



# Cherry Tree Nursery

Caring for people, caring for plants.

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2011

“Thank you for the sanctuary, the sanity and the place to be. It means the world”. This message from one of our lovely volunteers sums up the need and what we endeavour to offer. It also symbolises 2011 for Cherry Tree Nursery, now 21 years old; it has been the Year of the New Volunteers’ Tearoom. We never believed this would happen, indeed even at the beginning of 2011 it did not seem it could happen, but miraculously it has! Thank you to all of you who in your different ways made it possible.

The year began with a walk through snowy fields towards the river. The water was frozen and we were thawing out the toilets, but weather never deters our volunteers, many of whom come in to the nursery rain, shine or ice. At this time we also held a celebration of the life of volunteer Tim Boswell, who had sadly passed away after being with us for nearly twenty years.

Jobs over the winter included the ‘Safer Paths’ project, replacing crumbling slabs, and the very badly needed car park extension. The horticultural season really got underway with our very best ever plant sale at the end of March, when the nursery was full to overflowing with people! We had a visit from our MP, Conor Burns, accompanied by Peter Charon, head of Bournemouth Borough Council, and were pleased they were able to take the time to listen to all volunteers’ concerns about the new welfare cuts.

Then came the excitement of raising enough money for the first phase of our sustainable buildings, being granted planning permission, and signing the contract for the building work to start in April.

Sadly, before building work could start, we had to lose our lovely white poplar tree. Taking part in planting three oak trees on Vicarage Field outside our gate does not feel sufficient



recompense for the loss of such an old friend! But the roof of the volunteers’ tearoom had by this time collapsed, and was propped up by wooden beams, and there was so much water coming through the roof that the lights had had to be disconnected, so the new buildings had become really urgent. In April the builders from DCRS came to join us, and rapidly became part of our family. We had two temporary portacabin tearooms delivered, and our old building was taken away. Suddenly, our peaceful haven was invaded by dust, noise and lorries, but no one complained, and we carried on as well as we could in a limited space. This meant it wasn’t possible to have a Potathon this year, or to invite the Chestnut volunteers over for the annual joint barbecue. Both events were greatly missed!

The building works also resulted in a more low-key 21<sup>st</sup> birthday celebration in April, but the excitement at watching the building grow was huge. We were immensely fortunate in finding two professional photographers, Newton Oliveira and Maddy Hooper, to keep a detailed record of all the building work for us. Many of their photographs were posted on Facebook, so people could watch

the progress of the work. At the end of May we held the very important Topping Out ceremony to mark reaching the highest part of the building, and to give thanks to the forest for the wood we had used. The occasion was much enhanced by the Rotary Club of Westbourne, who provided a delicious barbecue.



**T**here was a lot of public interest because the building was as sustainable as possible, and built from local natural materials such as straw, sheep's wool, red cedar and Douglas fir, with maximum insulation, and heating from an air source heat pump. This resulted in a record attendance for our annual Open Day in July, even though the building wasn't finished. We had three public viewing days before we finally moved in at the end of September. The volunteers now have a wonderful airy spacious area for rest and relaxation, a large kitchen, and three much bigger toilet areas, along with a shower, washing machine and hot water boiler. The building has a feeling of calm and peace, with a lovely natural smell, as well as being warm and comfortable. There has been an undoubted improvement in our volunteers' mental health resulting from the new buildings, and we wish we had a way to measure and record this. "Everyone likes it. We feel we belong in here. We feel at home."

Ideally, we would now love to be able to progress to the second and third phases. The ancient leaking office buildings won't last much longer! However, fundraising is getting harder and harder, with more and more charities, and less and less money available. As of this writing, we still need £300,000 for phases 2 and 3. Survival for all charities is getting more precarious, at a time when services are being closed or drastically cut, meaning their work is needed more than ever. We rely heavily on the support of local groups, charitable trusts, organisations and businesses and of all the lovely people who give us donations by standing order. We are also trying to encourage donations through Payroll Giving, but this extremely cost-effective form of giving is not well-known in this area. Very sadly, our income was further



reduced this year by the Supported Employment grant being withdrawn.

There are 158 people currently attending Cherry Tree Nursery; the majority live in Bournemouth, but some come from Poole, Dorset and Hampshire. The Nursery has received over 100 referrals this year, many more than ever before. During the course of the year, 36 people have moved on, and 34 have joined us.

The government's welfare review, cuts, and changes in benefits are having a profound effect on the mental wellbeing of the volunteers, putting extra demands on our services. Rethink has recently launched an Urgent National Mental Health Survey in response to the huge amounts of distress provoked by the Work Capability Assessment.

Figures released in November 2011 by the Consumer Credit Counselling Service show that nearly nine out of ten people with significant debt problems also have mental health problems, while research from the Royal College of Psychiatrists suggests, not surprisingly, that people with debt problems are twice as likely to experience depression and anxiety problems than the overall population. Considering that one of the main triggers of the current "economic crisis" was the mis-selling of loans to people who could not afford to pay them, it seems that the mentally ill are those who suffer all the way through the process.

Volunteers have enjoyed some wonderful outings this year. The annual Harry Roffey Day trip was a memorable combined steam railway and canal boat trip. Other visits included a very special private visit to Grove Farm, Edmondsham House and Gardens, the Margaret Green Animal Sanctuary, a sponsored walk at Abbotsbury Swannery, and a mystery tour of North Dorset, along with the usual boat trips, visit to Diana Guy's garden, trip to the Great Dorset Steam Fair, and visit to the Cherry Tree stall at Stanbridge Mill. Walks included the Arne Nature Reserve, the Bluebell Wood, and the Tall Tree Walk. A visit to the Green Energy Centre,

and another to Adam Slatter's Carpentry Workshop see the timber frame of our new building under construction, both proved very interesting. Another highlight of many volunteers' year is the annual Santa Fun Run at Badbury Rings.

The annual caravan holiday this year was crowned by a boat trip, and volunteers enjoyed the Bob Anderson Camping trip despite heavy rain! The Literacy, Numeracy, and English with the Use of Computers classes continue as usual. Horticultural classes have been limited this year due to the building programme, but are now happily starting again, with more planned for next year! Volunteers are also undertaking outside courses varying from Computer Design to Organic Gardening. A new venture planned for next year is Basic Cookery/Healthy Eating classes. Herbal workshops continue – this year's special product is the highly effective Cherry Tree Nursery Gardeners' Hand Cream, designed and produced by volunteers.

At 10 o'clock one late summer morning, we had a visit from a roe deer. Foxes are now so common that they are walking through the site in broad daylight, and sleeping in the ornamental grasses in the polytunnel! We have seen pygmy shrews, grass snakes, the humble solitary bumblebee, and many butterflies, though not so many moths. We have had a bees' nest and a wasp's nest, and are pleased to report the return of flocks of sparrows and starlings. Birds visiting include green and lesser-spotted woodpeckers, coal tits, great tits and long-tailed tits, and there is now a rookery just outside the nursery. We regularly see buzzards, sparrowhawks, kestrels and a peregrine falcon. We are trying to encourage the return of toads, while frogs and newts are multiplying, and happily eating the aphids in the greenhouse. We pride ourselves that we have not used insecticides for many years now, preferring to use natural predators. We are also trialling an organic solution to the problem of vine weevil, in the form of a naturally occurring soil fungus. Every single

one of our nesting boxes was in use this spring, and the swallows are looking for a nesting site, hopefully under the eaves of the new building next year!



During the winter we aim to have a very interesting programme of films and talks, starting with the very successful One World Week in October. We have just had a very helpful information session about the Digital Switchover, and an inspiring presentation about the Earth Charter, which we have been invited to sign up to. On a different note, we have regular visits now from Disability Employment Advisers from the Job Centre, to supplement our twice-weekly Disability Rights Advice Service. Many thanks to everyone who has provided classes, clinics, talks, outings and films for us this year!

A new venture for us in the summer was having a stall and a children's event at the Bournemouth Family Festival. We continue to have a wide range of visitors, from people from different areas wanting to set up similar projects, to new friends such as the Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset, Mrs Pitt-Rivers, who was kind enough to come on two occasions. We were pleased to have a visit from Linwood School. We are also part of a newly established network of land-based therapy projects.

The annual arrival of the Travellers led to a visit from the Channel 4 Dispatches programme; the Director spent a long time talking to some of our volunteers. A less fortunate result of the Travellers visit was the large rocks currently decorating our road!



We are all very sorry that Steve Long has left us this year, but the good news is that he and Jo now have a baby son Thomas, and Steve is enjoying working for DCRS, and, who knows, maybe he will return to build Phase 2?

We also miss dreadfully St John Mauger, who filled Steve's position on a temporary basis, but who we all took to our hearts. He has been replaced, again unfortunately only temporarily, by Sarah Giles, who is destined to go to Chestnut Nursery

and change places with Jez Norris, who we are looking forward to welcoming to our team. This will happen once Laurence Jackson is established as the new Manager at Chestnut Nursery. We all send Laurence our very good wishes in his new position. Two of our Trustees, Ben Grower and June Wood, have retired this year, and Vic Williams has joined the board, strengthening our links with Bournemouth Borough Council. SWOP has also now, after a long wait, found a new Secretary to the Trustees, the excellent Andrea Keighley.



report, our Christmas card and this newsletter by talented graphic designer Newton Oliveira who has been working with us since April. The picture on the card was painted by Cherry Tree volunteer and artist Nicki Sturgess.

At a time when there is far more pressure on charities, we recognise the need to raise more money, which means that for the first time this year we are asking you, our friends and supporters, if you can help by pledging £2 a month to Cherry Tree. What we need, to ensure we can carry on giving light and hope to our many volunteers, is a guaranteed regular income, and every little bit makes a difference. Thank you.

We have again increased our range of plants, including now growing roses. We are also growing more trees, specimen plants, vegetable plants and fruit bushes, in response to popular demand. We had the valuable help of Josh, a marketing student from Bournemouth University, in May. Thanks to Brian Hardiman of FR Aviation we now have a new milk float, and as part of the new building programme we now have a proper Bicycle Shelter and adjacent Trolley Park in the car park. The cats now have a larger shed, and the middle potting station has been refurbished. All our electrical items have been PAT tested, thanks to Malcolm Rattue. We appreciate the opportunity to spread awareness of the project by giving talks, presentations, and guided tours of the nursery to a variety of local groups and organisations.

We have a very special calendar this year. It shows the story of the building process, and was most generously designed for us, along with our building



Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has, in their different ways, helped Cherry Tree to survive, and supported it to continue along the road. There are so many of you now, that we no longer have room in the newsletter to thank you all by name, but please rest assured that all your invaluable contributions are greatly valued, and you all have a special place in our hearts. According to a recent Mind survey, mental illness now affects 30% of the population in any year. There is no doubt at all that our services are still needed! Thank you, all of you, for your kindness, help and understanding, and for making the last 21 years possible, and very special thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who inspire us daily.

**“Liberty is like the morning. There are those who sleep and wait for it to arrive, and those who stay awake and walk through the night to reach it.”**



**Cherry Tree Nursery**  
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**Our love and thanks to all of you as always, and our good wishes for a peaceful 2012.**

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