

Cherry Tree Nursery Annual Newsletter 2015

We would like to welcome you all to Cherry Tree Nursery's 25th Anniversary Open Days and to the opening of the new Sylvia Bowditch Building, and also to thank you all for the help and support you have given us over the last 25 years. We know that it is the love and support of others that has enabled us to flourish and we will always be grateful.

2015 marks Cherry Tree Nursery's 25th Anniversary year. Although the mother charity, the Sheltered Work Opportunities Project, was set up in 1989, the original idea for the first Nursery was conceived by our wonderful founders, Cyril Speller and the Reverend Canon Roslyn Aish, many years before that. It was on 14 April 1990 that a very small band moved on to what was then a derelict and overgrown rubbish tip, nurturing dreams of something much better. We were so fortunate that Bournemouth Borough Council were able to share this hope, and they have most generously leased us the land ever since.

The words of Cyril Speller, when he welcomed a very nervous potential new staff member 25 years ago, sum up what is still the main purpose of the Nursery. Leaning on the old rusty gate at the entrance to the overgrown field he said 'People should go out of this gate feeling happier than they did when they came in.' Many years later, one of Cherry Tree's volunteers came up with our logo statement, 'Caring for People, Caring for Plants', and the two go hand in hand.

A long-term supporter of the Nursery made a very generous donation to mark our miraculous survival and



growth over the last 25 years, and this launched the 25th Anniversary Appeal, which aims to secure the future of the nursery for the next 25 years. All donations received over the course of these Open Days will go towards this appeal. There is no doubt that the need for our services is growing. We have 174 people on our books and received 114 referrals last year. Mental illness is becoming increasingly more common due to the stresses and pressures of an individualistic and competitive world, and those who cannot compete or cope in this situation need a peaceful haven where they can be valued and appreciated and feel part of a community where they belong.

The volunteers met together several times to discuss and decide how they would like to celebrate the actual 25th Birthday on 14th April 2015. Everyone agreed they would like a small and low-key celebration where we could share our memories and plan our future. This happened over the course of the birthday week. On the Monday we decorated the tearoom with balloons and banners we had made, a photographic collage and a very special wall-hanging tapestry the volunteers had made over the last few months. For this everyone was given a square of fabric on which to embroider, draw or print a small message about Cherry Tree. Please take a look: it is on the tearoom wall, and sums up what volunteers feel about the project.

The Tuesday was the actual birthday, and the day for tea, coffee and cake – and some extraordinary cakes materialised! After this we gathered together and shared our memories of the last 25 years, both those who have been here for a long time, and those who joined more recently.

One of our volunteers' favourite activities is having a hot soup lunch, so this took place on the Wednesday, thanks to our friend Chrissie. Thursday was hawks and owls, brought from the Liberty's Full Feathered Experiences, Ringwood. Then the week culminated on



the Friday with volunteers inviting their friends and family to visit the Nursery and see all we have achieved.



2015 also marks the completion of the Sustainable Building Replacement Programme, which has been ongoing for the last 5 years, ever since we launched our fundraising programme on our 20th birthday.

Work started on Phase 3, which is the Sylvia Bowditch Building, in April 2014: this forms the Nursery's new offices. Having completed all the different rooms for the volunteers in Phases 1 and 2, it was time to replace the Nursery's headquarters and abandon the damp, leaking and rotting portacabin we had been based in for so long. The third phase completes the horseshoe, and is also sustainable, constructed of local natural materials with a 'truth window' so you can see the straw bales in the walls.

We now have a large spacious, light and airy office, a proper private meeting room and a staff room, and a First Aid room. Dawn, our book-keeper, now has her own purpose-built office. For many years we struggled in damp, cold, smelly, inadequate conditions, which means we can now truly appreciate our new surroundings, and, most importantly, the volunteers' morale and self-esteem are greatly enhanced by finally having the working and relaxing surroundings they deserve.

The first phase of the building programme was opened in 2012 by HRH the Princess Royal. She shook each volunteer by the hand, an event many of you will remember. This time, after long discussions, we all decided that the building should be opened by the most important people of all, the Cherry Tree volunteers.

The volunteers discussed who should do this and their selection was unanimous: volunteer Anita Payne will therefore open the Sylvia Bowditch Building, thus inaugurating the whole complex, on July 2nd 2015 at our Annual Guests Open Day. She will be introduced by the Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset, Mr Angus Campbell.

We would like to thank all the builders from the Dorset Centre for Rural Skills who really became part of our family over the last 5 years, and all those who made the funding of phase 3 possible, especially the Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Charitable Foundation, the Talbot Village Trust, The Valentine Charitable Trust, Mrs Jean Aish and The Bisgood Charitable Trust.

The building is named in honour of our remarkable late patron, Miss Sylvia Bowditch, who lived locally and gave her considerable support to our project over the years, both personally and in her capacity as Senior Trustee of the Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Charitable Foundation, who has donated to the project every year for the last 25 years. It seems apt and fitting therefore to remember her in this way.

It would be improper not to mention at this time our other major supporters whose help made so many of our constructions possible, the Talbot Village Trust, to whom we also owe our eternal gratitude.

To mark the occasion of our 25th Anniversary, we have published a History of our first 25 years, written by a friend of the project. Please contact us if you would like a copy. We have also had an updated version of our very popular video produced. We have copies available, or it can be viewed on our website www.cherrytreenursery.org.uk. As mentioned above, the volunteers have produced their fantastic Cherry Tree tapestry, which will continue to grow, and we have set up a memory book in the shop, where visitors can record their memories and comments. Please take time to write something next time you are here.



The therapeutic benefits of horticulture for mental well-being are now much more widely recognised and promoted. Equally important though is the value of community. "It's the feeling of togetherness and supporting the environment," wrote psychiatrist Dr Patel, "the cycle of community is very important for people to feel safe, along with watering the flowers and watching the butterflies"

We are now selling more plants than ever, and try to have a much wider range of varieties available. Herbs, roses, vegetable plants, trees and fruit bushes, azaleas and bamboos have all proved especially popular, as have the planters and baskets produced by our volunteers. Seven day a week opening was extended this year thanks to two very kind friends.

Over the course of the winter we increased the size of our retail plant sales area by one-third. This was a great project for volunteers to get involved in, whether clearing the site, laying concrete, installing irrigation, or

building benches. They constructed an area for trees and an area for roses. We hope this bigger area will make shopping at the nursery easier and more comfortable for our customers

Other winter projects included re-covering and repairing polytunnels and constructing more metal benches for the greenhouse. These have been a great success, improving both plant quality and the volunteers' working day by removing the need for bending, while dealing in an environmentally friendly way with pests and diseases.

Following last year's successful trip to Cornwall, we were fortunate enough to be awarded a second holiday through the generosity of the Landmark Trust's 50 for Free scheme, marking the organisation's fiftieth anniversary. A small group of volunteers, who have never previously had a holiday, had a fantastic trip to the old railway station at Alton in Staffordshire. A different group went on the annual caravan holiday to Chichester.

We have been delighted to further develop our links with the Hengistbury Head Wildlife Garden where volunteers now have bi-monthly visits, which they love. Outings have included a walk in the New Forest, a walk round Corfe Castle and a visit to an exhibition during Dorset Art Weeks. Volunteers have also had a Marmalade-Making Day and a Soap Felting workshop.

We were very fortunate to be able to run a series of Manage Your Money workshops through Quaker Social Action, which are to be repeated in the autumn. Many thanks to Lyndsey Trinder. Volunteers found these hugely beneficial. These sessions complemented perfectly the Debt Advice offered by our Disability Rights Adviser, and the highly popular Healthy Eating and Cooking on a Budget sessions run by Annie Newbury. We are very grateful to those who kindly contributed to the funding of these invaluable workshops.



Everyone at Cherry Tree was devastated in May to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of long-term volunteer Andy Menezes ('Menz'). He came in every day and his smile and cheeky laugh brought joy to all our days. We are naming the Library, where he was in charge of photocopying, after him.

The loss of Andy only reinforces the importance of our Annual Day of Celebration and Remembering, when friends and families join us to remember those who are no longer with us, but are here for always really. This year this will take place on Friday 30th October.



We would like to thank all the kind people who responded to our break-in earlier this year. With the funds raised or pledged we have been able to purchase an alarm system for the shop, along with an extra camera and lights and Ken Cole from Moose International constructed a magnificent donation box out of a fire extinguisher for the shop.

When a new branch of Tesco opened in Kinson recently, the store held a competition for the local community to choose a nearby charity to support. A group of volunteers went down to the ceremony, and, contrary to all expectations, Cherry Tree was the winner. A great roar went up! We are honoured by this mark of acceptance and recognition from the local community. We are also pleased that Sally from the new store now comes to help with our events.

The knitting and sewing group goes from strength to strength, and has widened its links with the local community. The sale of the group's produce has now raised over £2,000 for the Nursery. Volunteers contrive to support the local food bank and have much appreciated having trainee community police officers here on placement, knowing that often now the police are the chief source of support for the mentally ill in crisis.

We are very grateful to the Rotary Clubs of Bournemouth North and Westbourne who have provided barbeques for our plant sales and for our annual reunion with our sister project at Chestnut Nursery. The Bournemouth North group also provided volunteers with a delicious cream tea! J P Morgan and Nationwide have both held plant sales for us and HSBC are providing a group of workers for a day. Helga Aldersey generously opened her lovely garden in aid of Cherry Tree. We now have a new band, 'the Darwins', joining our own group 'the Propagators' and our musical performances at our plant sales are even more popular.



Local magazine the Kinson Link continues to publish Trevor's monthly gardening tips column, and includes Cherry Tree's events in its listings. We would like to thank the Rev Sue for her blessing and community singing, and Tish Borrowman for running the Bournemouth Marathon in aid of Cherry Tree.

We were fortunate to have a group from Bournemouth University, Students 4 Community, placed with us in March. They enthusiastically helped us with social media and were kind enough to set up a blog for us – <http://cherrytreenursery.wordpress.com>. This is now looked after by a volunteer who is keeping it updated with poems. The students also ran a very successful tombola at our plant sale.

There have been plenty of butterflies this year, including orange tips, brimstones, peacocks, red admirals, speckled woods and commas. For the first time this year Trevor has watched over 100 baby crickets breeding by the pond. There are lots of damselflies now, and adult frogs. There was a good quantity of frogspawn this year. Many hedge sparrows have visited along with blackbirds, robins and swallows. Many birds have nested in the hedge, and a least two foxes are seen regularly.

We all send our congratulations to Cherry Tree volunteer Anna on her recent wedding, and to two volunteers who got jobs recently.

The tragic results of the cuts in mental health services have been in the news a lot recently. In 4 years, mental health budgets have been cut by 10%, at the same time as demand, reflected in referrals to mental health services, has risen by 20%. Even though the issue now has more media coverage, people with mental health problems are still faced with prejudice, ignorance and fear. There remains an acute shortage of single person housing, many supported lodgings are closing down and people are being pressurised to move on before they are ready. For many of our volunteers employment in the open job market will never be possible. Only 5.7% of people with severe mental illness have a job, while in some areas the percentage is only 1%. The meaningful occupation undertaken at Cherry Tree enables any person to learn that they are respected, valued and loved.

A group of psychologists have identified five "austerity ailments" which directly link austerity policies to increased mental distress, and read like the characteristics of depression. They are: humiliation and shame, isolation and loneliness, fear and distrust, instability and insecurity, and feeling trapped and powerless. With a further £30 billion worth of cuts threatening, it is no wonder the Mental Health Policy Group estimates that 2 million more adults in the UK will experience mental health problems by 2030. It is estimated that poor mental health costs the UK economy £105 billion per year.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our lovely friends and supporters. There isn't room to mention you all here, and some are already thanked elsewhere in this newsletter. We would however like to give special mention to the local Lodges of Moose International, Kinson Conservative Club, the Co-op in Charminster, J P Morgan/Chase, Eventide Homes, the residents of Homelands House, the Rotary Clubs of Bournemouth North, Westbourne and Wimborne, Mr & Mrs Terry Redman, the Lodge of Hospitality and Concord, Bournemouth Transport Ltd, the Foresters Charity Stewards Trust, Lesley Frampton, Phillipa Forrest, I-Mac Security Systems, Norman Aish and the Bournemouth Incorporated Free Church Council.

We send you all our love and thanks, and hope you will be able to continue to support us for the next 25 years!

"What I like about Cherry Tree is that you can go off the boil in your life and come back to Cherry Tree and they will put you back together again" - A volunteer

"Nothing in nature lives for itself
Rivers don't drink their own water
Trees don't eat their own fruit
A flower's fragrance is not for itself
Living for one another is the rule of nature."

The image shows a background of various potted plants, including pink flowers. In the foreground, there is a white square containing the Cherry Tree Nursery logo. The logo features a tree and the text "Charity for people living longish" and "Cherry Tree Nursery".

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