

Kirkby Fruit Project report 2015 – 2016

This is a summary of the activity of the fruit project from April 2015 to April 2016.

VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteer numbers have remained constant over the past year at around 20 and we also benefitted from a couple of extra people who offered their specialist professional expertise in developing new products. The age range of the people involved in the project is still very wide and we have found a role for people of all abilities.

APPLES AND JUICING

The juicing of surplus apples remains our main activity. In 2015, despite early predictions of a poor crop due to weather conditions, the warm and sunny late summer/early autumn delivered a crop which exceeded even the '10 year high' of 2013. This, coupled with a growing awareness of the project, meant that by the end of the season our volunteers had processed 3.8 tons of apples that would otherwise have gone to waste. We continued the same arrangement of giving one free bottle of pasteurised juice in return for every 5kg of apples delivered to us but in addition this year we offered people the option of getting back all the juice from their apples, bottled and pasteurised, at a cost of £1.25/ bottle. Using the donated apples our volunteers carried out 11 juicing sessions making 1500 bottles of apple juice. The juice is sold direct by the project and through the same 2 local outlets as last year (Summit Bakery and Kirkby News). Feedback from customers remains very positive. We encourage people to return their empty juice bottles to us to be washed and reused.

Due to the size of the harvest the project had far more apples than it needed for our apple juice sales so the decision was taken to make cider with the excess juice. Several of our volunteers already had experience in cider making and brewing so they formed a sub group of volunteers to oversee the process and obtain the appropriate documentation from HMRC.

COMMUNITY JUICING DAYS

We ran 2 community juicing days again this season to give local people the chance to bring their apples for juicing and take all of the fresh pressed juice home with them. These were very popular with people bringing along everything from a small bag to a car boot full of apples.

CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER GROUPS

We offered a 'profit share' scheme to other volunteer groups in the area to provide them with a way of raising funds and again Normanby & Marton Village Hall took up the offer. They collected their own apples and then they helped with the processing of the juice so they will receive a proportion of the final surplus from this year.

We have continued to strengthen our links with the Northern Fruit Group and are able to benefit from the considerable expertise of their members.

We have also offered advice to several community groups from other areas who were interested in setting up a similar project in their area.

CHRISTMAS MARKET

Some fruits other than apples were donated to the project and these were used to produce jams, chutneys and cordials to put into gift boxes for sale through the Christmas market. The design and composition of our gift boxes was changed slightly this year to reflect the large number of cordials we

were able to produce from donated fruit and these proved very popular with all 40 gift boxes sold within 2 hours. Some boxes were pre-ordered by customers from the previous year and we have already had enquiries about gift boxes for next Christmas.

We used some of our apple juice to make a 'spiced apple cup' which was launched in October and sold well at the Christmas market and through the winter months.

We also sold some of the local heritage fruit trees which had been grafted from local old fruit trees by our volunteers in early spring then grown on by us through the summer. Each tree had its own personal 'biography' and the idea proved popular.

FINANCE

We keep detailed records of all fruit donated, juice produced, income and expenditure on spreadsheets and these are circulated to the project volunteers at regular intervals throughout the year for information. The project is under the umbrella of the Kirkbymoorside Environment Group and they are the body that hold the bank account so all money is transferred to them and ultimate responsibility for it lies with them. The project financial year runs from 1st October to 30th September to link in with that of the Environment Group.

From our income each year we set aside a sum of money to cater for any future equipment replacement. This sum of money has been worked out on the basis that it will provide the full replacement cost of equipment originally purchased from grant money in around 6 years. This will ensure that the project has a secure financial future.

Accommodation and storage facilities continue to be provided free of charge by two of the project volunteers with the project paying only for the cost of electricity and water used in juice production. This arrangement is able to continue for the foreseeable future.

SUPPORT FOR OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS

We have an established procedure for other community groups to share the profits from the project and this is detailed on our website.

The surplus funds from the 2015 -16 season were distributed to other local community groups who had applied to us for support. The money distributed this year went to:

KMS junior cricket club £250 for new equipment

KMS brass band £200 for new music

KMS history group £201 to buy an A3 printer/scanner

KMS cub scouts £250 towards the cost of an outward bound activity

Kirkby in Bloom £40 to sponsor a flower tub

Kirkby shopping guide £60 held in reserve towards development

OTHER ACTIVITIES

HERITAGE TREES - Another grafting course took place in February to improve the skills of our volunteers. This was led by Hilary Dodson, chairperson of the Northern Fruit Group and acknowledged fruit expert. Our close links to the Northern Fruit Group meant that we paid only petrol expenses in return for this expertise.

The grafting skills have been put to good use again collecting scions and grafting wood from old fruit trees in the area. This year in addition to the Kirkby Pippin apple, which has proved very popular, we were finally able to track down the elusive 'golden harvest plum' that various people had told us

about. This wild Mirabel was found growing in a hedgerow in the town and we are hoping to grow daughter trees from it. Unfortunately the original tree was blown down over the winter so we are now waiting to see if we were able to collect enough viable young shoots from it to ensure this unique fruit tree will live on.

We continue to work closely with the History Group to collect both oral and social history relating to the old fruit trees in the town.

MILLENNIUM GARDEN – Despite our efforts to reach an agreement with the church to allow the fruit project volunteers to help with the ongoing maintenance of this community resource no progress has been made. However, we still hope it will be possible to site the heritage fruit trees in the garden next year.

PUBLICITY

Information relating to fruit project activities is published on the town blog and has featured several times in the Handymag. There have also been reports in the Moorsider

We were also invited to take part in the apple weekend at Rogers Nurseries in Pickering. Our involvement consisted of a display about the project, sales of apple juice and spiced apple cup and juicing demonstrations on both days. There was considerable interest in our activities and the weekend resulted in new contacts and some new volunteers for the project. It is anticipated that we will be taking part in the the apple weekend in October 2016.

FUTURE PLANS

We will continue our exploration of the fruit growing heritage in the town and develop this project in conjunction with the history group.

The above activities, participation in apple events and the publicity surrounding the launch of our new cider should help to promote the project and the town to a wider audience and we hope to be able to develop these further to provide wider benefits for the town.

The fruit project continues to thrive and grow thanks to the energy, commitment and good humour of its volunteers. Of course none of this would be possible without the generosity of the fruit donors and the people who buy our produce. We are very grateful for their continuing support.

More details about our activities can be found on our website www.kirkbyfruitproject.wordpress.com

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fruit project co-ordinator.