

## **KIRKBY FRUIT PROJECT REPORT 2018 – 2019 SEASON**

In the 2018 – 2019 season the project has continued to build on the success of previous years and to improve the service we provide to the local community.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

We remain a community based group run entirely by volunteers and are dependent on the commitment and enthusiasm of those volunteers. Our numbers remained at just over 20 active volunteers for the season with 2 new people joining us. We are always happy to welcome new people of all ages and abilities and we have already been contacted by 2 people who are interested in joining us for the coming year. Even those who are not as able to help with the more physical tasks find that they can help in other ways. Although some individuals take on specific roles within the project all decisions are taken by consensus amongst the active volunteers.

### **APPLES**

Despite the very cold spring, 2018 turned into yet another year of bumper harvests for fruit. The very hot and sunny weather over the ripening period also meant that the sugar content of the fruit was higher than in previous years. After our experience in 2017 we took the decision to limit the quantity of apples that we could handle for the season to 6 tons. To ensure that this allowed everyone to have fair access to the project we again set a geographical limit of a nominal 7 miles radius of the town and an individual limit of 120kg apples for processing. We encouraged people to make use of our popular 'buy back' scheme which 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. We also extended this scheme to include cider production.

Total bottles made for the year:

Project apple juice 1218

Buy Back apple juice 1148

Cider 671

A new venture this year has been the production of a 'raw' cider vinegar containing the mother culture. After trying out a sample batch on willing project volunteers we are about to bottle our first production batch which will be on sale at Moorside Stores shortly.

### **OTHER FRUIT**

Smaller quantities of other fruits surplus to requirements are brought to us throughout the year and we always make use of these in various ways. Locally grown grapes were juiced and bottled and various other fruits made into cordials, jams and chutneys for the Christmas market. We have been offered pears in the past but these are more difficult to process into pasteurised juice because of the lack of acidity so we tried making a small batch of perry (pear cider). This appears to have been successful so may be a possibility next season depending on the availability of fruit.

### **SALE OF PRODUCE**

Our produce is only for sale in Kirkbymoorside through 3 local outlets. The apple juice is available from Summit Bakery and Kirkby News and the cider is available from Kirkby News. Cordials and our new cider vinegar are available through Moorside Stores. We also have a stall at the Christmas market and launch our new season cider each year at the tractor run and 10k day.

## **FRUIT TREES**

We continue to offer guidance in the growing and management of fruit trees when requested and have been asked for help to discover whether another tree growing locally may be a unique variety. Samples of leaves from the tree will be sent for DNA testing this summer then grafting of daughter trees will begin early next year.

We were also asked to graft a selection of apple trees for a local farmer to encourage wildlife diversity, provide shelter and fruit for tasty treats for his animals. These young trees should be ready to plant out in the summer.

## **FINANCES**

Our accounting year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> September. Updated accounts are sent to volunteers for information every two months so our accounts are completely transparent. After retaining the usual £320 for our equipment fund the profits for the year to September 2018 provided £2000 to be distributed to local community groups.

These were allocated as follows:

Town Band £500 towards new hall

Kirkbymoorside Junior Cricket £500 for training equipment

History Group £451 to purchase historic maps of the town

Town Blog £175 web hosting

Kirkby in Bloom £40 continue sponsoring of tub

Library £200 purchase of table

Marton & Normanby Village Hall £156 to purchase glassware

## **EQUIPMENT**

We are aware that with the range and complexity of equipment we now use in the project there will be a need for periodic replacements so each year a sum of £320 is retained in our equipment fund to cover such costs. This ensures that the project can remain entirely self funding. This year we have used some of our fund to purchase a bottle washing machine which relieves our volunteers of the endless task of cleaning around 1200 returned bottles each year.

As interest in local food and awareness of the need to prevent food waste continues to grow the fruit project has an important role to play and our biggest challenge is likely to be managing the demand for our services so we are actively engaging with people in other areas who are interested in setting up a similar service.

Of course the project would not be possible without the generosity of the fruit donors and especially 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](http://www.kirkbyfruitproject.wordpress.com)

Chris Simmonds

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