

KIRKBY FRUIT PROJECT REPORT 2017 -18

Over the past year the project has continued to build on the success of previous years and our reputation for producing very tasty apple juice and cider continues to grow. We also used other fruits donated to us to make preserves and cordials for the Christmas market.

Volunteers

Our volunteer numbers remain fairly steady at around 20 active volunteers for the season but we are always happy to welcome new people of all ages and abilities. Even those who are not as able to help with the more physical tasks find that they can help in other ways.

Apples

Despite a fairly slow start to the season, 2017 produced yet another bumper apple crop. Following a review of our activity in autumn 2016, when we had seen people bringing fruit to us from more than 20 miles away in some cases, we had decided to impose a nominal geographical limit of 7 miles for donations of apples. This was to ensure that we could focus on our original aim of using surplus LOCAL fruit to prevent it going to waste.

We also encouraged people to make use of our 'buy back' scheme. This gives people the opportunity to have their own apples juiced, bottled and pasteurised by us for a nominal amount to cover the cost of processing plus a small donation. The scheme proved very popular and accounted for 1.5 tons of the apples we processed.

Towards the end of the season we found that we had filled all of our cider barrels and were running out of bottles. Our bottle supplier managed to scrape together all the bottles they had in stock to send one more delivery but by the third week in October we had done everything we could and our total for the season stood at 6.2 tons of fruit processed. The pomace (dry apple pulp) which remained after juice extraction was used as a soil conditioner on local gardens and allotments and a small amount went to a local farmer for pig feed.

Community Juicing

We held our two community juicing days as usual at the end of September and end of October to give local people the opportunity to have their apples juiced and take away the raw juice free of charge.

Totals for the Season

Apples processed 6.2 tons

Juice bottled for project 1278

Buy back bottles 1004

Cider 780 litres

Other Fruits Donated

This year we had small amounts of rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries, damsons, plums and green grapes which were all used to make juices, cordials and preserves for sale.

Sales and Donations

Our produce is sold in two local shops, The Summit Bakery (apple juice) and Kirkby News (apple juice and cider), and directly by us at the Christmas Market, Towlers Arch stalls, and the 10k day when we launch our new season cider. We have been asked about the possibility of selling our juice and cider in outlets outside of Kirkbymoorside but we have decided against this because of the increased time commitment and complexity this would involve. We remain committed to keeping this a volunteer project based in Kirkbymoorside for the benefit of the town and the community.

Sale of our cider is slightly more complicated because of the strict licensing regulations surrounding sale of alcohol. Kirkby News is licensed to sell alcohol so is able to sell our cider for us but this accounts for a very small volume of our total production. We apply for a 'temporary event notice' which allows us to sell the cider at the 10K, Christmas Market and Towlers Arch on specified dates but we need to explore other outlets for the sale of our cider in the future.

Across the year we donated bottles of our apple juice and cider to other local organisations such as the school and History Group for prizes in their fundraising activities, the 10k races for prizes and bottles of apple juice were sent to the food bank at Christmas.

Heritage Trees

In 2017 we submitted leaves from some local heritage trees for DNA testing at the East Malling research station as part of a nationwide programme to build a DNA database for apple varieties. We now have daughter trees from eight of these old trees growing on a local allotment and will continue to explore the possibility of a permanent home within the town for these trees so that they and their history can be preserved for the town.

Finance

Our accounting year runs from 1st October to 30th September. Updated accounts are sent to volunteers for information every two months so our accounts are completely transparent.

We continue to retain £320 per year to build up our equipment replacement fund so the project is completely self funding and will not have to ask for any outside help with funding in the future. This equipment fund now stands at £1600.

In the financial year 2016 – 2017 we had a surplus of £1800 after costs and retention for the equipment fund so local community groups were offered the chance to apply for a share of that money. Decisions about the distribution of funds are taken by consensus amongst the active project volunteers. This year money was given to the Library, History Group, Kirkby in Bloom, the junior wind band and the Beavers in Kirkbymoorside and we also supported projects for the village halls in Marton, Farndale and Harome.

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

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