

Wood Norton Community Orchard – Annual General Meeting

This took place on Thursday 9th May in the village hall.

Tim Lidstone Scott spoke about the decline in local fruit growing – by 60% - in the course of the last 50 years, and of the importance of preserving this indigenous heritage. This is one function of our community orchard, but there are others: it is to provide a green haven in the village for quiet contemplation and a wildlife sanctuary, but it is also a place for people to meet and for children to play. We hope that all the residents of Wood Norton will visit and enjoy it.

Mary Sheridan outlined the progress to date: the planting of some 33 trees of specifically East Anglian varieties – gages, cherries, plums, apples and pears - all chosen to have compatible pollination periods and to produce fruit over a long period of time (some of the apples will last until December!) The trees have all been protected with deer and rabbit guards, and a kissing gate has been installed. The next step is to hear whether we have been successful in a grant application (from the Norfolk Community Foundation) for the installation of seating and the purchase of a heavy-duty brush cutter. The latter will enable us to mow paths to make the site more accessible. Beyond that we need to implement the grassland management scheme to create our spring and summer flowering meadow areas.

There is therefore much to be done, and as our treasurer, Steve Piggott pointed out, we have very little money and no income as yet. Each year we need to raise around £300, principally to cover the cost of public liability insurance. Jenny Marchant spoke about fund raising initiatives. Last autumn's Apple Day made a profit of £110, and we intend to have another this year, but with a slightly different format. In the near future, we shall have a stall at the forthcoming Wood Norton Fete selling fruit-related products.

During open discussion, it was suggested that we might try to involve local schools in the project, generate interest among local village halls, install a bee hive to maximise pollination, and start an on-line scrap-book to keep a record of the development of the orchard. With regard to fund-raising, the possibility of a paypal 'donate' button was raised, which would enable members of the community who feel supportive of the scheme but lack time to get involved to make – modest! - contributions to our work, should they so wish. A 'membership' scheme for a small annual fee was also discussed, as is the possibility of compiling a Community Orchard recipe book.

The meeting concluded with Paul Marchant thanking all those who have helped over the past year – supporting our events and making suggestions, at the Apple Day, in planting and pruning trees, and in keeping a general eye on the orchard.

Please do keep in touch if you have suggestions and ideas – we welcome all support!