



Marcher Apple Network

Charity No: 1095 151

NEWS SHEET No. 15

Spring 2016

AGM

Our last AGM was held on Saturday 27th June .at the Cider Museum. We tried a Summer timing, rather than a late-Autumn date, to see if this was more convenient to members and would attract a larger turn-out. Attendance was about 30, a few less than usual. Consequently, Committee has decided to revert to having the AGM in November.

Our next AGM will be held on **Saturday 26th November 2016** at 11:00 in the Cider Museum with guest speaker Steve Oram of the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species. We are delighted that Steve has agreed to speak about the biodiverse wildlife that traditional orchards support, and the multitude of such orchards dotted throughout the Welsh Marches and beyond. If you have an orchard or look after one he'll likely have tips about how to improve its habitat

MAN Committee and News

Membership remains steady at about 280, with some subscriptions outstanding: your Membership Secretary will be in contact with you shortly.

The current committee consists of: Peter Austerfield, Sheila Leitch, Andy Pillow, Marion Owen, Chris and Mike Porter, Ainsleigh Rice, David Smith, Charlie Searl, Marie Ward and we're pleased that Daniela Bergman has joined us to observe. Trustees also join meetings. From 2016 we're reducing the number of meetings from six to four each year; if you're interested to join the committee please let Marie our secretary know (secretary@marcherapple.net).

What are we doing?

January–March will see the Committee organising and working on planting, pruning and maintenance in our orchards (see below). Of concern is the punishing schedule of attendance at Autumn Shows for our experienced identifiers, who are no longer spring chickens. We will have to reduce attendance and presence at shows unless some more members can assist. It's actually great fun helping members of the public with their queries, so try it! Another task that begins to loom is to rationalise our collection of trees, particularly at Tredomen and Donnington. We're pleased to note that all varieties present at Lower Ffordd-fawr have been grafted and are now growing at Paramor or Tredomen.

David Smith will take over as Membership Secretary over the next month. It's a quiet time, thus convenient. If you have queries, address or email changes, do please let him know

via membsec@marcherapple.net. The transition will, we hope appear seamless to you. Your chairman is very grateful to David for taking on this responsibility.

Many of you have kindly confirmed that we may occasionally communicate with you by e-mail, as with this News Sheet. If you do not wish for us to contact you by e-mail or only with more formal communications, please do let us know: for us to serve you better we need to know your wishes.

Nice to report that sales of our CDs has increased a little this year, with over 10 sold. Perhaps we are benefitting a little from the re-publication by the Folio Society of the Herefordshire Pomona?

Courses

- **Winter Pruning Course** led by Paul Davis (www.applewise.co.uk) on Saturday 13th February, or Sunday 14th February (weather dependent) 11:00 - 15:00. Twelve places are already taken and a few more besides. but we could still squeeze in one or two more if you are quick. Paul will explain the objectives of winter pruning and give a demonstration of pruning at MAN's Tredomen Court orchard. You may then carry out guided pruning on our trees to gain a wider variety of 'hands on' experience. Whilst MAN will be providing pruning equipment for the course you are encouraged to bring your own. Lunch will be taken at a nearby café/restaurant for participant cost. There are no toilet facilities except at lunch time. £15.00 for members of MAN, and £20.00 for non-members.
- **Grafting Course** led by Paul Davis at Glasbury Village Hall on Saturday 27th February 10:00-15:00. Twelve places: a few still available. This is the fourth year of running this successful and enjoyable course. All equipment, four rootstocks and many scions will be available to choose from; though you're welcome to bring your own. Lunch in a local Pub for participant cost. £30.00 for members of MAN and £40.00 for non-members.

For either course, please phone Mrs M. Ward on 01497 847847 to confirm a place before sending in your booking form. [Note: It only costs £10 to join MAN for the year to 31st July 2016.] MAN is also intending to run a one-day Summer Pruning course in June/July 2016. If interested....

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ID results

A bumper harvest brought lots of folk to the seven Autumn events at which MAN offered identification services. A total of 630 apples were inspected by Mike and Chris Porter, John Savidge, John Aldridge, Sheila Leitch and Peter Austerfield. With nine days at Shows and nine ID sessions at The Harp, it was the busiest season since 2004. Yes, there were lots of quite common apples such as Bramley, Cox, Charles Ross, Lord Lambourne, Newton Wonder, Fiesta, Spartan, Crispin but we did have a few much more interesting varieties such as Welsh Pitcher, Striped Beefing, Sandlin Duchess(2), John Norman,



Cellini, Pomeroy of Herefordshire, Brithmawr and Schoolmaster and half a dozen more of which we weren't sure.

At several of the shows Mike and Chris Porter put on a wonderful display of varieties, here is an example of just one of their full baskets:

Orchards and work parties

These are jolly occasions when you can come as a family or as individuals to enjoy some team work, exercise, fresh air and glorious views. There is ample parking, but no toilet facilities at our orchards. Please contact the organiser if you intend to come, just in case there is a last minute change forced upon us by inclement weather or whatever.

Paramor

We have had to cancel a planned planting and management day on Saturday 20th February.

And winter 2017, just in case you plan that far ahead, Mike has ordered 23 trees on MM106 and 6 on M25 for grafting in readiness for planting in 2017.

Tredomen

Following the pruning course on 13th February (see above), on Friday 19th February and Saturday 5th March course participants and members are encouraged to come and practice their pruning skills and help with orchard maintenance. By arrangement, if you'd like to come at another time please do contact the organiser. During 2015 two trees have died. There are no trees to plant.

Organiser: Stephen Ainsleigh Rice 01497-820332

Lower ffordd-fawr

Dover Holidays staff have helped with the pruning and maintenance of this small orchard near Hay-on-Wye. If you're interested to join, please contact Ainsleigh, as above.

Donnington and Westhope

These orchards in Herefordshire have been well looked after recently, thanks to Peter Austerfield. If you'd like to assist him and get some exercise and refreshing of pruning skills, please do contact him on 01432-830208.

Accession list for Orchards

As part of work for updating MAN's website, an accession list of confirmed varieties is being prepared for each of the Orchards. However, you will be relieved to know that unknown or unconfirmed trees won't be included to avoid confusion!

Would you be willing to let us have your list of varieties you have planted at your home, particularly those that you consider local, traditional or ones that grow successfully here? If you do not wish these to be made public, that wish will be respected. Would you be willing that the location and inventory is made available to PTES, and especially so if you have an interesting variety of wildlife? Also, would you like to consider arranging for a survey of your orchard to then add to the 8000 already surveyed and let us know the results? [<https://ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/countryside-2/traditional-orchard-survey>] And to show willing, your Chairman will try to get his included, if the Committee permits its inclusion.

The Little Owl Project

With encouragement from the Gloucestershire Orchard Trust, Emily Joachim has set up a project in collaboration with the People's Trust for Endangered Species to help arrest our declining Little Owl population, see <https://ptes.org/news/little-owl-orchard-project/> There is lots of interest from people wanting to help UK Little Owls.

Little Owls like to nest and hunt in traditional orchards; they mainly eat worms, earwigs, beetles, spiders, moths and small mammals. They hunt on bare ground, in short and rough grassland and along hedgerows, and they nest in pre-existing hollows. Managing orchards for Little Owls may increase and maintain habitat heterogeneity and biodiversity, which could help to support local Little Owls. There would be a limited number of free Little Owl nest boxes available for anyone who'd like to join in the project. Please help by filling in the short survey on 'Little Owls and Orchards' at <http://tinyurl.com/jdtwlx3> <<https://t.co/4i2dcZDSyf>> And please Tweet the survey to your Twitter followers, as we are keen to engage with traditional and organic orchards.

Collaboration with GOT

As part of our collaboration with Gloucestershire Orchard Trust, we have agreed to have grafted about a dozen apple varieties that we have in our orchards for them to plant in their exciting new orchard development at Longney. These trees are varieties closely associated with Gloucestershire. And it enables their wider geographical spread, too. Just in case you live near Gloucester, you might like to help with their planting in 2017 or 2018!

Now for a break, not an apple to be seen on this stand at Malvern, but it's pretty despite that...



Website updating

During 2015 our webmaster, Richard Wheeler, moved to Kent. He's settled there very well and we do wish him and his wife Mary all happiness. However, his removal has sorely exposed how much he has done over many years for MAN and of such a high quality; our fulsome thanks to him.

Before he left he was nudging the Committee to update the website, and some pages have been addressed. But, well yes—you know what's coming — there is quite a lot still to be done. Please can members help either revising the pages with members of the Committee or assist us with the web design and writing? The Committee has already made a brave start on the updates, and team work should make light of this task (well fairly light).

A practical assistance for updates is to let us have information that could be added to our website. Particularly giving personal experience and comments about apple varieties, disease control, grafting, pruning, and generally what works well for you. If you know of any orchards that can be visited by the public (with contact details if appropriate), have contacts for local nurseries that specialise in apples and pears, or prized sources of advice, we'd like to list them. Do you have preferred books and other publications, website links, and historical stories of about apples, of the people who propagated them and of research carried out?

Ancestry, a snippet

H.-J. Bannier has written an interesting article recently on the inbreeding amongst apple varieties [<http://www.suttonelms.org.uk/apple-vitality.html>]. He noted that six common varieties, Golden Delicious, Cox's Orange Pippin, Jonathan, McIntosh, Red Delicious or James Grieve commonly appear in ancestry. There is a warning that continued use of a limited number of parents, grandparents and great... etc. etc. — in total back six generations — for raising new varieties may result in them becoming less disease resistant. For instance, Bannier noted that the variety 'Mercury' has five times Golden Delicious, James Grieve (x3), Jonathan (x2), McIntosh (x2). The other four varieties in its ancestry are: Malus Floribunda (x2), Newtown Pippin? (x2), Worcester Pearmain (x3), and almost surprisingly only once for Cox Orange. That's just eight varieties being crossed over six generations: there could have been 64 separate forebears. Perhaps some of our unique varieties we're preserving may help enrich the pool of future crosses?

DNA, another snippet

News is just breaking that Peter Laws of FruitID database [www.fruitid.com] is in negotiation with East Malling Research [www.emr.ac.uk/commercial-services/dna-testing] for carrying out lots of DNA (Simple Sequence Repeats) analyses of extracts from leaves. This may assist identify varieties... or it may not. The cost for batches of 96 or more is likely to be about £25 each. Gosh, what an economy of scale compared with £200 for a single sample! Your Chairman's hope is that MAN will be able join in this and include the 100 or so trees identified by Mike Porter as candidates. Among many other valid reasons, it should make for some fascinating articles in future editions of 'Apples and Pears', not to mention help with

identifying some of those varieties that still remain puzzles. We might ask for help at the leaf picking time near to 25th June, a lovely time of year... perhaps we could make this into another social event? And I bet it'll lead to more queries and puzzles, even about the methodology. Hurrah!

Your favourite 8 (or 16) apples

As noted above, Richard Wheeler has moved from Herefordshire to Kent and writes:

"The new garden is much bigger than expected — but not so large as to merit a proper orchard. One of my aspirations is to grow espaliers. There should be space in the garden for one, two or even, if I am lucky, three. Now for the real part of my aspiration — each branch of the espalier to be a different variety. — so a four tier espalier will give me eight varieties to enjoy.

This is where you can help me out. Which eight varieties? If I am lucky I can have eight eaters and eight cookers. And if I am exceedingly lucky, eight pears. What would you choose? Please let me know. I will collate the replies and see what proves popular amongst MAN members. There must be some rules. No tip bearers please [that removes Bramley from the cookers]. Nothing which can be found in supermarkets [out go Cox, Discovery and Egremont Russett, as there is no point in growing common varieties]. Now for something a bit trickier — I want a spread of harvest times. There is no point in having eight varieties which all ripen in the third week of September. I am hoping for apples from September through December or even later. With eight varieties the flowering seasons should overlap but that is something I will check. So do send me your favourites, please, to webmaster@marcherapple.net.

You'll read what I selected for grafting in the next 'Apples and Pears' and perhaps some of MAN will be in Kent

Socials

BBQ at Puddleston

Daniela Bergman has kindly invited MAN members to a BBQ at her home in Puddleston near Leominster. Details to follow on our Website, please watch that space!

Leaf picking event for getting samples in order to analyse DNA will be 25th June in our orchards, details tbc.

Joint visit with Gloucestershire Orchard Trust to two County Orchard Centres

Following the successful informative visit we had to F P Matthews Nursery near Tenbury Wells in September last, Gloucestershire Orchard Trust have invited MAN members to join them on **Thursday 19th May** at: Day's Cottage, Upton Lane, Brookthorpe, Gloucestershire, GL4 0UT for 10:30 [www.dayscottage.co.uk/Days-Cottage-apple-orchards.html] and then at Hartpury National Perry Pear Centre and The Orchard Centre, Blackwells End, Hartpury GL19 3DB for 13:00 [www.hartpuryheritage.org.uk/places-to-visit/orchard-centre/the-national-perry-pear-centre]

More details of what you can see there:

At Day's Cottage: Dave Kaspar & Helen Brent-Smith's family-owned Orchard & Rural Skills Centre, home to the Museum

Orchard of many Gloucestershire heritage apple varieties; cosy Yurt; Roundhouse (where pruning, grafting and bud-grafting workshops take place throughout the year); organic (unsprayed) juice, cider and perry business; forest garden, young and mature orchards of apple, perry pear and plum etc. Coffee and light refreshments available (included in price) plus an opportunity to purchase their award winning juice, cider and perry, as well as talk to extremely knowledgeable Helen and Dave. They also have a tree nursery of rare varieties. More information on their website. Plenty of parking (one-way system) and composting toilet!

And at Hartpury: the National Perry Pear Centre. This was set-up by Jim Chapman. Jim is a trustee of MAN, so many of you will know him. Directions to get there <http://tasteandexplore.com/orchard-centre-map.shtml> Lunch is included in the price at Jim's. You can wander through the young pear orchard down to the bird hide and enjoy watching the birds by the Collier's Brook wetland. There will be an opportunity to purchase juice, cider and perry made on site through Peter Mitchell's Cider Academy (international courses available). Some trees can be ordered, propagated from the national collection of perry pears. Hartpury Heritage Trust/Gloucestershire Orchard Trust's new library will be open with a very good range of books to browse. Parking and toilets on site. Event should be finished by 15:30.

Arrangements

Please note that this event is open to MAN and GOT members and their families only. Children welcome over the age of 12 (but is a school day!). NO DOGS please. Cost: £12 per person, including lunch.

Please book by emailing Ann Smith, GOT coordinator [info@gloucestershireorchardtrust.org.uk] as soon as possible. She will contact you to confirm. You can either post a cheque, payable to "GOT" or "Gloucestershire Orchard Trust" to her at Ann Smith, 109 Orchard Way, Churchdown, Gloucester GL3 2AP (include address please). Alternatively, pay electronically – GOT's bank details are at

<http://gloucestershireorchardtrust.org.uk/members/> If paying electronically, please provide your surname and first name initial as code so we know who you are. For those not on email, please write in to Ann to book or phone her on 01452 855677 (no answerphone – please keep trying)

Transport: please be prepared to car share and arrange yourselves, though MAN will try to assist making "logical logistics". Clothing: be prepared for rain and have sturdy footwear as grass may be wet. Uneven ground.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!



*Four different varieties so seemingly similar, a veritable identifiers nightmare!
But when done, think of the warm glow of pleasure.*

This was one of the fruits of an ID sessions last Autumn. To get you started the one on the right is Golden Noble. How about the other three varieties?

Do you think this an harder or easier one than the MI6 Christmas puzzle?"

Answer will be in the Autumn Newsletter "Apples and Pears" (providing the Chairman doesn't forget what they were.....)