

Food4Macc AGM: March 2017 - Chairman's Report

Despite the rain we had over 500 visitors to the Potato Day and Seed sale in January. We were very grateful to our team of volunteers, and those who came to buy. We also thanked Macclesfield Town Council, for the loan of the room and Town Hall staff, who went the extra mile for us. We were pleased that our supplier Brighter Blooms went ahead with a sale again.

In April we built two more wheelchair-level raised beds at Upton Grange Care Home similar to those we built at Prestbury House last year.

As part of our campaign to support food growing in local schools, we made a grant of £250 towards the purchase of a greenhouse for Tytherington School's student garden project.

In July, we ended our direct involvement with The Heritage Walk site, off Churchill Way. Originally set up by Val Lloyd and Eric Rogers, this site is now being led independently by Abercrombie, and Food4Macc donated tools and equipment to help ensure the continuation of the project.

Our sister group Food4MaccDirect organised a bee-keeping visit to the hives tended by "Bees for Us" at Gawsorth in July as you can see on their Facebook page.

In September we supported the Random Apple Company at Rainow, who offer to take any surplus apples and convert them into pasteurised juice, by organising a site visit for our members.

In 2010 Food4MaccDirect set out to boost trade in local food and, after 6 years of trading, decided that having delivered about £178,000 worth of local food, working with 50 local producers and serving over 300 customers, it was the right time to stop trading, and to encourage our customers to support the other local food businesses that had sprung up. These include The Corner Plot on Park Lane, which now offers many of the same products, near to the town centre, and is open 6 days a week. To help other local food outlets, we added a comprehensive list of local food producers and outlets on our website.

In November we had a (rather wet) working party to replace the 6 year old recycled timber used in our raised beds at The Rowans Care Home.

In parallel with these individual activities, our volunteers continued to maintain, the community garden sites at The Rowans Care Home, Prestbury Beaumont, and the Station Approach.

We began 2017 by delivering a talk about Local Food, as part of the Langley Lecture series. This talk charted the progress of the availability of local food around Macclesfield over the last few years, describing how our community groups, Food4Macc and Food4MaccDirect, a social enterprise, have influenced what has happened locally.

On the 16th of January we began a promotion of our allotment queue-beating Garden Share Scheme, where we are looking to increase our current stock of 12 active plots. A second phase begins on March 20th. We also hope to see Macclesfield's allotment stock transferred from Cheshire East to Macclesfield Town Council, and more nimble management arrangements put in place.

Throughout 2017 we will continue to look for projects where we can support food growing at local schools, either financially or with a couple of days teamwork to get a project started.

Colin Townend 16/3/17