

CHERRY TREE NURSERY ANNUAL NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2010

This newsletter comes with our very best wishes to all of you in this, Cherry Tree's twentieth year, and our thanks to all the people who have made the last twenty years happen. We are especially remembering the two men who made it all possible, our founders Cyril Speller and the Rev Canon Roslyn Aish.



We celebrated our twentieth birthday in April with a big party in a hired marquee with balloons, and the sun shone for us. Our twentieth anniversary year coincides with the seventieth birthday of Bob Ferris, Cherry Tree's first volunteer who planted the first cherry tree in 1989!

The focus of 2010 for Cherry Tree has been our Sustainable Building Replacement Programme. Rob and Adam from the Dorset Centre for Rural Skills first revealed the initial design at our birthday party. At the same time, the major fundraising appeal was launched for the buildings.

Our efforts this year have been concentrated on achieving Phase 1, the most important part of the new buildings, consisting of the volunteers' new tearoom, together with the kitchen and the toilet block and washing facilities. Thanks to the magnificent generosity of our friends and supporters, and a lot of hard work by many people, the funding for the first phase is now secure and efforts are underway to raise the money for the second stage. As the cold and damp of winter sets in, we dream of comfortable, light-filled buildings insulated with straw and sheep's wool, warm and cosy and truly sustainable.



We have had some wonderful recognition of our work this year. The fact that we have been able to raise over £200,000 since the launch in April shows how many people believe in us, and we have also done really well for awards in 2010. Starting with the Ellingham and Ringwood Show Nurseries' Cup, we also won the cup for Bournemouth in Bloom's Best Improved Horticultural Project.



There was great excitement in the nursery when we heard that we had been short-listed for the Wessex Charity Awards, following a nomination by a member of the public. At the end of September a group of volunteers, staff and trustees attended the Gala Charity Dinner at the Winchester Guildhall where the winners were announced. To everyone's surprise and delight we were chosen as Wessex Charity of the Year!!

This award goes well with the Dorset Business Awards Charity of the Year. Winning the Co-operative Community Partnership Scheme's Award for Wiltshire and Dorset in November brought fond memories of Cyril Speller and of Peter and Nan Brushett, who would have been so pleased to hear of our continuing relationship with the Co-operative Society.

There are currently 160 people on our books. During the course of 2010, 23 new people have started and 21 have moved on, one to full-time work in a plant nursery and another to a full-time accounting position! It is not an easy time for voluntary organisations, with services closing and more groups applying to funders who have less money available, but the charity SWOP knows well that its services are needed more than ever.

Sue Cheeseman continues to inspire volunteers with her Literacy, Numeracy and English with the Use of Computers classes, while Diana Guy has enthralled volunteers from both nurseries, as well as members of the public, with her horticultural classes. Her current Tree Course has involved visits to Hilliers Arboretum & Canford School grounds

SWOP has been very fortunate this year to gain two dedicated new trustees, Sophie Manners, our long-term Community Psychiatric Nurse, and June Perryman, our wonderful adviser from Poole Citizens Advice Bureau.



We have also now recruited a new Treasurer, Roy Edgley FCA. Two new staff members have joined the Cherry Tree team, Office and Plant Sales Organiser Lisa-Marie Barrett, and Book-keeper Dawn Northover.

We very sadly lost two volunteers this year who had both been with us since the very early days. John Ellis and Mike Walker both made an enormous contribution to Cherry Tree and are remembered with love. Everyone was deeply saddened at the beginning of the year to learn of the loss of our committed and understanding former trustee, Ray Bere, and of our long-term photographer, Phil Cutler. Sadly Roslyn Aish's widow, Jean, died recently, but it was lovely for us to have the opportunity to remember him with members of his family. We think often of all the volunteers and friends we have lost, who are always in our hearts.

After twenty years, it's not only our buildings which are old and worn out! Work now involves repairs and replacement rather than expansion, and the repair work takes up a lot of time and money. We have had to replace the timber and polythene on three of our polytunnels, which didn't survive the gales. Two potting stations have been rebuilt and a hard-standing area for bulk handling of compost constructed. We have now re-vamped the Sales Tunnel with a new cover and a side opening with a new floor and new benches.



The major undertaking for winter 2010-11, through the generosity of a local charitable trust, is the Safer Paths project. The slab paths were laid many



years ago and are now crumbling and in urgent need of replacement, so a team of volunteers are working hard to construct non-slippery and long-lasting new ones. This provides a good exercise in teamwork!

At the same time we are taking up some of the very old gravel on the standing-out beds, which is now full of weeds, and trying to make more sensible use of the space available. Our site sadly cannot get any bigger, so every available inch needs to be allocated carefully! The size of the car park is also a worry, as more and more people visit the nursery. There are plans to enhance the parking area, and also to offer much improved bicycle storage facilities.

It was a difficult start to the year for plant growers with the prolonged period of cold weather, but a nice spring enabled sales to catch up. The more plants we sell, the harder it is to find cutting material to produce the varieties we need. We still endeavour to find a till system that will enable us to accommodate both trade and retail sales, and we are still unable to find anyone to work on our database to set up an effective stock control and sales system.

We responded to popular demand this year by growing more young vegetable plants, which also enabled us to have some lovely pumpkin soup! We continue to expand our range of plants and trees, and our plant sales have continued to increase, though it remains to be seen how we will be affected by the VAT rise in January. Our three annual plant sales have become essential events in the local calendar. We have a greater range of stalls every time! This year's three plant sales have been the most successful in the nursery's history!



Catherine Marshall continues to run a series of herbal workshops; the most recent plan is to produce a special Cherry Tree Nursery Gardeners' Hand Cream to sell at our first plant sale of 2011. The first results look very promising!

The volunteers' annual spring caravan holiday in Weymouth was followed by the annual Bob Anderson Camping Trip, which returned to the Purbecks again. These holidays are essential for some of the volunteers, who would not be able to get away otherwise.

They also enjoy a wide selection of outings. We returned to the New Forest Show this year, as well as visiting among other places the Great Dorset Steam Fair, the Ice Cream Farm, Larmer Tree Gardens, Stapehill Abbey, Stanbridge Mill, the annual day at the beach, and a selection of boat trips.



Following a successful one-day Potathon in May, the annual Harry Roffey Day coach trip visited Staunton Country Park. The volunteers are currently looking forward to visits to Dorchester Market and the reindeer at Stewarts Gardenlands, and to the annual Quiz competition with our friends from Chestnut Nursery. They will soon be participating in the annual Santa Fun Run organised by the Wimborne Rotary Club, for the second year running, to raise money for the Sustainable Replacement Building Fund.

Helga Aldersey has opened her lovely Bournemouth garden in aid of Cherry Tree on several occasions. She is a real plantswoman and her garden is a pleasure to visit and enjoy tea and home-made cake. John

Harvey has gone to a great deal of trouble to prepare fascinating winter talks for the volunteers, on subjects ranging from planets to dinosaurs.

Many thanks to Craig McCombie from Bournemouth Adult Learning, who has been very helpful in assisting volunteers to sign up for courses, and to DEAs Lyn Smith and Heather White, who have been helping volunteers understand the new system.

Schools have continued to visit the nursery this year for planting activities and to learn about the work of Cherry Tree. They also took part in our May 'Grow Your Own' workshop. Cherry Tree made a number of visits to Pokesdown Primary School to help them create more growing spaces. This involved seed sowing, building bug boxes and planting wildlife-friendly plants donated by Cherry Tree. At Easter, children visited the nursery to make willow Easter baskets, and during the Stour Valley Festival story-telling activities took place.

Volunteers organised a sponsored walk to raise money for the new buildings, which took place on one of the wildest days of the year, but they still managed to raise over £2,500!!



We hosted One World Week for the second year running, and had a fantastic selection of speakers and films. Richard Broomfield from QBL came all the way from Saffron Walden to tell us about the volunteers' current water project in Bolivia which he had visited earlier this year. We heard about the plans for a local Wind Farm near Wareham, about permaculture, and about work to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. We watched films about Canada and Ecuador, and had a wide range of fairly and ethically traded items on sale.

Don't forget to visit our website www.cherrytreenursery.org.uk, where you can watch the two new short videos the marvellous Simon Cox has made for us this year. Our thanks to Simon, and to Ian Smith for his invaluable help with the website. Thanks also to Matthew Israel for designing our latest volunteer evaluation questionnaire, and for producing a new Business Plan for us!



We want to thank everyone who has helped us in 2010, and over the last twenty years, especially all our loyal customers. We would like to mention Brian Hardiman of FR Aviation who generously donated a milk float, and the St George's Methodist Church and the Westbourne Rotary Club who supported us most generously, along with all our regular local supporters including Inge Axt-Simmonds, Richard Drax MP, the Forge Garage, George Fry, Jay's Fish and Chips, the Kinson Conservative Sunday Lunch Club, Kinson Tyres, Margaret Levinson, Iris Leppard, the Penny Serenaders, Rick Raumann, Ida Roffey, the Rotary Club of Bournemouth North, the Saunders family, Doreen Stewart, St Michael's Lodge and the staff of the Stour Valley Local Nature Reserve.

We would also like to give special thanks to our long-term supporters the Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Foundation, Richard Bagley, the Archer Trust, Miss Jean Bisgood, Bournemouth Borough Council, Bournemouth Borough Council Strategic Services, the Dorset Healthcare NHS University Foundation Trust, the Holdenhurst Charity, the Incorporated Bournemouth Free Church Council, JP Morgan Chase Bank, Arthur and Doreen King, the Baroness Maddock, the Pitt-Rivers Charitable Trust, the Talbot Village Trust, the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation and the Valentine Charitable Trust

More than anyone we would of course like to thank our volunteers, who continue to amaze us in many ways, but especially by their altruism, their care for others. Between them, they have chosen to give 47% of their total

Christmas present allowance to others this year. The good causes they have adopted this year are Casa Alianza, Médecins sans Frontières, their Bolivian water project, and our own new building fund.

Whatever plans develop over the forthcoming year, visitors are likely to have to face some disruption when coming to the nursery, with building work and repair and replacement work going on. We hope you will bear with us, and that we will become a far more pleasant and interesting place to visit.



One of the interesting findings revealed by Bournemouth University's ongoing research project, 'the Horticultural Nursery as a Restorative Environment', is how many people, whether customers, friends, volunteers or general visitors, say that as they walk down the rough track to the nursery they feel a lifting of tension, a shedding of cares and worries, an anticipation of love and friendship and laughter. This says much about the power of nature to restore wellbeing.

The most important aspect of the work of Cherry Tree Nursery is the restoring of dignity. No matter how powerless and excluded people may be, how hard the struggle, once they have dignity they have strength and hope, and tomorrow becomes possible again.



Our love and thanks to all of you as always, and our good wishes for a peaceful 2011.



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Thank you.

