

Marcher Apple Network Spring 2024 News Sheet

Dear M A N members

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter, we hope you are keeping well and that your fruit trees and orchards have survived the winter storms and that you are looking forward to another season of growth and fruitfulness.

Subs Reminder

Just a reminder the membership fee is now £20 a year payable 1st August and we have moved bank from Barclays to Lloyds all details are at [Payment – Marcher Apple Network](#) so if you are still paying the old £10 or need to set up a new standing order with Lloyds can we please ask that you address the matter? And if you haven't yet paid for the year 2023/24, would you please do so before 1st August? Thank you.

New Secretary sought

Our existing secretary Wade Muggleton has announced his intention to stand down from the secretary role at the next AGM, he took up the reigns in 2017 and so has done a good stint (and Trustees think a super job too). We are currently looking for a new volunteer to take on the role. It need not be arduous and involves monitoring the M A N inbox for question and enquiries, you are not obliged to answer all these yourself and can farm questions out to other M A N Trustees or members who may be able to help.

Sending out book orders from the shop page of the website. Orders are paid for by Pay pal so once orders are made the secretary gets an email and you just need to package up and send out either by printing postage labels or taking to a Post office. Postage costs are then reimbursed by the Treasurer of M A N.

Taking minutes at meetings and assisting in the organisation of the AGM.

M A N Trustees and active volunteers only meet a few times a year and largely online, so this is not an arduous task.

So if you can spare a few hours a month and would consider being the secretary of The Marcher Apple Network contact Wade who will happily talk it through with anyone interested. secretary@marcherapple.net

News from the MAN Orchard Visit Group – May 2024

Following on from the successful inaugural meeting organised on 29th September 2023 at the Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, we held our first MAN orchard visit on Sunday 28th April. After a long period of rainy weather in early Spring we hadn't great hopes for our first orchard visit although our pessimism proved to be wrong as the day dawned bright and sunny with blue skies which persisted throughout our visit to Ian and Karen Aldred's orchard.

We started with coffee and cake in the conservatory which was welcomed by people who had travelled some distance and gave an opportunity for apple/orchard discussions among the 9 people attending.

Outside we first saw about 20 apple trees in pots grafted in February. These were mainly local varieties obtained from neighbours as well as some 'rescued' cider apple trees of unknown variety from an abandoned orchard, with only 3 trees remaining, in the village.

We then passed through an area of ornamental fruit trees, consisting of quince, medlar and mulberry before continuing into the main orchard. This was planted at the beginning of 2022 on

a flat area of land adjacent to the Shropshire Way and consists of about 45 apple trees and a smaller number of plums and pears. The apples were all on MM106 rootstock and planted at about 5m spacing in 4 rows, with flowering time intended to start at one end and finish at the other. Having previously attended a grafting course run by Tom Adams half the apple trees were grafted by Ian using material obtained from the Marcher Apple Network. They were then planted straight in the orchard using 'Tubex' shrub shelters to provide rabbit protection and shelter. No watering has been carried out and there have been no failures, other than a Victoria plum, which is principally put down to keeping a 1m weed free area around each tree using a wood chip mulch. Most of the trees are now getting to a size requiring formative pruning and advice was discussed among the group. The remaining apple trees, and the pears and plums, are mainly local varieties more readily available commercially and were obtained from a number of local nurseries.

As often with orchards the question of grass management was a subject of discussion. At this orchard it is hoped to manage the grass as a wild flower hay meadow and this has been achieved so far using small scale cutting and baling machinery provided by the local Marches Meadows Group which can get around the trees. The meadow is unimproved grassland although to further improve the wildflower diversity and help reduce the vigour of the grass yellow rattle is being introduced, hopefully making grass management easier in the long term. Other features noted during the visit included the prevalence of voles, which provided they continue to stay away from the trees are welcome, and a new hedge bordering the orchard which after 2 years is already providing shelter and acting as a corridor for wildlife.

As it was a little chilly, we went back indoors to enjoy each-others' company over our packed lunches. Tea and coffee was again forthcoming and plenty of homemade cake and biscuits were eaten in addition. After a while visitors began to peel away looking forward to our next visit in July to Phil Bustin's orchard near Tenbury Wells with the theme of "fruit forming and summer pruning".



Karen Limbrick and Ian Aldred 14th May 2024

The Blossom Picnic at the Paramor Orchard

On Sunday the 12th May, MAN opened up the Paramor Orchard, Cwmdru to host a Blossom Picnic for the public and MAN members.

It was a glorious, sunny day with many of the apple trees in full bloom and the ground, no longer saturated with water, allowed visitors to freely roam the orchard. Some trees had laminated panels attached that gave the tree name, and explained its background and characteristics helping to inform and educate as we wandered through the orchard.

Throughout the day Ainsleigh ran a number of orchard tours, which were well attended, and other MAN members were on hand to engage with the public.

Over 100 people attended the event, many were families, and The Louby Lous storytellers, dressed up as bumble bees, entertained both young and old with humorous stories whilst beekeepers and moth experts were on hand with interesting exhibits and explanations. The event was well organised and a big thank you to the volunteers who helped with parking at the Cwmdru village hall and marshalled us all safely to and from the orchard.

It was a wonderful donation from Margaret Gill that enabled MAN to purchase the land for this orchard in 2006. Then Mike Porter along with Peter Austerfield and Tom Froggatt founded the orchard in 2008, with Margaret planting the first tree, a Bridstow Wasp. It was a lovely surprise to MAN members at the picnic that Mike Porter was able to come and watch us enjoying the day (the orchard is looking very tidy, with thanks to Sam and Monica).

There are rumours that a repeat next year would be appreciated!

Phil Bustin 17th May 2024

Blossom at Ty Glyn

Each year since 2018, the date when blossom emerges, including the first flowers of clusters, is observed on what is now nearly 500 trees. This year was about a fortnight earlier than last year, which itself was nearly a fortnight earlier than the 'traditional' dates. First blossom was 3-6th April for some such as Kerry Pippin, Beeley Pippin and Gennet Moyle (of Taylor) the. Some varieties are only just about flowering by the last week of May, such as Court Pend Plat, Stoke Red, Black Norman, and Tyleclydach. There is a hint that culinary and dessert varieties are on average a bit earlier than cider varieties

Orchard Network new training films

The Orchard Network recently ran a series of 5 webinar presentations on Wonderful Orchards, Planning an Orchard, Managing an Orchard, The Orchard Harvest and Setting up a Community Orchard. They can now all be viewed online at [Presentations and films | UK Orchard Network](#)

Crab Apple Project

When is crab apple not a crab apple? Well, that is the focus of fascinating new project looking in the true genetic make-up of *malus sylvestris*, the native crab apple. It seems they maybe endangered in their truest form by cross pollinating with our cultivated apples. See [Crab Apple project | UK Orchard Network](#) for more information. We may have a found one or two up an isolated valley above Talybont –on-Usk.

Coronation Community Orchards

Local Authorities were able to bid for funding through the Coronation Living Heritage Fund for funding of new community orchards and mini forests as far we are aware, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Shropshire were all successful in their bids. If you live in one of those areas

and have considered a community orchard now is the perfect time with 100% funding available. Obviously, each county is doing its own thing so you might have to search round online for the relevant contact but well worth it.

Hereford or Ludlow

For this year's AGM in November we have considered moving the venue to Ludlow for a change and as a reflection of the fact that there seem to be a nucleus of active members in South Shropshire any strong views of this Contact secretary@marcherapple.net or should we stay at the cider museum as per previous years?

Apples & Pears copy

We would welcome contributions from members for our annual Apples and Pears publication. So anything Orchard related however short please do tell us, it is only by hearing from members that we can gauge what is going on out there and what you as the members want from M A N in return.

Contact secretary@marcherapple.net