The Wymeswold Washdyke Community Orchard

Project Summary
A Community Orchard was planted by villagers of Wymeswold in December 2007 with the aims of providing fruit and nuts for all, creating a new focal point for the village, and to help to maintain diversity.

Background and Aims
In 2007, the Parish council asked for ideas on how the Washdyke field could be developed for community use. It was agreed that a Community Orchard was the best solution. A public meeting was held on 6th June 2007, a committee of 12 was formed and a plan hatched. There was room for 123 trees to be planted. The princely sum of £25 was set to cover the cost of each tree, a label denoting the sponsors’ name and the tree variety, maintenance, and a fund to cover possible replacements. In the event, the campaign was so successful that sponsorship was offered for more than 130 trees.

“What These trees are in danger of drowning”
Adrian Cooke

What Was Done
In December 2007, in a torrential downpour, 50 Wymeswold villagers of all ages turned up to plant 123 mixed fruit and nut trees in a field on the edge of the village. These included eating and cooking apple, pear, plum, damson, cherry, mulberry, quince, cob nut, walnut and hazelnut. As far as possible local varieties were sourced, including a graft from Newton’s famous apple tree at Woolsthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire, a falling fruit from which reputedly led to his theory about gravity. All this was brought about by a committee of 12 or so people, who not only organised collection of sponsorship, the purchase of trees and planting, but also managed to register with the Inland Revenue to reclaim gift aid. At the time of writing in February 2012, their work is not finished and the 41st meeting has been held, including 4 AGMs.

Benefits
The first trees bore fruit in 2011, but growth is slow. Around 10% of the trees have perished through accident, disease and poor soil, but funds raised at village events and grants won by the committee have not only covered the costs of replacement trees, but have enabled 4 benches and picnic tables to be installed, as well as labelling.

“You’ll never get anything to grow in there”
Anon

Next Steps
The project goes from strength to strength. A mowing regime has been set up to encourage wild flowers, a boundary hedge will be laid using raised funds and specimen native softwood trees will be planted. The Washdyke field now has, in addition to the orchard, a growing set of exercise equipment purchased with grants. The next work is to design a sundial.

Acknowledgement
We would like to thank all villagers who have sponsored trees, and supported with fundraising. Thanks also go to those who have provided grants, and village organisations who have donated funds, such as the Garden Walkabout and the Duck Race.