Pear trees planted in Allerton Project community orchard to celebrate ground-breaking research farm's 30th anniversary

Monday 28 March, 2022

Trees donated by the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers

Local people joined liverymen of the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers on Thursday 24 March 2022 at the Allerton Project in Loddington, Leicestershire, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the pioneering research and demonstration farm. Five new pear trees were planted in Allerton's Community Heritage Apple Orchard to mark the project's birthday and commemorate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The tree planting is part of The Company's initiative to plant 500 fruit trees for Her Majesty's jubilee.

"We are very grateful to the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers, for donating the trees and suggesting that we mark this significant date for us and Her Majesty by adding to our community orchard, which was originally planted to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012," said Dr Alastair Leake, Director of Policy and the Allerton Project for the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), which runs the farm.

The Allerton Project, which recently featured on BBC 'Countryfile' (6 February 2022), uses the 320-hectare farm to research the effects of different farming methods on wildlife and the environment and improve policy makers' and the public's understanding of agricultural and environmental issues. Research on the farm has led to farmers across the country planting crops to feed songbirds in winter and a range of measures to reduce soil erosion.

The farm was given to the GWCT in the will of Lord and Lady Allerton in 1992. Since then, a strong bond has developed with the local community. The orchard was planted in 2012 in partnership with the Loddington Women's Institute, to help conserve old Leicestershire apple varieties, and its members help to take care of the orchard and enjoy the apples.

"Part of our mission is to engage with rural communities and develop awareness of agriculture and food production, so it is very important to us to involve local people. And we greatly value the support and contribution of the community we are part of," said Alastair.

The orchard also plays a key role in school visits to the Allerton Project, organised by the Country Trust - a charity which connects children with farming and where their food comes from.

"We use the orchard to explain about pollination and bees, the importance of fruit in our diet and why we plant a range of varieties to ensure we have fruit for as long as possible," continued Alastair.

The Master of the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers, Laurence Olins, planted the first of the new trees. One of the famous City of London Livery Companies, the Company was established before 1300 AD. Mr Olins said:

"The Worshipful Company of Fruiterers launched an initiative last October to plant 500 fruit trees in batches of 5, 10 or 20 trees to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. One of our members donated five pear trees to sit alongside the already established Diamond Jubilee community apple orchard at the Allerton Project. As Master it is my privilege to plant one of these trees and recognise the excellent work being conducted at Loddington."

Justin Farrington-Smith, who is a Liveryman of the Company and donated the trees, planted the second tree. President of Loddington Women's Institute, Ruth Jarvis, added the third tree. Mrs Jarvis has a long association with the Allerton Project through her husband Phil Jarvis, who was the project's farm manager for 29 years until 2021.

Ruth Jarvis commented: "Loddington WI was founded in 1952 with Lady Allerton being our first President, so it is very fitting that The Allerton Project, along with The Worshipful Company of Fruiterers, has invited us to join in commemorating Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee by planting a pear tree alongside the apple trees that our membership helped to plant 10 years ago. There has been a strong relationship between the Allerton Project and Loddington WI since the project came to the village 30 years ago."

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Tina Fanshawe, Vice President of the Country Trust, and GWCT Vice President and former Allerton Project Chairman, Hugh Oliver-Bellasis planted the remaining trees.

Jill Attenborough, CEO of the Country Trust, said: ‘We hope that the tree we planted today will bear as much fruit as The Country Trust’s partnership with Allerton has over the years. Visits to the Allerton Project provide a perfect opportunity for us to connect children with the land that sustains us all, to ignite their curiosity and build the confidence of children who wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunity to experience farming and the countryside. Definitely something worth celebrating!”

The visitors heard a short talk from Dr Alastair Leake about the key achievements of the Allerton Project in its first 30 years, as well as a farm walk taking in the ground-breaking agro-forestry project, wildlife seed mixes, tillage and carbon trials.

For more information about the Allerton Project please visit allertontrust.org.uk

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Notes to Editors:

The Allerton Project www.allertontrust.org.uk researches the effects of different farming methods on wildlife and the environment, sharing results of our research through advisory and educational activities. We identify management that delivers multiple benefits for our rural landscape. Our work covers natural capital accounting, agri-environment schemes and regenerative farming systems. From soil and water, to woodland and environmental habitat that increases biodiversity, our aim is to build farmland resilience. Our researchers collaborate with other research organisations and visitors to the project include businesses, policy makers, non-government organisations, regulators, farmers, advisors, students and schools.

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust www.gwct.org.uk is an independent wildlife conservation charity which carries out scientific research into Britain’s game and wildlife. We advise farmers and landowners on improving wildlife habitats. We undertake our own research as well as projects funded by contract and grant-aid from Government and private bodies.

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