

CHERRY TREE NURSERY ANNUAL NEWSLETTER— DEC 2008

Thanks to all our volunteers, friends, supporters, customers and neighbours, Cherry Tree is now in its nineteenth year and has one hundred and sixty people on its books. During 2008, thirty people started work at Cherry Tree and eighteen moved on, two of them into full-time work, one in a plant nursery and one as a postman. We have been fortunate in gaining some highly skilled new volunteers who are benefiting from participating and contributing to the life of the nursery. Numbers increase, referrals and interest increase, sadly it seems more and more people need a safe haven in a harsh world.

The year started with the nursery resembling a building site, as bad weather delayed the completion of our new Information Centre until the end of March. Many thanks to everyone for their forbearance during this difficult period. The new building was opened on our eighteenth birthday by the Brushett family, in memory of our friends Nan and Peter. It is bigger, has more doors, and is hopefully more comfortable and pleasant for our customers. Most importantly, it gives us much more space to display and generally make available information on mental illness, the work and history of the project, other support services, and the therapeutic value of horticulture. This will hopefully help address the prejudice, stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness, and promote more understanding of the local environment.

We continue to increase the number of plant varieties we grow. The new Information Centre has been complemented by the construction of a special area for ornamental and fruit trees. We now have more bamboos and unusual plant varieties available. We also have Cherry Tree jute and cotton bags and cards, together with local honey, on sale.

The Bournemouth and Poole College Foundation have held many more horticultural courses for the general public, run by Diana Guy, at Cherry Tree in 2008. These have funded more courses for our volunteers to enjoy, joined by volunteers from our sister project at Chestnut Nursery. Visits connected to these courses included a guided tour of Stewart's Nursery and a visit to Diana's new house and garden, recently featured on BBC Gardener's World. Our wonderful literacy teacher, Enid Nixon, retired in the summer. We miss her very much, but have found an excellent replacement in our 'English with the use of Computers' teacher, Sue Cheeseman. Sue is now joined by assistant, Anna Sowter. All the classes continue to thrive, while demand grows for the services of our indispensable Citizens' Advice Bureau adviser, June Perryman. The computer class has been greatly enhanced by a marvellous donation of twelve computers from Canford School. All the students now have matching modern machines. A group of female students from Canford work here weekly, and have just organised a "mufti" day and raised enough money to pay for a pressure washer to clean the slabs, as part of our current Health and Safety review.

We have had visits from several school groups, including one from Montacute School, who have all joined in with the work of the nursery and learned about 'caring for people, caring for plants'.

Thanks to a donation from Bournemouth Borough Council a recycling area has been created and a generous local recycling firm makes a weekly collection of different items. The volunteers have a forthcoming visit arranged to a large-scale recycling centre in Southampton where they hope to discuss the recycling of surplus pots and trays.

Volunteers have enjoyed a wide variety of trips this year. They have been on a caravan holiday in Weymouth, and a camping trip to the Purbecks. They visited Kingston Maurward to sign up for courses, Brownsea Island, and Durmast House. A highly successful Potathon was followed by our annual Harry Roffey Day, this year a visit to Heale Gardens and Stonehenge. Therapeutic horticulture projects we have visited, or who have visited us, include Mayfield

Nursery, Minstead, Weymouth College, Sunnycrest Nursery and Bridewell Organic Gardens. This September volunteers went kayaking in pouring rain (two of them fell in!) and most recently they made a trip to Dorchester Market. After joining us for our Summer Barbecue, Chestnut Nursery invited our volunteers for coffee and cake. They returned to us in November for our Annual Quiz.

Thanks to the Supported Employment Scheme Cherry Tree employed Ses in February 2008 as a part-time driver. This has been a huge success, enabling regular plant deliveries to be made, and has also allowed more volunteer outings. In June Cherry Tree volunteer Anita married Karl at Bournemouth Town Hall, and volunteer Diane moved to Tasmania where she has set up our Antipodean branch.

We have had stalls this year at the offices of JP Morgan Chase, the Ellingham Show, the lovely Stanbridge Mill, and at the local Stour Valley Festival. We hope to continue to participate in this event, which in 2008 felt like another Cherry Tree event as it was held on Vicarage Fields, following the successful renewal of the Green Flag Award for the area.

Vicarage Fields was a subject of controversy in the summer, when a decision was made to site the Traveller Transit Site on this piece of land, which is next to the Nursery and alongside the access road to the site. This decision led to a very worrying time for everybody which has now thankfully been resolved. Our thanks go to Peter Charon and to Bournemouth Borough Council for all their support and for extending our lease to six years.

Volunteers were visited by three different MPs over the summer and given the opportunity to express their concerns. Our patron, Richard Drax, arranged a visit, talk and film show from explorer Colonel Blashford-Snell which left everyone spellbound. Volunteers enjoy a selection of talks and films on wet winter days including Linda Bowditch on Ancient Inca Waterways, Lorraine Exley on Andean Spirituality, and films on Climate Change, Free Range Poultry-keeping and Sustainable Living.

Cherry Tree Nursery has a long-term commitment to research and promote the connections between mental health and the natural world. Our own research continues, with ex-volunteer Matt producing an excellent report for the Open Day. He is now working on a follow-up. We are therefore thrilled to be working with the recently-opened 'Centre for Well-Being and Quality of Life' at Bournemouth University, and to have had a recent presentation of 'Eco-Psychology' from Dr Paul Stevens who hopes to set up a research project here. This represents everything we work for and promote: 'Nature is not a place to visit, it is home'.

The Volunteers of Cherry Tree Nursery Bolivia Group have had a tremendous year. They have just completed raising the staggering amount of £8,453 to enable the one hundred and seventeen families in the remote Aymara Community of Chuchulaya to have safe clean piped water. This is the fourth community in our twinned Sorata Valley area to benefit from their efforts and they have now raised nearly £20,000. Our friends from the Bolivian band, 'Expresión Bolivia' have joined us again this year. Their music, together with the sale of Bolivian crafts, help make our plant sales

into very happy events.

This winter we are continuing to improve the information area, paint the benches and improve the irrigation system. We have re-covered two polytunnels and are building a new potting station. We hope you have noticed our new signs on the New Road Roundabout.

Very sadly our much-loved Trustee, Ray Bere, had to retire due to ill-health in 2008. We send him our love and best wishes. We also send our love to the family of one of our most long-standing customers, John Thompson, who passed away this year, and to the family of the late Frank Richards.

Our friend Helga held four garden Open Days this year, with the proceeds of tea, cake and plants sold going to Cherry Tree. These highly enjoyable days enabled more people to visit her lovely garden. We would also like to thank Chrissie for her delicious soup lunches.

Other kind supporters this year have been our friends at Michael House who have given us regular donations of bread for toasting. We also made friends with Home News who wrote a big article about our work. Jay's Fish & Chips, who supply our annual Fish & Chip lunch, continue to be regular supporters, as are George Fry Ltd of Pokesdown. Two volunteers had the opportunity to go to Ferndown Golf Club in March for the presentation of a cheque from the Alliss-Merlo Pro-Am Celebrity Golf Tournament. Our long-term supporters from the Rotary Club of Bournemouth North, together with our friend Mike Clements, are helping us to upgrade our security system. We particularly value support from local groups and would like to offer thanks to the Yellow Buses, the Daily Echo and Waitrose of Winton for their generous support, to Karl Payne and Neil and Dennis Fall for their help with car repairs, as well as to all who have donated or helped prepare food for our events.

We would like to thank all our volunteers, friends, shop helpers, supporters and all the organisations who have supported us through the year, especially the Talbot Village Trust, the Bisgood Trust, Bournemouth Borough Council, the Graham Burrough Charitable Trust, the Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Foundation, the Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, First Capital Finance Ltd. Hale & Woodgreen Horticultural Society, the Incorporated Free Church Council, Kinson Tyres, the Leonard Laity Stoate Foundation and Margaret Levinson.

Thanks to two local very generous charitable trusts our electricity supply is finally being upgraded this winter. This is the first step to enable our future plans of renewing our dilapidated building to come to fruition. The leak in the volunteers' tearoom has got much worse, and we are very grateful to Bournemouth Borough Council for offering to repair it.

We thank all of you who help and support us in your many and various ways, thus ensuring that our essential work is able to continue so that we can hope to be a worthwhile part of the local community.

The world today is not an easy one to live in, and those who fall by the wayside in the increasingly stressful and competitive employment marketplace need a place of

peace and love more than ever, to re-connect with each other and with all living things. Our volunteers continue to set an example of co-operation and mutual caring, and we are grateful to them for the inspiration they give us.

Our love and thanks to you all, and good wishes for a peaceful 2009.

Please consider supporting us by making a regular contribution by standing order or remembering us in your will. Thank you.