**Marcher Apple Network Trustees’ Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022**

The Trustee Report is reproduced here for member information.

Marcher Apple Network is a company limited by guarantee, Company No. 3787303. It is also registered as a charity, Charity No. 1095151, and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association as amended by special resolution dated 29th November 2014. The Directors of Marcher Apple Network are the Charity Trustees. This combined annual report contains the Directors’ report as required by company law.

**MAN Trustees:**

Trustees for the reporting period were: Peter Austerfield (Life Vice-President), James Chapman (to 20/11/2021), Jacqueline Denman (Chairman), Nicholas Dunn, Sir Andrew Large (President), Andrew Pillow (Company Secretary and Treasurer), Michael Porter (to 20/11/2021), Stephen Ainsleigh Rice (to 20/11/2021) and David Smith.

Mike Porter, Stephen Ainsleigh Rice and James Chapman expressed their wish to retire as Trustees at the 2021 AGM. As required by our Articles, just one further Director, Jacqueline Denman, stood down and was re-elected at the 2021 AGM.

**Additional Governance Matters – Trustees:**

The Marcher Apple Network, along with many organisations, continued to be impacted by the coronavirus pandemic during the year. Trustees held two meetings by Zoom, in July 2021 and March 2022.

The Futures Working Group completed its round of virtual meetings in May 2021 and reported back to Trustees at their July 2021 meeting. The report will be made available through the website, but the overarching proposal was to separate the operational functions of MAN into two areas, each supported by a new Working Group:

1. Technical (maintenance and recording of the collection); and

2. Public facing (audience development and engagement).

Each Working Group to be co-ordinated by a named member of the Association, not necessarily a Member of the Council (ie the Board of Directors), and each to include a minimum of two Directors/Trustees. Trustees recognise the importance of providing a connection between the two areas through increased opportunities to access, handle and learn about varieties in the care of the collection.

The decision to run a hybrid AGM was carefully considered and recorded to demonstrate good governance. A limited number of in person places were made available by kind invitation of F P Matthews, complemented by unlimited remote places. In the event, of 15 members attending, just one chose to attend in person. The level of interest and willingness to contribute to discussion about the future of MAN was heartening, as was the number and encouraging content of emails that followed the meeting.

**Additional Governance Matters – Management Committee:**

For many years, day to day activities of Marcher Apple Network (MAN) have been run through a Management Committee with powers delegated by Trustees. During 2021/22, members have included Peter Austerfield, Sheila Leitch, Wade Muggleton (Secretary), Andy Pillow, Stephen Ainsleigh Rice (Chair), David Smith. Some Trustees are members of the committee with specific responsibilities, but all have been welcome to attend.

As with the Trustees, in-person meetings were considered out of the question. A virtual meeting was held on 8th June 2021 with ad-hoc discussion between Committee Members continuing as necessary to keep on top of operational matters. Committee members received detailed reports of continuing activity required to keep the collection and its records in good order. Despite various attempts to identify members willing to become involved, concern remains about the diminishing number of volunteers.

Discussions over the previous year about lack of capacity and duplication of effort had made clear that it was no longer viable to maintain both a Management Committee and a Board of Directors, a view supported by the Futures Working Group. At their meeting in March 2022, Trustees withdrew the powers covering operational matters that had formerly been delegated to the Management Committee in 2014, taking the first step in enacting a decision to wind up the Management Committee.

**Objectives and Activities**

The objects for which the Association is established are to further the education of the public by promotion of research, identification and to 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.

**Summary of the main achievements during 2021/22**

MAN has much to celebrate in the extent to which it has accomplished its original mission:

* A dedicated team has successfully constructed and documented a collection of most apple varieties found growing in the Welsh Marches, including a good number of varieties of the region thought to have been lost.
* The collection has been rationalised, maintaining remaining varieties as the premier collection of apple varieties found growing in the Welsh Marches.
* Steps have been taken to back up the collection through selective distribution to other parties.
* MAN has established a track record and is known and recognised for the exceptional body of knowledge which it has developed.

MAN has welcomed 6 new members. Membership stands at 306, including 25 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. For example, Andy Bryant has been kept busy photographing examples drawn from MAN’s collection.

Not all of the usual round of shows took place during the year, but there was a definite increase in activity over the previous year. MAN was able to mount a presence at Leominster Apple Fair and the Autumn Apple Day at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre Due, while contributing 66 apple varieties to the display at the Big Apple Harvestime weekend, and continuing to offer a ‘hands off’ identification service, taking in apples by post, from emailed photographs and from orchard visits. 18 sets of apples collected from visitors to the Shropshire Hills and Big Apple events were subsequently identified and owners notified. Although MAN felt unable to attend the Malvern Autumn Show, they were there ‘by proxy’ in the Orchard Pavilion, where Trustees Nick Dunn, Jim Chapman and Jackie Denman were representing other organisations.

In 2021, MAN submitted 6 pear and 21 apple varieties for DNA analysis by East Malling Research, although the results were delayed into the following year.

MAN’s collection covers about 10% of the entire National Fruit Collection apple holding; it includes most of those historically associated with Wales and the English border counties. It is a regional contribution to reducing biodiversity risk.

MAN was responsible for 27 of the 55 varieties submitted to a virtual meeting of the Adjudication Panel on 8th November 2021, for accrediting varieties for accession to a National Register of Local Cultivars. Two were in collaboration with the Pippin Trust and one with Irish Seed Savers Association. All were accepted. A further six were carried over to the next scheduled meeting. This achievement represents an enormous body of work over many years, on the part of Ainsleigh Rice and Mike Porter. A full listing of all MAN’s accreditations since the process began in November 2018 can be found on the website.

**Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit**

In managing the year’s activities, the Trustees have taken careful consideration of the Charity Commission’s general guidance on public benefit, to the extent that this can be met within the restrictions imposed by the continuing presence of coronavirus (COVID -19).

Marcher Apple Network manages five museum orchards: two sites where the main collection is held (Cwmdu (Paramor Orchard) and Ty Glyn); Tredomen, where a managed withdrawal is in train; and two small sites at Croft Pendarren and Westhope. These orchards provide a gene bank from which local varieties may be propagated by graftwood or budwood as well as allowing unknown varieties to be grown on for later identification.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, most contact with the public this year has been online. Enquiries are handled by the secretary, who can be contacted through the website. Increased use of the inbox over the year appears to have been prompted by ‘stay-at-home’ restrictions leading to renewed interest in gardening and growing, with every effort made to reply to genuine enquiries. With regulations easing over time, visits to inspect orchards of particular interest have become more possible. In certain cases, this has led to new identifications, fruit being sent for DNA or the resolution of some uncertainty.

MAN has continued to invest time and effort in improving the website and uploading new content. Results of the DNA Campaigns are available to the public via [www.fruitID.org](http://www.fruitID.org).

Apples & Pears Volume 3 No 3 was circulated to members in Autumn 2021, using a combination of post and email, depending on expressed preference. Opportunities have been taken to maintain contact with members using Mailchimp, including a Spring Newsletter in April 2021.

The Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales organised a pruning course for volunteers associated with community groups, with input from MAN.

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

**Achievements and Performance**

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

A detailed plan is now in place for completing consolidation of the collection at Paramor, Ty Glyn and elsewhere. Multiple copies are to be retained of varieties that MAN has accredited, of those cultivated from MAN’s (wide) region, or associated with it, and any ‘unknown’ varieties still under research. In general, only one copy of some of the more common and out-of-area cultivars are to be retained for reference. A detailed Inventory and Accession Policy have been prepared.

*Orchards*

In total, 33 trees have been planted this year at Paramor and 61 at Ty Glyn.

All the standard trees at Paramor were pruned by July 2021, and all summer pruning at Ty Glyn was completed in August 2021 through a combination of volunteer effort and contract work. Tree protection from sheep grazing at Tredomen appears to be working well, saving the cost of mowing.

Nick Dunn and Ainsleigh Rice worked together to prepare a specification for the evaluation of any sites arising in future for a potential sister orchard at Paramor.

*Graftwood and Propagation*

During winter 2021/22, Paul Davis grafted 9 trees for Paramor, 38 for Ty Glyn, and 3 for the cordon row at F P Matthews. Of these 31 are from outwith MAN. About 90 of the trees grafted by Paul Davis and Tom Adams in winter 2020/21 for MAN, and 55 of those for third parties, made weak growth during 2021. These were retained by the nurseries to grow-on before delivery next winter.

A total of 16 sets of scions were taken from MAN trees for propagation elsewhere within MAN for various reasons, such as replacing diseased or dead trees, copying a couple of varieties only present at Tredomen, and ensuring we have valuable varieties in duplicate, preferably triplicate, the most appropriate of which are progressively being grafted onto M25 rootstock for longevity.

The cost of the trees for MAN and FPM collections is included as an accounts accrual. 8 more trees were grafted on M25 rootstock for the National Trust at Berrington Hall, and MAN also supplied 25 sets of scions to members.

**Commentary on the Annual Accounts**

COVID-19 continued to have an inevitable impact on income during the course of 2021-22, but it was donations that saw the biggest fall. Trustees are aware of the urgent need to diversify sources of income in order to address MAN’s reliance on the generosity of a single donor. Sales of books and CDs exceeded those in 2020-21. As the costs of running and maintenance costs have increased, the net effect has been a reduction in the amount available to carry forward at the end of the year. It is clear to all that a shortfall of incoming resources over resources expended is not sustainable for MAN, although it can be managed from reserves in the short term.