



# newsletter

Issue 9, March 2007

Welcome to the ninth edition of the Manx Organic Network newsletter: our quarterly update for members on organic developments in the Isle of Man.

## Changing attitudes By Janet Bridle

LATER in this issue you'll read the very exciting news about the formation of the Organic Working Party (OWP). Getting DAFF's agreement to make this happen has been a great achievement for the Manx Organic Network.

It seems incredible that only four years ago the embryonic MON cautiously conducted a straw poll at the Southern Show. Were there others out there who would support the concept of locally grown organic produce? Were we just some batty fringe group, or did we have our finger on the pulse?

Today, as we work towards an Organic Action Plan for the Island, the answers to those questions are clear. And the fact that we're taking a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to organic development means we should be able to avoid the problems faced by the UK in the 1990s.

### Lessons from the past

The problem then was 'feast or famine'. Encouraged by the grant system and the promise of increased premiums for organic products, many farmers converted to organic.

However, the euphoria was short lived as the market had not been developed in tandem with the products that flooded on to it. It was a steep learning curve and sadly, many lost their way. But we now have a fantastic opportunity to learn from these events.

### Positive thinking

One thing that particularly struck me at the first Organic Working Party meeting in January was the attitude of nearly everyone there. It was not a case of 'Shall we do it?' but rather 'How

can we do it and get it right?'

We're not for one moment saying that organic production is a cure-all for the looming worries of 2010. But we do believe it is one of several potential vehicles to help our farming industry move forward confidently.

Organics is of course further ahead in the UK and even more so in Europe. Yet what we do have in the Isle of Man is something unique. We are an island, with a vibrant economy and a strong identity. We have no GM crops and very little in the way of factory farming.

### A unique opportunity

People are starting to see that we could be much more than a financial centre and a tax haven. Government departments and DAFF are increasingly being convinced that our natural attributes and heritage are valuable assets. At last, officials have recognised that supporting the Island's fledgling local produce markets is a win/win opportunity. Reflecting the beauty of our environment, local produce is something the MNFU has started to encourage with the 'I love Manx' campaign.

This is all potentially very good news for residents and visitors alike. Obviously the TT could never be matched as a festival, but if we had a series of events celebrating Manx produce throughout the year, this would both boost and regulate the flow of visitors. With natural beauty, fascinating heritage AND fabulous local and/or organic produce, we have three very strong legs to stand on! If West Wales and the Shetlands can do it...

## MON NEEDS YOU!

The fantastic progress made by the Manx Organic Network over the past four years is down to the hard work of a dedicated committee and, most importantly, your continued support. The size of our membership gives us a lot of credibility when dealing with the various parties involved in Manx agriculture and the Government.

But the more we grow – and we're growing fast – the more we need members to help in more active roles. For example, we're currently looking for support with:

- The newsletter
- Media watch
- Membership administration
- Shows and stands
- Events like Eco Days

*If you'd like to get involved, call Janet Bridle on 835436, or email [jbridle@manx.net](mailto:jbridle@manx.net) to find out more and talk about the options.*



Log onto the Manx Organic Website for the latest news  
[www.manxorganicnetwork.com](http://www.manxorganicnetwork.com)

# Organic Working Party gets underway

IN A HUGE step forward for organics in the Island, an Organic Working Party (OWP) has been formed to drive the development of the organic sector.

This was one of the recommendations made by the 2010 committee and, as Agriculture Minister Phil Gawne said, "It has a clear remit to advance the production and sale of organic produce on the Island."

Attending the first Organic Working Party meeting on 12 January were:

Janet Bridle, *MON*

Roger Chadwick, *IOM FMA*

Ffinlo Costain, *MNFU*

Paul Costain, *Beef Producers*

Viv and Ian Davies, *MON*

Sandra Donnelly,  
*Laxey Flour Mills*

Paul Fargher,  
*Isle of Man Creameries*

Richard Lole, *DAFF*

Howard Quayle, *MNFU*

Phil Teare, *Isle of Man Fatstock Marketing Association*

While this was an introductory meeting, it covered a lot of ground. Several key areas for further work were identified, including supply management, food chain integrity, market dynamics and routes to market.

The latter was explored in more detail when farmers' market expert James Pavitt joined the meeting and

gave a short presentation. Emphasising the importance of farmers' markets for consumer feedback, he provided some interesting statistics on market sales.

MON's Viv Davies, who was proposed and accepted as the Chair of the Working Party, said, "The establishment of the Organic Working Party is an extremely important step towards creating an Organic Action Plan, which will ensure stable and strategic growth for organics as an integral part of agricultural policy."

The aim is that the plan will set out a series of practical measures which the Government and the food and farming industries will take, in order to encourage and develop a sustainable organic sector in the Island.

Viv Davies added, "From our discussions with the North West Organic Centre, which covers Lancashire, Cumbria and Cheshire, it's evident we have a lot of catching up to do with local production in the UK.

"In particular, we look forward to addressing the issue of imported products that can be produced locally. While this will take time, it might not be too many years away with all the key stakeholders now working together on the Organic Action Plan."

## The North West Organic Centre

The North West Organic Centre in Lancashire was established by the Soil Association, with funding from the North West Development Agency via the Northwest Food Alliance. Its aim is to lead and support the development of organic food and farming in the North West of England.

Unfortunately the Isle of Man doesn't fall within the centre's remit, but the contact we've had with them has been hugely beneficial, particularly because what goes on so close to us across the water is applicable to our agriculture here.

As well as organising events like the recent 'Extending Seasons' and 'Protecting Cropping' horticulture seminars, the North West Organic Centre produces local and organic booklets and other materials, which have inspired us in terms of what could be achieved in the Island.

The centre also offers advice to certified producers on developing markets, connecting with markets and tracking markets, all of which is invaluable for a fast emerging and vibrant organic sector. Any business

## MON gets benefit of Soil Association experience

THREE MON members recently travelled at their own expense to Myerscough College near Preston, to meet with Phil Stocker, Head of Agriculture at the Soil Association and Lucinda Kirby, Co-ordinator for the North West Organic Centre.

As the UK's largest organic certifying body, The Soil Association has been a driving force in the Organic Action Plans for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The idea behind our meeting was to gain insight into these plans, ensuring MON is well equipped to help form the Island's own Organic Action Plan.

This was MON's first real contact with the Soil Association. We have always been careful to maintain our independence. We've also been careful to be unbiased, informing people that there are several certifying bodies in the UK. Of these, the Soil Association is the largest, followed by Organic Farmers & Growers, who for historical reasons already have a foothold in the Isle of Man.

But the Soil Association's remit extends beyond certifying and during our discussions we were impressed by the huge range of activities the organisation is involved in. It soon became clear how much our producers and entrepreneurs would benefit from the facilities, training and advice available through the Soil Association in the UK but so sadly lacking here. This is obviously an area that could and should be developed in tandem with progressing Manx organic produce.

with organic interests in Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire can benefit from the expertise and information available. This is a service for farmers and growers, food manufacturers and retailers, irrespective of certification.

And even though the Isle of Man is outside the centre's remit, co-ordinator Lucinda Kirby is happy to answer queries, supply information and chat generally to anyone with an interest in organic production here. Call 01995 642206, or email [enquiries@nworganiccentre.org](mailto:enquiries@nworganiccentre.org)

## Bread Matters 7.30pm, Wednesday 25 April, Manx Museum

We're delighted to confirm that Andrew Whitley, founder of the celebrated Village Bakery in Malmerby, will be visiting the Island in April.

Andrew will also be holding a master bread baking class at the Isle of Man college on 23 April, all places for which were filled within two weeks of our December announcement.

As well as running bread-making and team development courses, Andrew's company Bread Matters Ltd works to promote a sane and rational approach to food and health. With expertise in artisan baking, small-scale rural business and the organic marketplace,

Andrew and his team have a proven track record in building a coherent business concept and engaging with a wide range of people.

Bread Matters is keen to work with other individuals and groups who feel that we need to do food better – for the health of individuals, society and the planet. The company offers:

- skills of articulate advocacy – turning sometimes complex arguments into messages that capture the imagination
- strategic planning and vision, especially in areas like small-scale business development, sustainable tourism,

and food and health

- expertise in organic food production, certification and standards development

Andrew Whitley is also chair of the Soil Association's Processing Standards Committee and a member of its Certification Scrutiny Committee.

*Tickets for the Bread Matters seminar are £5 for MON members and £7.50 for non-members – available at **The Bridge Bookshop** in Port Erin (tel: 833376), **Mother Nature** in Ramsey (tel: 815118), **Lexicon Bookshop**, The Strand, Douglas (tel: 673004, cheques and cash ONLY), or from **Susie Watson** on 825755.*

## Tree planting, Arbor Week 5 to 9 March

For this year's Arbor week, Manx organisations have been invited to plant a tree to enhance the natural beauty of the Island. The Forestry Commission has provided one tree per organisation, with the stipulation that it should be planted at a site within public view. We contacted Rushen Primary School, Port Erin, who have confirmed they are happy to give a native Rowan a loving home.



## Manx Organic Network AGM 7.30pm, Thursday 17 May, Knockaloe Farm, Patrick

A formal notice will be sent out in accordance with our constitution in good time, but in the meantime we'd like to encourage you to come to the AGM to meet with your committee and air your views.

The evening will also feature a presentation by Phil Diment of Biomann Ltd, importers of alternative bio-diesel produced from UK-grown rape seed oil. Could this be the fuel for you? Could/should the Isle of Man grow its own Biofuel? Phil will be considering these questions and others in his presentation. We look forward to seeing you there.



## Eco Day Monday 23 July, Castle Rushen High School, Castletown

Under the passionate guidance of Cheryl Cousins, The One World Centre is planning another annual Eco Day. A reminder of what it's all about...

**The Eco Day** is a 'circus' of environmental workshops and activities within the framework of the host school's day.

It helps students and teachers become more aware of local environmental issues and groups in an informal way, through fun activities that look at personal responsibility in a global context.

This is not just a one-off event. Activities initiated on the day can become permanent fixtures – for example, a sensory or vegetable garden, recycling projects or a Fairtrade shop.

**The Eco Partnership** is a coalition of Manx environmental organisations coordinated through the One World Centre. It is deeply committed to raising awareness of the Manx environment and issues relating to local conservation and sustainable development, as well as encouraging lifestyle changes that will benefit the planet.

## Growing excitement: farmers' markets prove a big attraction

ONE OF THE most consistent messages from members is that we need to see the sort of farmers' markets in the Isle of Man that we enjoy when visiting the UK and abroad. This dream is now being realised – and in no small measure thanks to MON's work.

As recently quoted in *The Examiner*, MON's message is loud and clear: "...the Green Mann market is now in its second successful year on Thursdays at Ballabrooie in Patrick and continues to expand.

"More recently in the North from last October, the Ramsey Market in Mooragh



Park has been attracting a good deal of support each Saturday morning. The Ramsey Commissioners are to be commended for their encouragement for this initiative, although so far it is limited in that currently stallholders will have to seek new premises after 31 March.

"Their customers hope that the Commissioners will continue to give more support now and in the coming years. Stallholders already have well advanced plans to increase the quantity and continuity of supply of local produce there, including the critical winter months, but...crops take time to grow etc etc and it will be late summer this year before there is a significant change."

DAFF and the NFU have organized several one-off markets: in Villiers Square, at the Sea Terminal and most recently, an evening at Castle Rushen High School. Also very encouraging is that a committee sponsored by DAFF has been established to look at further options

– for example, a monthly farmers' market in Douglas.

The committee will be considering accreditation too. In the UK, this is overseen by FARMA, the National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association, which independently assesses and certifies farmers' markets round the country. Accreditation means shoppers can be confident they're buying the freshest, most local produce possible – thereby supporting the community and helping protect the environment by reducing food miles.

FARMA's accreditation standards have been in place since 2002. FARMA defines a farmers' market as a market in which farmers, growers or producers from a defined local area are present in person to sell their own produce, direct to the public. All products sold should have been grown, reared, caught, brewed, pickled, baked, smoked or processed by the stallholder.

In the Isle of Man we're in a great position. For us, all this is just a formality, as our markets already fulfil these criteria. We also know that we have a group of committed people with the entrepreneurial spirit and enthusiasm to set up the markets and turn up week after week to host them.

On behalf of all our members, a big 'thank you' to our local producers. Keep producing more please!



## Green Mann and Mooragh Park markets update

By Janet Bridle

The Green Mann market at Patrick has now recovered fully from the unexpected closure of its food production side by the Environmental Health – as reported in our December issue. Regular customers are once again tucking into delicious vegetable soups, breads, cheese, cakes and hot drinks from an approved converted burger van.

The half-term holiday was very busy and the team had the foresight to arrange craft activities for the children to enjoy while the rest of us did our usual: wandering around, chatting to stall-holders and buying all the tempting produce, including fresh veg, just-baked bread, newly-laid eggs and Greeba mushrooms – the freshest and most delicious on the Island. Personally, I snapped up what are probably the biggest, juiciest orangest carrots I have ever seen, plus some (polytunnel) lettuce.

So, all is well and thriving once again at Ballabrooie and I look forward to seeing you there every Thursday, 11.30am to 3pm. If you have any questions in the meantime, just call Jimmy or Nadine on 843738.

Although the Saturday market at Ramsey's Mooragh Park is going from strength to strength, with nine regular stall-holders, it's due to come to an untimely end on 31 March.

But don't despair. Dot, the market's intrepid organiser, is working hard to find a suitable alternative venue. Having been in negotiation with the Ramsey Commissioners for some time now, she is also searching for an alternative private venue. If you know of a space that might be suitable or would like to get involved, please contact Dot on 470507.



# Our daily bread

By Hannah Boyd (AKA 'Lady B')

I HAVE BEEN providing local people with fresh baked bread at the Green Mann Market for almost a year now, and I'm delighted to have the opportunity to tell you a bit more about myself.

First of all, I love bread. I was fortunate to grow up in Denmark, where there is a strong baking tradition. The Danes are very hospitable and it's customary to provide visitors with something to eat, so a lot of baking is done in the home and fresh yeast is sold at every grocery shop.

## A taste of tradition

The independent Danish baker is master of everything: all sorts of breads, sweet pastries, rolls and very special cakes. What better to spend your pocket money on? Even the sweet shop couldn't compete. Traditionally baked bread isn't cheap however. And surely this is only fair: everything is handmade and the baker has a business to support and staff to pay.

## The price of mass-production

Unfortunately many Danes today feel it's too expensive to visit the baker. Even in Denmark, supermarkets now provide the full range of baked goods for less – often to the detriment of quality and fair trade. The consequence? My favourite baker in Denmark is no longer in business. Despite the fact that mass-produced bread cannot compare in terms of flavour and wholesomeness, people seem to accept it because it costs less.

## Bucking the trend

You have to be strong to go against this trend and I believe I am. When I came to the Isle of Man I felt that the baking tradition was lacking here – and supermarket domination even greater than in Denmark.



I was lucky enough to move into a home with an Aga and soon mastered how to bake good traditional healthy breads. I started baking for my family and friends, who would be greeted at the door by the intoxicating aroma of freshly baked bread.

## Word of mouth recommendation

Then, last February, I was invited to the Green Mann and although my customer base has since steadily grown, I have stayed loyal to this pioneering market. The Green Mann stands for noble principles and I owe so much to Jimmy and Nadine for their generosity and confidence-inspiring vision.

I also do the Ramsey Market on Saturdays and have a steadily growing number of customers in Douglas as a result of word of mouth recommendations.

## Exciting varieties

I believe that one of the reasons for my success is the variety I offer. Unlike the mass-processed standard lines of the big supermarkets, I sell many different breads, but only a few of each type on any one occasion. I also constantly research and try out new recipes across my lines. That way, my customers can sample different flavours and textures originating from all corners of Europe.

Here is a taste of what I have to offer:

## Spelt bread

This nutty bread with its distinct taste is unusually gentle on the digestive system due to its very low gluten content. With added sunflower seeds, linseeds, sesame and pumpkin seeds (and no fat!), it's fast becoming a phenomenon among my customers. For people with gluten intolerance, spelt flour can be used with any of the

breads on my list.

## Norwegian rye bread

If you've never had rye bread before, this version is a mouth-watering must. Unlike the factory-made, heavy, dry pumpernickel, it's a moist, fresh and surprisingly light variety. Yet it is also full of fibre and a meal in its own right. I believe if everyone's diet included this delicious and nutritious bread, the world would be a better place!

## Root vegetable breads

Vegetables have been used in breads in other countries for centuries, with the vegetable adding extra moisture and a super boost of flavour. Favourites among my customers include courgette and walnut, parsnip and raisin and carrot fibre breads – or my Russian potato bread, which all kids love!

## Irish wheaten

This line is ever-popular, especially with my Irish and other Celtic customers. It is incredible just how many different ingredients go into this bread, making it very wholesome – and a big hit with customers who have yeast allergies.

This is just a selection from my full list, which you'll find on my stall. While I aim to make everything with organic flour and vegetables, there are times when organic produce isn't available and I have to substitute alternative (ideally local and always good quality) ingredients.

Why do I do it? Because I take pride and satisfaction in improving the quality of other people's lives in this small way. The people of this Island seem happy to give me the opportunity to develop my skills and, quite simply, I enjoy it!

## Get growing 2007 Tips from Bill Mizen and Sharon Jamieson

MORE AND more people are realising that there's nothing more satisfying than growing, picking and eating your own produce. It will be fresh, better for you and, if you've treated it properly, organic.

If you have a patch of land – no matter how small – and want to grow your own vegetables, now's the time to get organised. Here are a few tips on what to sow when and how best to do it.

**POTATOES** of the early summer new variety are unbeatable, so try putting a few in your plot – or even a bin or bag of compost. One of our favourites is Charlotte: not the earliest, but a great salad spud which stores well and makes excellent chips. Other good varieties are Karlana, Nichola, Sante, Orla, Bambina and Sarpo Mira.

**ONIONS** are easy to grow from sets which can be planted in the ground from mid-March. We recommend Sturon

and Red Baron (personal experience showed that while Turbo did well, it failed to store past October).

**LEEKS** do very well in the Isle of Man and if you use different varieties, you can harvest from August through to April next year. If you only have room for one variety, make it Musselburgh – sow in a seed bed in April, then plant out in May or June.

**BEETROOT** can be sown directly in April, and a good recommendation is Bolthardy.

**CARROTS** should be sown successively every two to three weeks to get a continuous crop of small, sweet vegetables. If you're worried about carrot fly, try Resistafly. Sugar Snap is another excellent small carrot variety that children will love to snack on.

**COURGETTES** are very easy to grow but need quite a bit of space. Start them off indoors in a pot and plant out in

late May or June. The same goes for sweet corn, peas and beans.

**LETTUCE** is very easy too and can be grown in a patio pot, but watch out for slugs. Talking of which, now is also the time to start brewing your own beer for slug traps – organic of course!

If you've no land but are keen to learn, why not join fellow MON members at Ballkilley Farm near Port Erin? You can do whatever hours and times suit you and you'll be able to share the fruits of your labours and enjoy time out in the fields.

If you have limited space and only need a few seeds of each veg, come to the Green Mann Market (every Thursday from 12 to 4pm at Ballabrooie, near Kirk Patrick), where smaller seed packs are on sale.

*For more information contact me, Sharon Jamieson, on 836626, or email [Ballakilley@manx.net](mailto:Ballakilley@manx.net)*

company no longer in existence. Perhaps it didn't prove so popular commercially because, as Russell Sharp reports from his experience last year, it ripened late. We shall see...

I will be putting together a report on behalf of MON members at the end of the season, so please do let me have your comments – email [iandavies@manx.net](mailto:iandavies@manx.net), or write to Boayl Chirrym, Andreas, IM7 4BB. Then watch this space for our report in the September (or maybe even December) issue!

*If you'd like some Manx Marvel seeds, send a SAE to: Dr R Sharp, Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University, Lancs LA1 4YQ.*

## Manx Marvel-lous!

By Ian Davies

MANX MARVEL, a native tomato variety to the Island, is making a welcome comeback this year. And MON members will be aiming to prove it can be grown just as well without pesticides or artificial fertilisers.

Having received a supply from Dr Russell Sharp, the UK holder of the seed bank, I've already distributed it to as many members as I practically can. But following media coverage in January, many more people have applied direct to Dr Sharp.

Dr Sharp is a self-confessed 'geek' in this area. A plant scientist at the Dept of Sustainable Agriculture at the Lancaster University Environment Centre, he wants to revive Manx Marvel following success last year with a 'lost' Leicestershire variety, the Blaby Special. He says he knows little of our variety's history, but we have uncovered quite a bit.

Robert Watson of Watson's Nurseries at Greeba, where tomatoes were grown until 1968, remembers Manx Marvel well. He believes it came about as a 'sport': an accidental cross between Ailsa Craig and Moneymaker, the main varieties grown at the nurseries. Robert thinks it was passed on to Carters Seeds, a



### Manx Organic Network in a nutshell

#### Aims and objectives:

- To promote awareness of the benefits of organically produced food and sustainable agriculture.
- To promote Manx organic farmers and growers by encouraging consumers to buy locally produced organic food.

- To create a network of local resources, information and advice.
- To encourage the Manx Government to continue and increase its support for organic production.
- To develop an identifiable Manx Organic brand.

#### Membership:

750 and growing. For more membership forms to pass on to

friends and relatives, please get in touch with Membership Secretary Susie Watson on 825755.

#### Contact:

Janet Bridle, Chair, 835436 or [jbridle@manx.net](mailto:jbridle@manx.net)

Viv Davies, Secretary, 882332

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