

Kirkby Fruit Project report 2016 – 2017

This is a summary of the activity of the fruit project from April 2016 to April 2017.

VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteer numbers remain constant at around 20

APPLES AND JUICING

The juicing of surplus apples remains our main activity. 2016 was another bumper crop year so by the end of the season our volunteers had processed around 4.5 tons of apples that would otherwise have gone to waste. In addition to our normal offer of one free bottle of pasteurised juice in return for every 5kg of apples delivered to us, our 'buy back' scheme where all the juice is returned to the apple donor, bottled and pasteurised, at a cost of £1.25/ bottle proved very popular.

Our volunteers carried out 10 juicing sessions making 1730 bottles of apple juice, including those returned to apple donors as 'buy back'. The remaining juice is sold direct by the project at Christmas and other markets 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.

We also made our craft cider again this season and in light of the demand last year we increased production to 25 barrels.

The public profile of the project has continued to increase and this has led to us being contacted by people with surplus apples from many miles away and receiving enquiries from as far afield as South Yorkshire. As a small, local, volunteer led project we are unable to deal with any more fruit than we already handle and so we are actively encouraging a number of groups from other areas to set up similar fruit projects in their area.

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. Over the 2 afternoons we juiced around 900kg of surplus apples for members of the community.

CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER GROUPS

Normanby & Marton Village Hall took up the offer of our profit share scheme again this season. 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. Last year they raised about £170 in this way.

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.

We again provided bottles of cider and apple juice for the winners of the Kirkbymoorside 10k races this year

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. Our 'spiced apple cup' which is produced in limited quantities in the autumn sold well at the Christmas market and through January. A number of people were disappointed that we had no cider for sale at the Christmas market because our entire stock from the 2015 season had been sold by October. As we have almost doubled production this year we should have the cider on sale at the 2017 Christmas market.

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 financial year runs from 1st October to 30th September

From our income each year we set aside a sum of money to cater for any future equipment replacement. This has ensured 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 remaining at 30th September 2016 amounted to £1800 and were distributed to other local community groups who had applied to us for support.

KMS brass band £450 towards the purchase of an E flat tuba

KMS history group £245 for the purchase of large scale OS maps

KMS scouts £360 towards the cost of an outdoor activity

Kirkby in Bloom £40 to sponsor a flower tub

Sinnington Pre-school £350 towards staff training for development of forest school activities

KMEG £50 towards the town shopping guide

Northern Ryedale Transport Group £220 allocated to bus shelter appeal

£440 had originally been set aside for the scouts activity day but as the final cost was less than this it was unanimously agreed by the volunteers to give the remaining £80 to the Beadlam tractor run for their Yorkshire Air Ambulance appeal.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In October we were fortunate enough to gain access to apples from the Northern Fruit Group reference collection. This allowed us to hold a short 'Introduction to apple identification course'

PUBLICITY

Information relating to fruit project activities is published on the town blog and has featured several times in the Handymag. 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, spiced apple cup and cider 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.

KIRKBY DAY CIDER LAUNCH

We launched our new season cider on 30th April this year to coincide with the tractor run and 10k races. This year the weather was very kind to us and we had another successful day with sales totalling £786 including around £300 of repeat orders.

As there are very strict regulations surrounding the sale of alcohol we are only able to sell cider on specific dates when we have arranged a Temporary Event Notice. Before the launch we had been approached by the owners of Kirkby News, who hold an alcohol licence, about the possibility of them selling our cider and we have discussed this with them but at the moment we are still waiting for them to go ahead.

The project will have cider on sale again at a stall in Towlers Arch on 19th July and 13th September, the Apple Weekend at Rogers Nursery in October and the Kirkby Christmas Market in November.

THE KIRKBY PIPPIN

The Kirkby Pippin is our own unique apple tree, found growing in a hedge on the outskirts of the town. The tree appears to be very old and has probably grown from a seed in an apple core discarded in the hedgerow. The hedgerow is clearly marked on the earliest OS map of the area (1853) so we can be certain that the tree is a chance seedling and therefore unique. In 2016 we had the opportunity to send a sample from the tree for DNA testing at East Malling research station. This showed that the Kirkby Pippin is closely related to the Yorkshire Cockpit apple which was popular and widely grown in the late 1800's but not often seen outside private collections today. It is most likely that the Yorkshire Cockpit was one of the parent trees for our Kirkby Pippin and the fruit does bear some similarities to this parent.

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

Chris Simmonds,

fruit project co-ordinator.