i.e. were as expected. Eighteen were not as expected, including showing that the variety locally known as Stanardine at two locations is indeed 'King of the Pippins' as some pomologists have suggested. A further tree locally known-as 'Bastard Blenheim' proved to be 'Rival'. Results are available on the website www.fruitID.com and a report is available from MAN.

A further six apple varieties were fingerprinted using the pear set of SSR marker-pairs to add to 31 varieties submitted last year. Analysis of these 37 pear SSR together with the apple SSR has shown that it gives more confidence and discrimination in identifications and familial relationships. However, in running both sets of SSR marker-pairs, cost doubles for a relatively modest gain in confidence. Analysis is available on the website. Two sets of results stand out: a) the similar varieties 'Cherry Pearmain' and 'Skyrme's Kernel' are indeed genetically a little different perhaps indicative that one maybe a mutation of the other, b) the varieties bred by Thomas Andrew Knight over 200 years ago 'Bringewood Pippin', 'Downton Pippin', 'Grange', and 'Yellow Ingestrie' are full siblings and that the variety available commercially with name 'Red Ingestrie' is likely not a (half-) sibling but rather in an 'uncle or aunty' relationship. It is becoming apparent that pedigree re-construction studies will be much more effective using DNA single nucleotide polymorphism technology (SNP).

Cwmdu Show

I'd hoped to go to this, but the forecast for Saturday 15th July of rain, wind and thunder and lightning deterred me. My gazebo doesn't have sides, thus attendance risked getting our books wet.

Stephen Ainsleigh Rice



The Shropshire Good Food Partnership is a Community Interest Company (CIC) that brings together people with an interest in 'Good Food' – that's food that is good for People Place and Planet. In other words, a more sustainable and resilient food system. Now in its second year, SGFP has over 100 members and is working with councils, food businesses, farmers and growers, community and charity organisations, academic institutions, and researchers. The organisation works across six main action areas: *Healthy Food for All, Nature Connection, Grow Local, Wise Land Stewardship, Waste Reduction, Sustainable Food Economy*. These areas overlap and interact in a number of ways, so we find that action in one will often have knock-on effects across others. This year, we launched the Shropshire Good Food Trail as a way to highlight Shropshire's local food economy and those who make, grow, sell and serve Good Food. This has gone hand-in-hand with the Shropshire Love Nature Festival as a way for locals and visitors to connect with the environment and their own wellbeing.

The Marches Real Food and Farming Conference, was held at Linley Farm this September 15th and 16th. The inspiration behind the creation of the MRFFC was the long-running Oxford Real Farming Conference (ORFC), now entering its 15th year as 'a movement dedicated to transforming food and farming systems for good'.

The MRFFC is all about *our region* and how we can create a regenerative and resilient food future here in the Marches in the face of a wide range of challenging conditions. The aim of this conference was to cross borders and bring together producers from all backgrounds with an interest in future-proofing their farming. Practical action is essential to the Partnership and a key part of that is helping organisations to make connections with those that share their aims and values. Supporting local projects boosts their impact and visibility and inspires others to replicate initiatives in their own communities. At the SGFP, we're keen to support the legacy of work that MAN has achieved over the last two decades. The cultural heritage of our orchards and fruit varieties is indeed something to celebrate and is vital to a sustainable food future across Shropshire and the Marches.

We'll soon be developing a resource toolkit for a 'Wassail Trail' for 2024 and would love MAN members to contribute any songs, traditions, event information, recipes or any other quirky Wassail bits that could be shared! If you would like to find out more about the Shropshire Good Food Partnership, please visit www.shropshiregoodfood.org. Please get in touch by emailing Hello@shropshiregoodfood.org and follow us on social media [@shropshiregoodfood](https://www.instagram.com/shropshiregoodfood)

Author Contact: Daphne Du Cros, Coordinator and Director, Shropshire Good Food Partnership.

Important AGM late message

This year building works at the Museum of Cider means there is no lift access to the meeting room on the first floor. If this is an issue for you please would you be willing to join online. Contact secretary@marcherapple.net for an online invitation

Crab Apples

Rick Worrell, Markus Ruhsam, James Renny, Will Jessop and Graeme Findlay produced a report in 2018 on 'The Ecology and Genetics of Scotland's Native Wild Apple: *Malus sylvestris*'. You know this species as crab apple. Though it is a species of *Malus*, it has hybridised with *Malus sieversii* to form some of the domestic eating apples we now know and value (this is confusing as I was taught that species can't hybridise... except when they can). But the prevalence of the domestic apple has resulted in wild apples hybridising and losing purity of the stock. This isn't just a UK issue. It's recognised throughout Europe as a concern. In a recent study of the US Department of Agriculture collection of over 5000 cultivars only 35 were found to be 'pure' *M. sylvestris*.

Rick Worrell et al. ask for wild crab apples to be recognised as a native of the UK and planted more frequently. Perhaps members might like to consider doing this. If you're thinking of buying Crab Apples and want a native unhybridised one, a cautionary word can be found in the brief report by: Markus Ruhsam, James Renny and Rick Worrell, 'Verification of wild apple (*Malus sylvestris*) nursery stock sold in the United Kingdom' (2022). DOI: 10.1002/ppp3.10345. There is a nursery in Scotland that has been shown by DNA to sell trees that are 'pure' *M. sylvestris*.
Stephen Ainsleigh Rice

Clearwing sightings in member orchards

Not a variety of apple, but of a moth that benefits from orchard habitat. Norman Lowe is the Country Moth Recorder for Breconshire. He asked MAN for advice about doing surveys in old orchards of a hot sunny day in June or July to see if clearwing moths could be lured to simple traps. Our orchards aren't old, so he was put in contact with a couple of members who have old orchards, one near Llangynidr and another near Hay-on-Wye. He had success much to the pleasure of the owners.

At Llangynidr a Yellow legged Clearwing was seen. Wikipedia describes it as *Synanthedon vespiformis* - which flies sometime in April to September/ and larvae feed on oak and other trees.

Near Hay-on-Wye Norman found a Red-belted Clearwing close to an ancient crab apple tree. The moth is described in *Synanthedon myopaeformis* - They are native to Europe and elsewhere, but very rare in Wales. Their habitat in orchards is bark of old apple trees, the leaves of which they attack (with some gusto), some regard them as a pest.

Photo by Neil Phillips - originally posted to Flickr as Red-belted Clearwing *Synanthedon myopaeformis*, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3923892>

If you have an old-ish orchard and think you've some unusual wildlife there do please consider contacting your local Wildlife Trust.

Norman Lowe and Stephen Ainsleigh Rice



Triploids

Natural occurrence of triploids is rare. In a fascinating study Michael J. Considine et al. (2010) found that among the 27000 trees they bred as natural crosses between a range of Malus diploid varieties ca. 99% of them were diploids and only ca. 0.25% were triploids. By contrast of the 2138 varieties at the National Fruit Collection (NFC), 287 are triploids; that is over 10%. Triploids must offer something for them to be so seemingly disproportionately frequently conserved. By comparison with diploids they may have larger fruit, faster and larger tree growth, greater resilience to pests and diseases. Think of Blenheim Orange, Bramley's Seedling, Gabalva, Warner's King....

If triploid varieties are 'better', shouldn't using a triploid in breeding result in even better varieties?



Triploid varieties usually result from a (maternal) diploid $2n$ -gamete (with 34 chromosomes) being fertilised by (paternal) haploid pollen which has the usual 17 chromosomes. As a consequence, the progeny inherit the entirety of the maternal DNA, but only half the paternal DNA. With triploids having 51 chromosomes, the normal process of cell division for producing pollen and ova by meiosis is messed up and results in both pollen and ovules with gametes likely having more than a haploid set. This seems to result in low viability.

There are several reports in literature that some seeds, likely the plumper ones, from triploids can be germinated and grow. Some recent accounts shared recently note, though, that the seedlings usually show weak growth or even die within a few months. Normally such would be discarded in any plant breeding programme. In a brief trial a MAN member, John Teiser, bred seedlings from Ashmead's Kernel and Warner's King this last winter. The best of them have put on less growth than a comparable diploid seedling, often leaves are misshaped. John wonders what the DNA will show when results come next Winter? So do I. And will they produce flowers, fruit and seeds? Please be patient. This is such a lovely piece of work that I asked John to help me next season repeat his work with perhaps 20 or so triploid varieties with, as he has done, some diploid varieties as control. Would anyone else like to join us?

A recent detailed study by Howard et al. (2022) used DNA SNP data for studying parentage of 2498 diploids and 219 triploids. They found no examples of a diploid having a triploid as a parent, including some recorded in historic literature compiled by Smith (1971); it thus substantially refutes all those prior documented cases investigated. Howard et al. found they could identify a diploid parent of over 100 triploid varieties, and of these a second parent was found for about 40.

It seems then that though triploids may be 'better' than diploids, they are as Howard et al. describe them evolutionary dead-ends. The likelihood of them producing quantities of viable pollen and fertilisable ova is lower than with diploids, and the resultant saplings are weaker.

Getting 'better' and 'better' doesn't seem to apply for triploid varieties.

John Teiser and Stephen Ainsleigh Rice

A Welsh Apple Walk

Twenty five years ago I turned a small pony paddock into an orchard. At the time I didn't pay much attention to the varieties of apples and pears. I essentially didn't know much about trees or varieties, particularly in regard to those that had local or Welsh provenance.

Those original trees are now mature and have survived two decades of neglect. In 2018 I read about the Bardsey apple and bought one to plant in an unused corner of a large horse paddock, and this then prompted my interest in Welsh apples.

Ensuing research into varieties led to my investigating several informative online resources - the Marcher Apple Network, Tom the Apple Man and Ian Sturrock. Amazed at the amount of varieties available from the Wales and Border counties, I slowly started to collect apple varieties.

Then during Covid, I became interested in cider making processes and with plenty of time on my hands, I decided to build a Cider Press, which I completed in the first month of lockdown. I was therefore geared up to produce my own cider, but unfortunately did not manage to garner many of my own apples that season due to a massive hail-storm in May which left fruit looking like it had been machine-gunned and was unusable. However the damage was local and I therefore managed to beg (and, with permission, scrump!), enough to make 200 litres of Woodcock Cider (which was the name and logo I set up as my brand).

The following months I bought several more Marcher and Welsh varieties and several specialised cider apple trees, and continued research into pollination groups and various root stocks available.

I have a public footpath in the large horse paddock and this footpath is now bordered by 28 trees on large rootstock to form an Apple Walk, planted in 2021. All the varieties have identifying labels anchored in the ground (with a back-up paper record in case the labels disappear or fade!)

The latest project is to have 50 metres of fencing within the large paddock to support 8 espaliered apple trees. These are now in their first season.

In addition to apple trees, I have some original small pony paddock pears (similarly neglected but producing well) together with cherries, gages, mulberries, medlars, plums and quinces dotted about in various locations, and I continue to seek out the rare less well known varieties.



A line of perry pears have now been planted along the large paddock edge and this is the first year I have produced perry, and although not perhaps with the best varieties for a perry, it was very drinkable.

I attended my first winter pruning course with Tom. I like to think that my apple and fruit knowledge has improved and that all my trees are healthy and most are well pruned.

This season there are a lot of apples on the mature trees and a good crop already on the young trees so cider production looks promising.

Having reviewed and done a quick stock list, I have 65 apple trees with over 46 varieties, 10 pears including perry, 14 cherry trees, 5 wild damson, 8 wild gages and 3 native plums.

I have a social media presence on Instagram with lots of pictures under the following, #althreyorchards, #althreycider, #woodcockcider, #althreyapplewalk

If anyone is ever in the Bangor-on-Dee area please feel free to get in touch or just walk the Public footpath and the Apple Walk.

Mike Metcalf

Could Cactus be the Answer?

In recent years we have had various discussions of how to graze sheep in orchards without the blighters eating our precious trees. In Apples and Pears of 2021 we looked at a few options of weld mesh, mega mesh etc. There is now a new guard on the block or should that be in the orchard? The Cactus Guard is a South African invention I believe. It is a sort of sheet of weld mesh with every other square cut through and bent outwards to form a barb. Hence Cactus. They look rather evil and need to be handled with extreme care and thick gloves but they do seem to utterly deter any climbing or rubbing in the way standard weld mesh doesn't do. The recommended installation is with three lengths of rebar, that's it, no wooden posts! They arrive as rectangular sheets and then have to be rolled into a circular guard. That's where the thick gloves are handy. They can be rolled on the long side for use against cattle, however I have rolled them the short side and so far, they seem highly effective and my pesky, wiry, easy care sheep have seemingly no desire to climb them.

Cost-wise it depends how many you buy as cost reduces with quantity but for small numbers with the additional rebar they come it at £25-ish so comparable to or lower than the other options we looked at in 2021.



See www.cactustreeguards.co.uk for further details

Wade Muggleton

Is it Really Ripe?

Listening to an edition of Gardeners question time earlier in the year, panelist James Wong made the interesting claim that most fruit eaten today is significantly under ripe, whereas back in history it was eaten in a condition many of us today would consider way over ripe. He was answering a question relating to medlars which are best eaten bletted. All of which raises a question about the way we eat Apples and Pears today. Haven't we all experienced those supermarket apples and pears that are so hard, crisp and sharp that we are left to ask is that really what an apple should taste like?

So by growing your own Apples and Pears we can be far more in touch with the way they are intended to be. When fruit drop naturally that is a sure sign that they are ready. Early Apples fall in August or September whilst the keepers hang on the tree for months. So perhaps we all need to use our senses and observations as to what is going on with fruit and being able to enjoy it at the right time.

Wade Muggleton



What about this for a Ladder

A lot of the material artifacts from orchard history had been lost so it was interesting to come across this photo of some old orchard ladders, the one on the right is 37 rungs, imagine having to go up and down that multiple times a day let alone the fear of falling whilst handling heavy baskets of fruit. It is easy to romanticise the past but the people who worked the orchards had hard lives and was not without dangers as we saw in A & P 2019, Orchards as Dangerous Places.

Wade Muggleton





More on Pitching

In Apple & Pears 2021 we had a feature on Pitchers, those few varieties of Apples that buck the trend and do freely strike or self root so enabling them to be propagated and grown on their own rootstock. This would no doubt have been a sought after characteristic back in history where you could obtain a new tree(s) simply by taking a cutting or breaking a piece off your friend or neighbours tree, no grafting required.

This characteristic must be a genetic predisposition as there is no logic to why a few varieties do it but most apples and pears will not. This is a picture of a seedling tree my son grew from a pip four or five years ago and it clearly has the pitching genes. After taking the photograph I carefully cut away the shoot and potted it up so we will see if it takes, another option would be to bag some organic matter around the junction using cling film and give it a few months to root into before detaching from the parent tree. In this case the tree has yet to fruit so we have no idea if the apples will of any merit. I have 20 seedling trees dotted around our land but only 3 produce what I would call noteworthy apples. So this is more of an experiment in pitching than anything else.

Wade Muggleton August 2023

Obituary Sheila Leitch

It is with great sadness that we report of the death of Sheila Leitch one of our founders. To all of those who knew her Sheila was a force of nature with her boundless energy and enthusiasm for following up leads, looking at fruit samples and visiting orchards. She contributed to MANs work immensely over the last three decades. Originally from Liverpool she moved to Wales and ultimately settled in Glasbury. Research and investigating was clearly her forte as she was also an avid family historian beginning in the day before the internet when such activities involved much travel and ploughing through archives, record offices, searching cemeteries, etc. She took a similar approach to Orchard matters following up leads, reveling in chatting to people at shows and visiting trees in gardens and orchards with a view to identifying and finding those lost rarities. Sheila contributed a huge amount to MAN and you will be missed Sheila.

Wade Muggleton



Well Done Jim

Left and opposite page— Former M A N trustee and Perry Pear guru Jim Chapman was the proud and well deserved recipient of RHS 2023 George Lockie award for his amazing work on Perry Pears.

Tony Girard, chair of the RHS fruit, root and herb committee presented Jim (left) with the trophy and 104 varieties of Perry Pear were on display at the Harpitsbury centre, an amazing Achievement well done Jim.

Apples & People

Since ancient times, the story of the apple closely follows human history all around the world. The extraordinary connection between humanity and this humble fruit is explored in an online exhibition called Apples & People www.applesandpeople.org.uk. Developed in Herefordshire with help from international experts and art collections, a series of illustrated short stories recount different aspects of this worldwide relationship.

Later this year, as part of the Apples & People exhibition programme, the Museum of Cider in Hereford will host an exhibition called 'A Variety of Cultures'. This explores how cultures across the globe have taken the apple and made it their own. It will bring important international artworks to Herefordshire. A highlight will be a large collection of nineteenth century Australian model apples lent by the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew that have never before been seen outside London.

There will also be work by New Zealand pop artist Billy Apple, Chinese art including a cultural revolution poster courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, and a new commission by Anglo-French artist Anne Rook who has created a body of work which looks at the iconography associated with varieties of apples. This exhibition opens on 27th October



and runs until 28th January 2024.

Some of the apple models coming to Herefordshire. Courtesy of Royal Botanic Gardens Kew Economic Botany Collection ©

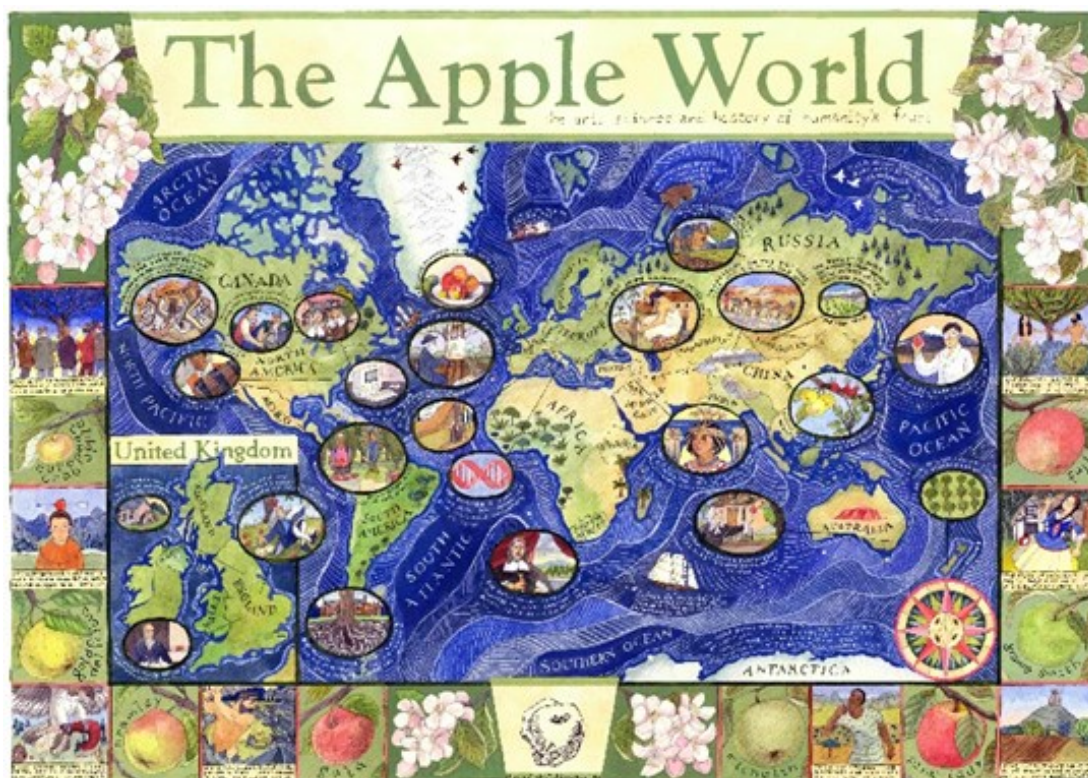
A companion exhibition called 'An Apple Gathering', is now open at the National Trust's Croft Castle until 5th November. Normal admission fees apply at both venues.

Together, these exhibitions show the apple's significance around the globe.

Special note to apple enthusiasts

The Economic Botany department at RBG Kew Gardens holds some 140 model apples, one of the largest such collections in the world. Many were made in Australia for the 1862 International Exhibition in London, some came from elsewhere.

These apples have not been seen in their entirety for half a century, meaning that the exhibition at the Museum of Cider will be an important opportunity to study the models. With many of the models being over 160 years old, it is not certain that the apples in Kew's collection are all correctly recorded. Therefore, whilst exhibited in Hereford, it is hoped that apple enthusiasts will come to help check the varieties and perhaps advance understanding of how apples have changed over time and geography. Please contact David Marshall on damagelimited@btinternet.com if you would like to be involved with the identification or could help with research in the history of the models.



The Apple Map by Helen Cann commissioned by and licensed to Apples & People ©

Orchardists Unite!

We have an idea involving orchards, apples and pears, and hopefully lots of people interested in growing trees.

MAN members haven't met in person for about three years due to restrictions and lockdowns. Although Zoom has its uses we are all missing the opportunity of normal human interaction and the opportunity for casual discussion and the exchange of information.

MAN members Ian and Karen Aldred are also members of Marches Meadow Group, a group of meadow enthusiasts interested in the management and conservation of wildflower rich hay meadows of all sizes, even in orchards. As part of its activities it organises informal visits to members meadows, giving the opportunity for discussion and the exchange of information and expertise. The thought was that perhaps MAN members could benefit from a similar approach in a transfer of knowledge and expertise about orchards and their fruits with fellow enthusiasts?

Two years ago Ian and Karen planted a half acre orchard of their own, many of the trees grafted from scions from the MAN collection. At the time they would have appreciated the opportunity of discussing issues relating to establishing an orchard with others who had already done this. And now, although not experts, would be happy to pass on their experiences through visits and discussions in the future.

So began our plans for an inaugural meeting to bring orchardists together, interested in visiting one another's plots and other sites of apple/orchard interest, for mutual fruit tree information sharing and discussions.

We initially contacted all members within about 50km of Craven Arms with an invitation to meet at the orchard of the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, on Sunday 24th September. Led by a member of the Centre's staff there would be an opportunity to learn about their management programme and pruning regime. Our chairman Ainsleigh Rice, secretary Wade Muggleton and membership secretary David Smith were hoping to join us, giving an opportunity to learn more about the current position of MAN.

At the time of writing we haven't yet had the meeting although by the time you read this it is hoped there will have been enough interest to consider it a success.

If successful and well supported it is hoped that we will get together again in others' orchards for further meetings. It might be that the visits would be promoted over the whole of the MAN area although there could also be opportunities for more smaller local groups. If you have an orchard of whatever age and condition that you would be happy to have us visit, or have an idea for a visit elsewhere, then please let us know. We hope that a programme of a few meetings/visits per year can be put together starting in 2024.

Ian Aldred, Karen Aldred and Karen Limbrick

Major apple and pear events Autumn 2023

* = Apple display and MAN ID service.

Gloucester Orchard Trust events can be found at:

www.glosorchards.org/home/blog/

Saturday, 16th, September 14:30- 17:00, Perry Pear ID at Hartpury Orchard Centre, Hartpury Orchard Centre, Blackwells End, Hartpury, Gloucestershire GL19 3DB.

The National Collection of Perry Pears Over 70 varieties on display (crops permitting!), Teas, Explore the Wildlife Wetland and bring your perry pear for identification.

Friday/Saturday/Sunday, 22th-24th September. Autumn Show at Three Counties Showground, Malvern <https://www.malvernautumn.co.uk/> .

Sunday 24th September 10:30, A group meeting for members (principally local to South Shropshire) for meeting up, sharing experiences, visiting the Centre and its orchard and discussing MAN's future.

Saturday 30th September, Autumn Apple Day at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 9RS, https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-events/autumn-apple-day_; MAN will have a stand.

***Saturday, 7th October**. Applefest, Tenbury Wells, held on the town's Burgage Recreational Area, from 10:00–17:00, Further details: www.tenburyapplefest.co.uk

Daily throughout October (to be confirmed) 10:00-15:00 at Berrington Hall, the National Trust property near Leominster invites you to join us as we celebrate our harvest with a full month of traditional apple themed activities. With a children's trail, apple themed treats in the tea-room, crafts and apple pressing on selected weekends, Berrington has a lot to offer. Also on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd October (to be confirmed) there will be traditional horse and carriage rides to get you into the swing of the season. MAN may possibly attend on Sunday 6th and offer an ID service. Events at Berrington Hall (nationaltrust.org.uk)

Saturday/Sunday, 14-15th October 'THE BIG APPLE'. Weekend rural events in and around Much Marcle <http://www.bigapple.org.uk/> . £2.50 entry to historic grounds of Hellens, from 11:00–16:45 where there will be apple and pear displays, tastings of a wide selection of cooking apples and various apple activities. Further details of talks, demonstrations and other events, from Jackie Denman, Tel. 01531–670544.

***Saturday and Sunday 14th – 15th October** (to be confirmed), National Botanic Garden for Wales, Llanarthne, SA32 8HN, 10:00 - 18:00, Apple Weekend <https://botanicgarden.wales/visit/whats-on/>.

Probably in October at The Cider Museum Hereford, Pomona Place, Hereford HR4 0EF there will be an Apple Day celebrating cidermaking, details to follow Museum of Cider - Hereford (cidermuseum.co.uk)

***Saturday, 21st October**. Leominster Apple Fair at The Priory, Leominster. 10:00–16:00. Parking nearby in Bridge Street Car Park. "Various stalls, apple display and ID by MAN". Details from Felicity Norman, Tel. 01568–780886. <https://www.eventgoat.co.uk/leominster/leominster-apple-fair-2019/>

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

From now till 5th November 'An Apple Gathering' at Croft Castle' <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/worcestershire-herefordshire/croft-castle-and-parkland/an-apple-gathering-at-croft-castle#rt-an-apple-gathering>

Saturday 2nd December MAN AGM at 11:00 in The Cider Museum Hereford, Pomona Place, Hereford HR4 0EF.

MAN Accounts
Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st March 2023

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Incoming Resources				
Annual Subscriptions	1,574	-	1,574	1,325
Apple ID	-	-	-	2,385
Gross Bank Interest	33	-	33	13
Donations	3,763	-	3,763	3,280
Life Members	100	-	100	100
Misc. Receipts	72	-	72	-
Pomona Project	-	-	-	-
Speaker Fees	-	-	-	-
Grants Received	-	-	-	-
Events	100	-	100	100
Sale of Books & CD's	649	-	649	1,436
Sale of Trees	274	-	274	972
Peelers	-	-	-	-
Grafting/Pruning Courses	-	-	-	-
Juice Sale	-	-	-	-
Closing Stock	7,084	-	7,084	8,167
Total Incoming Resources	13,649	-	13,649	17,777
Resources Expended				
Direct Charitable Expenditure:				
Running and maintenance costs	8,679	-	8,679	12,353
Opening Stock	8,167	-	8,167	9,050
Total Resources Expended	16,846	-	16,846	21,403
Net Incoming Resources	(3,197)	-	(3,197)	(3,626)
Fund balances b'fwd at 31st March 2022	75,032	-	75,032	78,658
Fund balances c'fwd at 31st March 2023	71,835	-	71,835	75,032

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2023

	As at 31/03/2023		As at 31/03/2022	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets held for Charity Use				
Land & Improvements	36,000		36,000	
Orchard Equipment	1,007		1,119	
Computers	26		35	
Library, Reference Books & Equipment	500		3,000	
		37,533		40,153
Current Assets				
Debtors	-		3,272	
Bank Balances	27,977		31,209	
Stock held for Resale	7,084		8,167	
	35,061		42,648	
Less Current Liabilities				
Creditors	758		7,769	
		34,303		34,879
NET ASSETS		71,835		75,032
Represented By:				
Capital Reserves - Unrestricted Funds		71,835		75,032

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 x 230mm; full colour throughout. 96 pp. **Price** £15.00 + £5.00 p and p.

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 + p and p.

The Worcester Black Pear written by Wade Muggleton is an in-depth story of this iconic fruit, so embedded in Worcestershire life. Here is its story, including up to date DNA research. **Price:** £8.00 + p and p.

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** £5.00 per copy + p and p.

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

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.

The Paramor Orchard Cwmdru, 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 + p and p.

The Apples & Orchards of Worcestershire by Wade Muggleton This book captures a few of the stories of the apples of a county once so renowned for its orchards. With 32 varieties described and photographed, as well as chapters on lost varieties, heritage varieties, pears, Orchard stories and aftercare, the book will be available at all events that MAN attend as well as at www.marcherapple.net/shop all proceeds from the sale go to Marcher Apple Network **Price** £8.50 + p and p.

MAN Library contains over a 40 books and major articles on fruit, principally apples. Members may arrange to borrow these, and the public by specific arrangement (donations are welcome). A library listing is given in <http://www.marcherapple.net/libr.htm>

For more information contact secretary@marcherapple.net

Apples and Pears is the Newsletter of the Marcher Apple Network
Charity No 1095151 Company No 3787303
Regd Office: Brock House, Pelham Road, Upton Magna, Shropshire SY4 4UA
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