

Community Orchard Starts to Blossom at Etton



Langdyke Green Leap Day, 2016



The new allotments at Etton High Meadow

One of the Langdyke Countryside Trust's many local projects is taking shape at its Etton High Meadow Nature Reserve. Since taking over the 8 acre site in 2012, the Trust has been slowly creating a community orchard and a number of small allotments for Etton residents.

Planting of the orchard took place in 2013 and 2014 as part of the Trust's annual Green Leap Day when Peterborough based businesses give up time to take part in conservation work on its reserves. Employees from Athene Communications, Peterborough Environment City Trust, Change Agents, Royal HaskoningDHV and Peterborough City Council have planted 70 apple, cherry, plum, gage and pear trees with funding from the Forest for Peterborough project, where possible choosing varieties with strong local connections. All the original trees were carefully protected from rabbit grazing only for several to succumb to the attention of muntjac deer! Once this problem had been addressed, the trees have – in the main - flourished!

A group of Langdyke members is now actively managing the orchard and has had a busy winter work programme, pruning the trees and clearing away vegetation from around the roots and trunks. They are now starting to prepare for a time when the trees will bear fruit and Trust members can harvest and enjoy the produce on a community basis. Tasks include creating a wild flower meadow around the fruit trees, planting up some more hedgerow around the orchard and starting to plan community events with a fruity theme – perhaps including cider making and mid-winter wassailing!

More recently, Langdyke has also offered an area of land on the reserve to local residents to create vegetable plots at High Meadow. This has involved some seriously heavy work, turning a largely neglected and uncultivated area of rank grass into a very tidy set of six plots all ready to be planted up and produce a range of crops from potatoes to rhubarb and soft fruits.

The rest of the land is home to the Trust's flock of Jacob sheep and is actively managed for nature. A large pond was restored on the site last year and will hopefully provide a new home to many species of dragonfly, newt and aquatic species.

If you are interested in being part of the team at Etton High Meadow, do get in touch, we are looking for new members and have an active programme of work-parties here and on our other reserves, which seem to combine a lot of hard work with a lot of fun and community spirit – which is what Langdyke is all about!

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