



Marcher Apple Network

Charity No: 1095 151

NEWS SHEET No. 12

Spring 2013

Acting Chairman's Notes

Changes to the Committee

There have been a number of changes to the committee with people coming and going. The big surprise to all of us was when our Chairman of nine years, Peter Austerfield, told us he needed an operation for prostate cancer. I am pleased to report that the operation went well and he is on the road to recovery. Peter has stood down from the Chairmanship (but is now our second Life Vice-President) and I am filling the role of Acting Chairman whilst the committee finds a new permanent Chairman. Peter will be continuing on the committee but in a less active role than previously and we look forward to his return for "light duties" later this year. Tony Pain took the opportunity of the AGM to leave the committee and recently Sylvia O'Brien realised that she was no longer able to commit the time that membership of the committee required. I would like to thank them both for all the hard work they have done for *MAN* whilst on the committee.

The AGM obviously worked some magic this year. We have three new members on the committee — Andy Pillow, Dave Smith and Gillian Menzies. Andy is already shadowing our Treasurer, Tom Frogatt, on the financial side (see what happens when you volunteer!) Dave and Gillian are still bedding into the committee and starting to understand how we work. We are expecting great things of them.

Membership Benefits

The committee are arranging a number of membership benefits this year. We start with an apple grafting course on 9th March. At the end of the day you will be able to take back home three grafted trees — so make sure that you have some empty spaces in your orchard. In fact, make sure you have several empty spaces as *MAN* is having a number of varieties specially grafted for our 21st birthday. Six rare local varieties, all illustrated in *Welsh Marches Pomona*, are being propagated this spring and will be ready for collection in spring 2014. The six varieties are a good mix of eaters, and dual purpose apples. Five are mid-season for pollination whilst *Kings Acre Bountiful* is late flowering and would do well alongside *Edward VII*. Do get your order in quickly as we need to know the numbers required at the very beginning of March. A few additional trees will be grafted but these will be sold at a higher price.

During blossom time we are arranging a trip to the National Collections at Hartpury on 20th April. Jim Chapman gave a stimulating talk at the AGM (see next page) and this is a chance to see the National Collections of Perry Pears and Gloucestershire apples whilst still in their formative years. The visit will also include Wick Court. Another visit is being arranged for Thursday, 11th July, this time a return visit to Frank Matthews Nursery near Tenbury [see separate flyer enclosed]. Note that numbers will be limited to 30 and also that lunch will be provided in the £12.00 fee. There is so much to see there and Nick Dunn has been a very entertaining host on our previous visits.

But pomology is not just about visiting other orchards! There is work to be done and on July 27th there will be a summer pruning course at *MAN*'s Tredomen orchard. (see next page).

Later, as the autumn evenings draw in and the cider bubbles away in the vat, you can think about what new trees you would like in your orchard. Remember that *MAN* members benefit from the graftwood scheme and can purchase "sticks" of many rare local varieties for just a nominal amount. And you do not need to have been on the grafting course to benefit from this scheme.

You will find flyers for most of these in with this newsheet. Where the details are not yet finalised please check on the *MAN* website — www.marcherapple.net — nearer the time or send an email to enquire.

Mailshots

The recent increase in postage charges has meant a big increase in costs for *MAN*. The committee are looking at ways of reducing these costs. The AGM notice may, in future, be included with Apples and Pears in the summer (so please note the date when it comes out) removing the need for a special mailing. Letting us have your email address will also help us — see item on next page.

Richard Wheeler
Acting Chairman

of PEARS and the Perry Pear

After the AGM on December 2nd, **Jim Chapman** from the Hartpury Orchard Centre gave a fascinating talk "of Pears and the Perry Pear". Here are just a few of the salient points he made.

The history of pears in Britain goes back to Roman times. But these were hard varieties, useful in store for seeing out the cold winter months. Perry — as in fermented pear juice — seems to have been made for as long as records exist. Perry pears as we know them, however, were only specifically selected about 400 years ago. It is almost as though they were being preserved as the new-fangled dessert pears started to be introduced, often with the butter pear in their ancestry.

Going by such variety lists as are available, pears were more popular than apples until around the mid-19th century. Since then, it has been a tale of decline until today pears are very much the poor relation. The decline may follow from pears being difficult to grow in Britain and that pears need harvesting and storing with great care to ensure that they are enjoyed at their best.

The current literature on pears (and perry pears for that matter) is sparse compared to that for apples. Charles Martell has recently completed a book on perry pears (which is available on-line at Gloucester Orchard Group's website*) and it is hoped that this will be published in paper form. Recent attempts to find a champion for pears (culinary and dessert) failed to find a taker. Perry pears, at least, have Jim as their champion and a stronghold in the National Perry Pear Collection at Hartpury Orchard Centre.

Extensive DNA testing has been carried out to establish a set of DNA markers for each variety. Trees with the same DNA markers are the same variety but when trees of the same variety have different DNA markers then it gets interesting! Whilst we may wonder who mixed up which bundle of graftwood or sapling whilst planting out, there is the really tricky question as to which one is the true variety — let alone what the other variety is. Jim is seeking funding (DNA tests are not cheap!) to resolve these anomalies and to move forward to trialling rootstocks for perry pears.

After Sir Andrew Large's talk after the 2011 AGM on the Apples of Kazakhstan this was another cracking talk. It just goes to show that AGMs need not be dull, boring events.

* http://www.gloucestershireorchardgroup.org.uk/perry_pears.pdf

Imported fruit

Looking through some of the older treatises on fruit growing, its interesting to note that the concern about imported fruit is nothing new: in 1886 Robert Hogg was lamenting "...American and Continental Apples and Pears are brought, year by year, in larger quantities, to supply our great centres of population, and they are even now coming from Australia....."

Schools pollination project

MAN was approached by a group of primary schools in Radnorshire for help with a project "Bring on the Bees" details of which are at www.beetlesandbees.co.uk. It is a lovely opportunity to help young children understand how fruit forms, so we're assisting them get six family trees (three grafts on MM106 rootstock) to plant this March. Each school will have one tree to plant. Would you like to join the fun at one of the schools (at Knighton, Dolau, Whitton, Gladestry, Radnor Valley, Nantmel, Rhayader, Presteigne, Beguildy, Llanelwedd, Newbridge, Crossgates, Trefonnen and Cefn Llys Llandrindod Wells) by helping them plant a tree and enjoy telling the children something about apples? If so, please contact Ainsleigh Rice, see details below.

MAN's 20th Anniversary

As you read this, it was about 19 years that MAN had its first formal meeting. Next year we'd like to celebrate our 20th Anniversary with some happy community activities. If you have ideas for this, please do get in contact with Stephen Ainsleigh Rice, Ty Glyn, Cusop Dingle, Hay on Wye, Herefordshire HR3 5RF, Tel: 01497-820332. Email: ainsleigh_jennifer@btinternet.com.

MEMBERS' EVENTS 2013

On **Saturday 20th April**, Come see and walk amongst the glorious pear blossom in Gloucestershire at Wick Court (near Arlingham) and at Hartpury. Wick Court is an Elizabethan moated farmhouse, with three orchards and has a collection mainly of perry pears. For those interested it will be possible to join a guided tour of the house as well as the orchards. Hartpury is a recently established orchard with a National Collection of perry pears.

Itinerary:

- 10:15 Meet at Wick Court for guided walks, etc.
- 12:30 Leave for Hartpury where we can have bring-your-own picnics with tea and coffee at the training centre. Jim Chapman will host guided walks and discussion.
- 15:30 Depart

Places are limited to 30 and cost is £15.00 for members and £20.00 for non-members. Please book your places with Mrs M Ward, 8 Nant-y-Felin, Three Cocks, Brecon, Powys LD3 0SJ, Tel: 01497 847847.

On **Thursday, 11th July**, visit to Frank Matthews: for more details, see separate flyer.

Pruning & planting work parties

Saturday, 9th February 2013. Volunteers will be very welcome to our Tredomen Court orchard for a general working party effort, to help with some pruning and general clearing up. There is plenty of work to be done so if you can

spare the time, lunch is free and petrol paid! Please let Ainsleigh Rice know if you can help. Tel. 01497-820332 or email ainsleigh_jennifer@btinternet.com

Saturday, 16th February 2013. An informal pruning session at Cwmdru, initially some formative work on the young trees in the Paramor orchard and then moving to some local orchards for advice and tips.

Saturday, 23rd February 2013. A planting session at Paramor.

Training courses

Saturday, 9th March 2013. Grafting Course at Monkland Village Hall, run by Tom Adams — full details on separate flyer.

Saturday 27th July Practical Summer Pruning Course at Tredomen. Emma Gardner will explain principles and practice and you will have plenty of opportunity to try out and embed your new skills. You may prefer bringing your own tools, though *MAN* will have them available for use too. Lunch will be taken at a nearby café/ restaurant. (The cost of lunch is not included in the course fee). While there are no toilet facilities at the orchard, we will try to arrange for a mobile facility. Places limited to 12 and cost is £15.00 for members and £20.00 for non-members. Please book your places with Mrs M Ward, 8 Nant-y-Felin, Three Cocks, Brecon, Powys LD3 0SJ, 01497 847847.

Thursday, 3rd October 2013. A 'Revision ID' course is to be run by Mike Porter, location to be advised later in the year.

Brynmor Davies (Bryn)

Many members will be sorry to learn of the death of Bryn Davies who, for many years, was involved in work parties and in mowing three of our Welsh orchards in Powys. Because Bryn loved the orchards, his wife Carole asked that any donations given in Bryn's memory should be divided between Marcher Apple Network and The Woodland Trust. *MAN* is very grateful.

What's in a name.....

Observant readers of *Apples & Pears* may have noticed that the Welsh translation of the title was absent in last year's issue. Regional variations in words occur in different areas of Wales but, after consultation with various experts, who are all agreed that it should be *Afalau a Gellyg*, we would be interested to hear from members, Welsh-speakers or English, as to whether, with the language apparently in decline, *MAN* should continue to use the dual title. If you can get your tongue round Llangollen more or less correctly, and remember that g is always hard, single f is pronounced as v and y & w are both vowel sounds in Welsh, you can confidently manage to say Afalau a Gellyg!

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We welcomed **Gillian Menzies**, **Andy Pillow** and **David Smith** to the committee at our last meeting in 2012 and hope they will enjoy the experience as much as we shall in having their fresh input to our deliberations. Here's some brief introductions:

Gillian is a tree lover and lifelong activist for conservation of the natural world and a former officer in Environmental Services, delivering environmental education and events in Herefordshire and elsewhere. "Raised on cider and perry, I am the niece of two Bulmer directors doing my bit to restore, replace and protect some of the delicious varieties in orchards not grubbed up during my childhood! My interest is in joining with others who care about such things, helping where I am able to ensure our orchards continue to flourish and gift us the fruits I love to eat."

Andy says he and his wife moved from Blairgowrie, Perthshire, to the village of Upton Magna in Shropshire in 2001. The plot on which the house had been built was a former orchard attached to the village smithy. "Some hedgerow fruit trees had been retained which I have since had identified as *Lord Derby* and *King Edward VII*. Whilst living in Scotland I had managed the CWS Scottish Farming Operations comprising some 12,000 acres, so I had little time then for the fruit trees in our walled garden. Over the past 10 years I have planted two *Victoria* plum trees in the boundary hedges, together with an *Oullins* greengage (which has taken 5 years to start cropping*). Apple trees planted have included *Bramley*, *Ribston Pippin*, *Adams Permain* and a *King Edward VII* (before our hedgerow tree had been identified!). I joined *MAN* after attending apple identification events and have joined the committee with a view to becoming more involved in the group."

[* *You're lucky: I planted mine 9 years ago and, so far, have had just just 24 fruits in total -Ed.*]

David says he's been growing top and soft fruit for about 40 years and likes to talk with people about fruit, so very happy to help man stalls at shows. "In my garden in Shrewsbury I grow apples [12, mostly on dwarfing rootstocks], pears [2] and plums [3]. In my previous garden on Tyneside I grew cherries as well, and 33 varieties of apple, mostly as cordons. I should like to be able to grow fruit on a slightly larger scale than is possible in a suburban garden. Professionally I am a civil engineer dealing with transport generally and railways in particular."

Emails & postage

We hope you enjoy getting these newsletters — we certainly enjoy sharing information with other members — but postage costs are getting more difficult to accommodate. If any members would be happy to get their newsletter by email, please do let us know by clicking 'Membership' on the *MAN* website home page, and then click the Email Membership Secretary button.