



A community Smallholding

## Annual Report 2021/22



There have been some great events over the last year that have brought many of us together in safe, fun and productive ways.

There has been a lot of creative thinking about how we can develop what Blakeney Hill Growers does and stays relevant and practical to a wider community in the years to come. We have developed some of these to a certain extent with time and energy being the main barrier to them not actually being realised as yet, from a lending scheme for small holding equipment (Blakeney Borrowers) to a community orchard. We have had success raising money for fencing, which now that it is 12 years old needs some attention to keep goats in and other creatures off the veg patch.

Gatherings on the goat field, from Christmas carols to kid naming!

Membership has been steadily going up with 35 households signed up for the year ahead. With about half of them actively involved each month.

We had a treasure hunt and BBQ just after Easter that several families enjoyed and gave us a chance to show off the kids and for a fun amble through Blakeney Hill woods.

We have got several events planned for the year ahead including a plant and book sale on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May, we will have our AGM too, usually a brief and informal affair to which all members are invited and anyone interested in what we do is very welcome. We are also hoping to run an event in the autumn that will focus on food preserving, from honey spinning to making pickles and drying food to cheese making.

Mark has quietly been working on the website and face book page in the background. There is potentially more work to do here to bring it up to date but being able to join as a member on line now has been a real improvement. <https://blakeneyhillgrowers.org.uk/contact-us/> We have also added a QR code to our logo and would like to add a strap line too. We are suggesting the one at the top of this page. Comments welcome.

We applied for a grant from Awards for All and were successful in raising £5700 for putting mains water on the goat field as well as mending fencing and shelters, thanks to Penni for her work on this! It means we can be more self sufficient and secure into the future.

## Treasurer's Report

It has been a successful year from a financial perspective. We received a grant of £5700 for various important improvements, which is in this year's accounts, though it will be spent next (financial) year. Our main income is subscriptions, and, excluding the grant, we have maintained a surplus of income over expenditure. I hope to work closely with Kim over the next few months to provide a more detailed examination of each portion's budget.

ACCOUNT SUMMARY 2021/22	
opening balance	£1043.56
total income	£8140.65
total expenditure	£1353.15
closing balance	£7831.06

Excluding grant:  
total income       £2440.65  
total expenditure   £1353.15  
  
surplus 2021/22    £1093.50

Steve Shaw

## Veg Portion 2022

After unusual weather patterns in the spring of 2021 the summer months were productive and we had a fine harvest of gourds in the autumn. Brassicas, leeks and chard have kept going through the winter and are now nearly over.



The polytunnel has been mulched with a deep layer of goat muck from our own herd, and the soil in the raised beds is in better condition than it has ever been. The first salad leaves are now producing and this seasons direct sown brassicas are ready for planting out now the cold winds have finally dropped.

The spring drought has meant a poor germination rate in the direct sown beds of root crops, but the garlic seems unaffected.

When the project started there were several families with young pre school children and a few older members, as time has passed the children have grown and the parents returned to full time work. The weekday two hour working parties suits the current team of mostly older folks, however this



excludes younger working families who we would very much like to involve. A new inclusive pattern needs to be found, perhaps several working groups at different times? All ideas and newcomers welcome.

Our lease on the Chapel field is due to expire in October 2024 and thoughts are turning to the future; possibly a new site, a garden share scheme, a new village community allotment. The last two years have shown how much we value the sociable activity of growing food together and how much we benefit from it.

## Goats

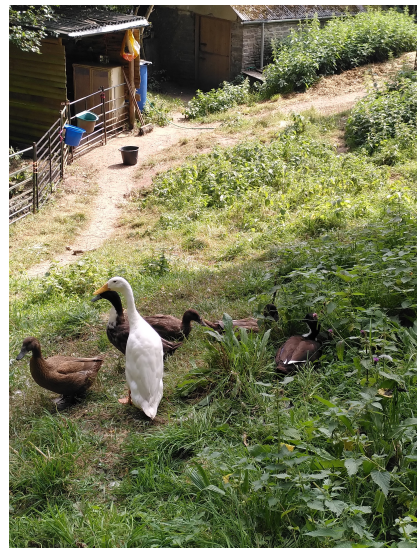


Last summer we had two male kids so our hopes for succession were put slightly off course but this spring we have had 8 kids, four boys and 4 girls so we are happily back on track. The billy was a Toggenburg, which crossed with our girls should produce a steady, friendly milker. Richard and Deena have decided it is time to step back from milking, after having been with the goats since Ava and Ami first came into milk eleven years ago, a huge thank you to them for all

their commitment, time and energy! We have welcomed Becky and Rory and now Pete to the team we have seven households with potentially space for one more household to join the goat team.

## Ducks

The ducks this year have been good layers, although too many males has lowered the egg ratio a little. We have managed to hatch another 12 ducks this spring and hoping to get the ratio back on track. They are a delight to watch on the field and the now not so new duckingham palace is working well. The next project will be to sort out the pond. We are happy to have new members that would like to get involved with the duck portion.



## Bees

Bee Portion Report April 2021 to March 2022

We started last year with three hives and with a bit of luck mixed with careful swarm management ended up with six. The bees had a good summer and gave us a dividend of 3 jars of honey for each portion member. In the autumn we decided that we would move the hives from the top part of the goat paddock where access is difficult to the top of Beki and Mark's garden where access is easier and much less remote, making it easier to keep an eye on the colonies between

inspections. The hives were moved mid winter. I have moved colonies in the depths of winter before without problem but sadly at our post winter inspection we found that four hives out of our six contained no life. All the empty hives contained stores so the bees had not starved. It leaves us with two strong hives to start this season and the opportunity to build up our numbers again. Crossed fingers that we can pick up a swarm or two.

I am standing down as portion leader but will remain an active member. Mark is taking the responsibility from me and I wish him every success. My thanks also go to Siobhan who gave me excellent support over last summer.

Richard Andrews.

## Conclusion

This is a very brief look at what we have done and some thoughts about the future. We are sure that caring for the land in community has many benefits, we can build soil carbon, locking it away so as to play a part in climate change, we can build our resilience as a community, we can produce healthy food that does not cost the earth, and we can have fun and satisfaction. We would love for more people to be able to benefit from all this and be a part of an exciting positive future. If you are interested do please get in touch. [blakeneyhillgrowers@gmail.com](mailto:blakeneyhillgrowers@gmail.com)

May 2022

Rebekah Hoyland, Chair