**Annual General Meeting of the Marcher Apple Network**

**Held at the Museum of Cider, Hereford and online**

**Saturday 2nd December 2023**

SAR opened the meeting at 11.05 welcoming those present and those online.

1. **In attendance:**

Stephen Ainsleigh Rice (Chairman of Trustees) **SAR**

Phil Chadwick (Trustee) **PC**

Andy Pillow (Trustee) **AP**

Russel Sutcliffe **RS**

James Bisset **JB**

John Teiser

David Hadley - willing to help and learn

Steven Richards-Price - willing to be co-opted **SRP**

Phil Bustin - willing to volunteer **PB**

Bridget Rose **BR**

Elizabeth Pimblett

Bernie Danvers

Ian Aldred - continue orchard meetings with Karen Limbrick **IA**

Martin Redfearn - Amateur but happy to help **MR**

Tam le Bailly **TlB**

Jackie Denman **JD**

Felicity Norman **FN**

Joining on Line

Wade Muggleton (Secretary) **WM**

David Smith (Trustee) **DS**

Peter Austerfield (Trustee)

James Nason

Richard Wheeler

Andrew Large **AL**

David Bussel

Paul Davis

Pete Wall

Mary Shuldham

Gillian Barter

Proxy votes given to Chairman: seven

1. **Apologies** – Gareth Pugh, Marion and Shirley Owen, Jim Chapman, Tom Tibbits, Philip David Ellwand.
2. **To receive and approve the minutes of the AGM 19th November 2023**

Minutes of the meeting were noted to have been made available on MAN’s website. SAR apologised for having posted an early draft version rather than the final draft approved by the Trustees; this error was corrected on the day before the AGM. Paper copies were made available to those attending in-person.

1. **Matters Arising**

None, though the opportunity was taken to wish Peter Austerfield a Happy Birthday.

1. **Annual Report**

SAR then noted who were the Trustees for the Financial Year to 31st Mach, 2023. He thanked Nick Dunn and Andrew Large for their years of service and support.

SAR than talked through the annual report including the return to Autumn Shows after the Covid-19 years, working parties at Paramor and the cordon collection, Copying the collection at FP Matthews, site visit to Llanerchaeron and submissions for accreditation. Volunteers involved were thanked for the enthusiastic support.

The report was put to the meeting and was approved unanimously.

1. **Annual Accounts**

AP then talked through the accounts as presented and displayed on the website.

He noted the right-down of value of the library stock from £3000 to £500, as a result of only some of the books being identified at Sheila Leitch’s home and in depreciation in value of many.

RS raised what he believed was an anomaly of £200 in the accounts. Subsequent to the meeting examiners Silver and Co. have advised that:

* Note 6 Resources is for Charity activities and admin.
* The purchase of trees is in our opinion, not to be included in Note 6.

The report was put to the meeting and was approved unanimously, subject to clarification of the close-out of £200-issue (for tree purchase) with a subsequent communication to members by mailchimp.

1. **Election of Trustees**

AP then talked through the situation regarding directors with JD, PA and AP all standing down in the last 12 months.

DS remains.

PC and SAR were willing to be elected as Trustees.

Those in the room sought clarification on the role of Trustees and requested a clear description of the role and any responsibilities and liabilities associated with the role. SAR noted that the best guidance is to be found on the Charity Commission website (post meeting available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-commission-guidance>). Extensive discussion then took place on the role, with suggestion that those who wish to join be co-opted to ‘test-the-water’.

For carrying out ‘new’ business there must be a minimum of 4 Trustees.

Members were invited to vote. Both PC and SAR were proposed by Bridget Rose, seconded by Martin Redfern.

They were elected unanimously.

SRP asked where the Articles of Association were displayed (post meeting available at <https://www.marcherapple.net/about-us/contact-us/> ).

SRP kindly agreed to be co-opted as a Trustee.

1. **Examiner of Accounts**

AP noted that for several years MAN has had its accounts examined by Silver and Co. Trustees recommended continuing having accounts examined as there is no capability identified within MAN to do this.

RS queried if it was legal for a member to examine the accounts, he cited personal experience where this was deemed impermissible. SAR noted that Charity Commission Guidance is that examination is only needed if the income exceeds £15k (post meeting corrected as £25k) and that the examiner may be a member of the charity as long as they are competent, not connected to Trustees or bookkeeper nor have a material interest in the charity (post meeting added: guidance available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-examination-of-charity-accounts-examiners-cc32> ).

Members were invited to vote.

Paul Silver and Co were the appointed examiners for 2023/24 unanimously.

1. **Open Forum**

*Bank Accounts*

SAR explained what had happened with Barclays and how we have an account open Lloyds Bank, the details are on our website. PB – stated that Barclays have been very difficult with a range of organisations this year and as such MAN is not alone with these bank related problems.

SAR mentioned that Virgin Money suspended MAN account for inactivity immediately after the Barclays account was frozen. However AP had managed to put in train the route to re-activate it.

*Apples and Pears and other publications*

A lengthy discussion then ensued about Apples and Pears as a physical publication, was it still a cost effective thing to do. AP explained it was costing in the region of £800 to £900 to print and a further £500 to post out (post meeting addition: we do take the opportunity to include notice of AGM and summary accounts).

It was noted the membership subscription rise was partly to cover Apples and Pears costs and so would it be disingenuous to now go only electronic.

JD suggested shopping around for printing and production costs.

FN felt that Apple & Pears was a good advert for the organisation and gave MAN a presence. JB agreed but felt a flyer or poster about MAN that might be displayed at the likes of the cider museum would be a good idea.

SRP offered his professional background in relation to Apples & Pears and promotion of MAN.

PB stated in his view there were 3 elements that of a sort of annual report, a glossy Magazine and marketing and promotional stuff.

RS suggested that more frequent newsletters would be a good thing.

WM stated that all these ideas were very fine but who actually was going to do them?

On a show of hands in the room and online 13 voted to keep the paper version whilst 14 voted for it being an electronic only document.

*Has MAN completed its Object?*

PC commented that the objective was so open ended that it would be hard to definitively say it was completed.

JD felt there was a huge job still to be done in understanding apples and their uses characteristics in order to get more apples actually used.

SRP felt there was a role in raising awareness of traditional orchards and their role in our heritage.

AL agreed with JD but felt attributes like keeping, ripeness and maturity would also benefit from more understanding.

IA & PB both stated they were comparatively new members who had joined because they had properties with orchards and were looking for expertise to help them.

IA explained the idea of local get togethers of orchard owners, an idea being explored at a meeting in September at the Discovery Centre in Craven Arms.

SRP felt a model like some of the local Permaculture Groups use of get togethers, shared lunches and working parties might be an avenue to pursue.

*Further options for conserving the collection*

SAR talked through options of the future conservation of the collection as an assurance against a possible loss of, or failure to conserve, Paramor.

* FP Matthews is kindly grafting up new trees for hosting a complete collection of MAN’s varieties at their orchard nursery.
* National Fruit Collection at Brogdale wish for MANs heritage finds, it is a considerable accolade to MAN and its founding members.
* National Botanic Garden of Wales wish for MAN’s varieties of a ‘Welsh’ association.
* There is a possibility that to house some or all near the Museum of Cider orchards. JB noted this would be considered as part of their strategic review.
* Pitchford Estate is interested to house part or all of MAN’s collection in a new orchard to be planted to the east of the entrance avenue.
* Penpont Estate is interested to house part or all of MAN’s collection in a new orchard to be planted near the banks of the River Usk.
* Colwall Orchard Group are interested to house up to 60 varieties either local to their area of interest or of a special note.
* At least two new nurseries have approached MAN for graftwood to expand their offering to the public.

Members recommended that commercial enterprises should pay for graftwood at MAN’s normal rate.

JD would like to see clarification on the future of the Ty Glyn cordon collection and the other collections in relation to longevity and an assurance they would be maintained.

MR stated that as new member he would like to see a more optimistic attitude to MAN going forward.

TlB asked whether MAN would work with the Black Mountains College. SAR noted that he’d had contact with them, but it had not been possible to agree that, for instance, only summer pruning would be undertaken; he stated this was a red line for MAN.

SAR pointed out that in large measure WM and he had carried MAN for several years; this is not sustainable. Members must step-up or MAN will fold-up.

SRP and several other members kindly committed they did not want MAN to fold; SRP hope others would volunteer.

1. **AOB**

None was requested beyond that covered in the open Forum, we were talked out.

SAR closed the formal meeting at 12.50.

After a break…

There followed an excellent and fascinating presentation by Bridget Rose on her Harmony Orchard project.