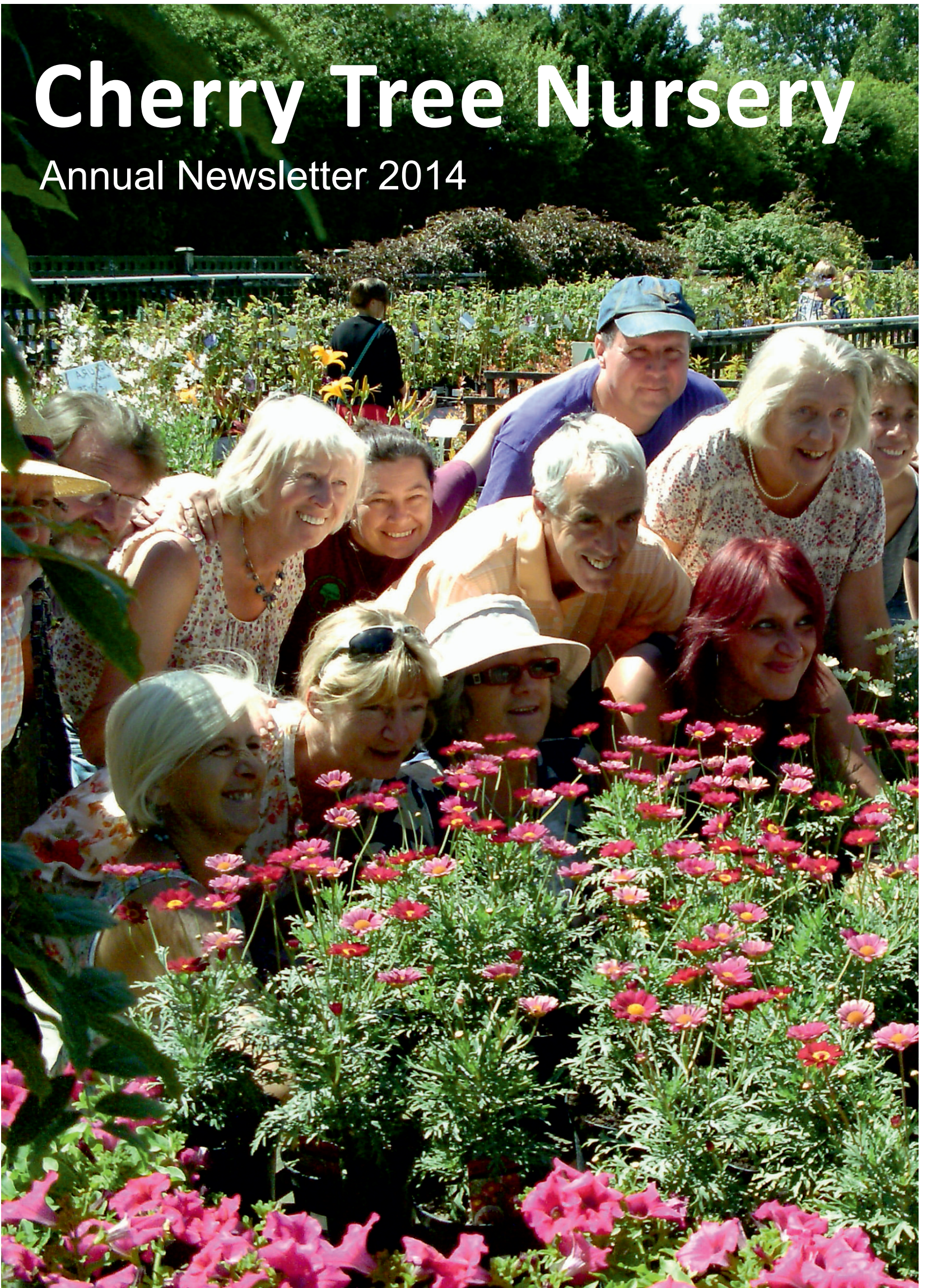


Cherry Tree Nursery

Annual Newsletter 2014



Twenty-five years ago, two dedicated and inspirational men had the vision of a plant nursery where people could work together in a supportive and pressure-free environment, restoring self-esteem, dignity and happiness. It is thanks to Cyril Speller and the Reverend Canon Roslyn Aish that, on 14th April 1990, four volunteers, one part-time member of staff seconded from the local health authority, and a dog named Gus started the long process of clearing an abandoned and overgrown site which came to be known as Cherry Tree Nursery. It is to these two individuals and to the owners of the site, Bournemouth Borough Council, who so providentially leased us the land, that our first thanks must go twenty-five years later, but our sincere thanks also go to everyone who reads this newsletter, for every one of you has played your part in enabling something to happen that twenty-five years ago did not seem possible. We hope that all those of you who have played your part will also share your memories with us. In the New Year we will set up a book in the shop to enable you to do so as part of our anniversary celebrations.

Fourteen years ago, we were fortunate to have filmmaker Simon Cox join us to make a video of our work, 'The Cherry Tree Nursery Story'. In 2014, he came back to make an updated version. 'Celebrating 25 years of Cherry Tree Nursery', which was released at the Open Day. Simon was astonished to see how much things had changed, and how much harder life is now for those with mental health problems. You can watch both versions on our website here <http://www.cherrytreenursery.org.uk/>. But although much has changed, some things remain the same: our ethical basis, the basic human need for community, the restorative powers of the natural world and being outdoors, and our volunteers' amazing capacity to love, support and care for each other – which are the fundamental reasons for everything we do.

Cherry Tree Nursery will especially remember 2014 for being the year of the building of Phase 3 – our new office and staff room, meeting room, first aid room and a new working area for our bookkeeping. Having completed all the facilities for the volunteers in 2013, it was time to renew the heart of the nursery operations. As we only moved in to Phase 2 at the end of 2013, we were unbelievably fortunate, mainly through the support of local trusts, organisations and individuals, to secure the funding for the third phase so quickly. It seemed as if everyone wanted the Sustainable Replacement Building Programme to be completed. We are so grateful to have found and worked with the Dorset Centre for Rural Skills throughout, and to know that they believe in what we are doing as much as we do – we don't want them to go!

This phase has been by far the most disruptive to the smooth running of the nursery for volunteers, staff, friends and customers, as it involved transporting the damp, leaking and dilapidated portacabins housing the old offices across the nursery, and digging up all the telephone and electric cables. Miraculously the buildings survived the move, but the relocation meant that the reception was no longer at the entrance, and that it was far harder for staff to monitor comings and goings, problems and general activities. We would like to thank you all for your patience and understanding during the construction work.

The new offices, which we plan to move in to at the beginning of 2015, are to be named in honour of our late patron and benefactor, Miss Sylvia Bowditch.





We hope to have a formal opening and blessing of the whole building complex in 2015 and look forward to showing it to many of you. We all enjoy the sustainable buildings, with their natural feel, look and smell, the love that has gone in to them, and the fact that they are built of local natural materials, such as straw, timber, wool and flax.

like to thank the kind people and groups who generously make by hand and donate to us lovely items to sell in the shop, to complement the pieces sewn and knitted by our volunteers, and those who supply us with fairly and ethically traded goods. Another big thank you goes to the wonderful friends and volunteers who have opened the nursery at weekends for us. We are sure our customers appreciate this as well, especially the weekend tea and coffee service!

We currently have 173 people on our books, almost equal numbers of men and women. During the course of the year 29 new people have started and 24 have moved on, while we have received 84 referrals. Referrers tell us that sadly, there is a huge shortage of places to go to. We continue to receive visits from people seeking inspiration to set up similar projects in other places: we often hear that every community needs a Cherry Tree!



2014 started with a prolonged period of wet weather, making work difficult. We lost several polytunnel covers in the gales, and had much repair and renewal work to do, as well as constructing a donated metal building as an additional indoor working area, and multi-purpose metal benches for the greenhouse. We are extremely grateful to all the donors who have made and continue to make our winter projects possible. This winter there are more tunnels to cover and more benches to construct, thanks to the support of local organisations and individuals. We have also realised that we need to expand our sales area again. There is no longer sufficient space to display all the many plant varieties we produce; this makes it difficult for customers and reduces plant quality, so we hope to increase the size of the display area by one third. All this work will keep the volunteers very busy until plant work starts again, and they enjoy the wide variety of tasks available.

Our volunteers continue to enjoy a variety of courses outside the busy horticultural period. We have been running Literacy and Numeracy courses since 1992. Our teacher, Sue Cheeseman, also offers Literacy with the Use of Computers, which can enable volunteers to progress to outside training, signing up at an annual session. Other volunteers have chosen to undertake courses in Needlework, Japanese Culture, 19th Century History and Comparative Philosophy. We were concerned that our Healthy Eating and Cooking on a Budget courses might have to stop following the withdrawal of funding to the Dorset Food and Health Trust, but a lifelong friend of the Nursery recognised their value, and enabled Annie Newbury's very popular workshops to continue, and lovely smells and happy smiles now fill the tearoom on Wednesdays.

25 years ago, we grew only a few hundred varieties, mainly large quantities of landscape plants. Now we sell hardly any of these! Most popular today are cottage garden plants, perennials, grasses, bamboo, herbs, fruit and vegetables. We grew a lot more trees and roses this year, and for the first time volunteers made and sold 200 hanging baskets. More customers now want a ready-made garden and are looking for bigger and more well-established plants. Particularly popular is *Griselinia littoralis* hedging, to the extent that we had a special day, reminiscent of the Potathon, when we potted over 4,000 of them and volunteers really enjoyed the team spirit. There has also been a big increase in the sale of local honey, logs and kindling. We would



At the beginning of the year, Diana Guy gave a series of classes on the Plants and People of New Zealand, and started her next series of sessions, which is to be on Fruit, with a visit to the local orchard at the New Leaf allotment project. Catherine Marshall runs an annual herbal workshop, and a series of one-off talks and presentations are given – this year including an informative presentation from our local recycling officer, a subject the volunteers feel very strongly about. One very interesting opportunity to learn more about local and global issues is One World Week, organised for us every year by Carl Richards and the World Development Movement; volunteers have the chance to choose the subjects for films and presentations.

Every year a group of volunteers go on a caravan holiday together. In 2014 they returned to Chichester for a second time, and had a fantastic trip, dancing together on the final evening! A very special extra this year was a few days in Cornwall, courtesy of the Landmark Trust, which made it possible for a small group of volunteers who had not had a holiday for a very long time to stay in a fifteenth century cottage and enjoy holiday activities varying from dipping in rock pools, horse-riding and walks on the beach to sitting by the fire and eating well!

Harry Roffey Day 2014 took the form of three greatly enjoyed minibus trips: Larmer Tree Gardens, Cranborne Manor Gardens, and Edmondsham



House and Gardens – thanks to all these venues for making it possible. Volunteers have recently been on a Murder Mystery Tour and a visit to Salisbury Market. They were invited to an art studio during Dorset Art Weeks, and visited the new Hengistbury Head Information Centre, and Slades Farm Community Garden. Walks were enjoyed in Moors Valley and the New Forest, and the day at the beach and the visit to the Great Dorset Steam Fair are always highlights.

It is very important to have events at the nursery that everyone can enjoy, like the winter soup lunches. The 24th birthday took the form of a non-denominational blessing and re-dedication ceremony conducted by our new friend the Rev Sue. As a result we discovered that we really enjoy singing! We have an annual barbecue with our sister project, Chestnut Nursery, which was generously provided this year by the Rotary Club of Westbourne, and a wonderful new event for 2014 was a delicious cream tea, which was very kindly put on for us by the Rotary Club of Bournemouth North with lots of happy faces.

We held the second annual Day of Celebration and Remembering for those we have lost, but not forgotten. This event has already become very important to us all, as we are joined by families and friends to celebrate the lives of those who are no longer here with us, but at the same time will always be with us. The candle-lit ceremony, held on the Friday nearest to November 1st, is followed by a joyful and colourful feast, featuring pumpkins of course! During 2014 we have very sadly lost our first original volunteer, Bob Ferris, our long-term book-keeping volunteer George Rampley, – who had a wonderful send-off at the New Road roundabout – newer volunteer Stephen Gulliford, and, very recently, pioneer of therapeutic horticulture and supporter of Cherry Tree since the beginning, Nick Sayner. We also received a wonderful contribution made from the estate of the late volunteer, Peter Wade.





While we were very sorry to hear of the death of our patron Sir Stephen Hammick, who gave us a lot of support in our early days, it was a great pleasure to welcome a new patron, Mrs Valerie Pitt-Rivers, when she retired as Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset.

Our friend Pam Shrubbs recently completed a Plants for Wildlife painting, much admired by everyone, which is featured on a board outside the shop. We are anxious to help encourage customers to make their gardens as friendly to wildlife as possible, and one of our volunteers is updating the information we provide. We have had very great numbers of grasshoppers in the nursery this year and two or three different sorts of crickets. We were joined by a rescue hedgehog in the spring, and were thrilled to see toads return to the pond this year, which has also been a good one for butterflies and bumblebees. And our friendly fox is still with us. Over the lovely summer, Cherry Tree was the venue for two important events. The reception for Trevor's daughter Jade's wedding to Marq took place here in June, and the Rotary Club of Bournemouth North held a special Garden Party here in August. A small number of volunteers were able to enjoy attending these events, which can only reinforce our links with the local community. We are grateful to Ian Connell and Sue Lynch who supported us through opening their lovely gardens to the public. Trevor is now a journalist, writing a monthly column 'Trevor's Gardening Tips' for the local monthly publication the Kinson Link. They have a

lovely photo of him by the pond disguised as a gnome!

Our biggest events are our three annual plant sales, held at the end of March, beginning of July, and end of September. These events have become very popular and much-anticipated, with a positive happy atmosphere, and many people stay for a long time, as they offer far more than high quality plants at reduced prices. This year we have been immensely fortunate in having a tempting barbecue provided by the Rotary Clubs of Bournemouth North and Westbourne with a delicious smell!

Being an active part of the community is very important to us, and we have enjoyed hosting a variety of local groups at the nursery. We wholeheartedly thank the many groups, organisations and businesses who have supported us. It is not possible to mention them all, but we particularly would like to thank our long-term supporters such as the Moose International Winton Lodge No 181, Kinson Conservative Club, the Incorporated Bournemouth Free Church Council, George Fry Ltd, Norman and Lupita Aish, Catherine Archer, the Catenian Association, the customers of Charminster Co-operative, Bearwood Post Office and Hillview Post Office and Waitrose in Winton. The Inner Wheel of Ferndown presented us with a sack truck, and we have benefited from weeding parties who joined us from HSBC and LV=. St. John and Jez enjoyed a visit to Hall and Woodhouse to receive a generous donation. Thanks to them we now have baby-changing facilities! JP Morgan Chase have held plant sales for us and sold our goods at their events, and we have good links now with their Green Team. Nationwide also sold our plants at their headquarters. We recently received our first Sponsorship donations sponsorship for our 25th anniversary celebrations from the Foresters Friendly Society, Court "Henbury" No 5779 of The Wessex Area and Wimborne.





In these hard times of slashed benefits and sanctions, acute shortage of social housing, debt, poverty and homelessness, our most essential service is that provided by our indispensable Disability Rights Adviser, Tish Borrowman. More and more people are needing to be accompanied to

appointments, medicals and tribunals. As if all her work for the volunteers was not enough, she also ran the Bournemouth Marathon for us, raising £600! We would like to thank Psychiatrist, Dr Searle, who cycled from Lands' End to John O'Groats, splitting the sponsorship between Cherry Tree and the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

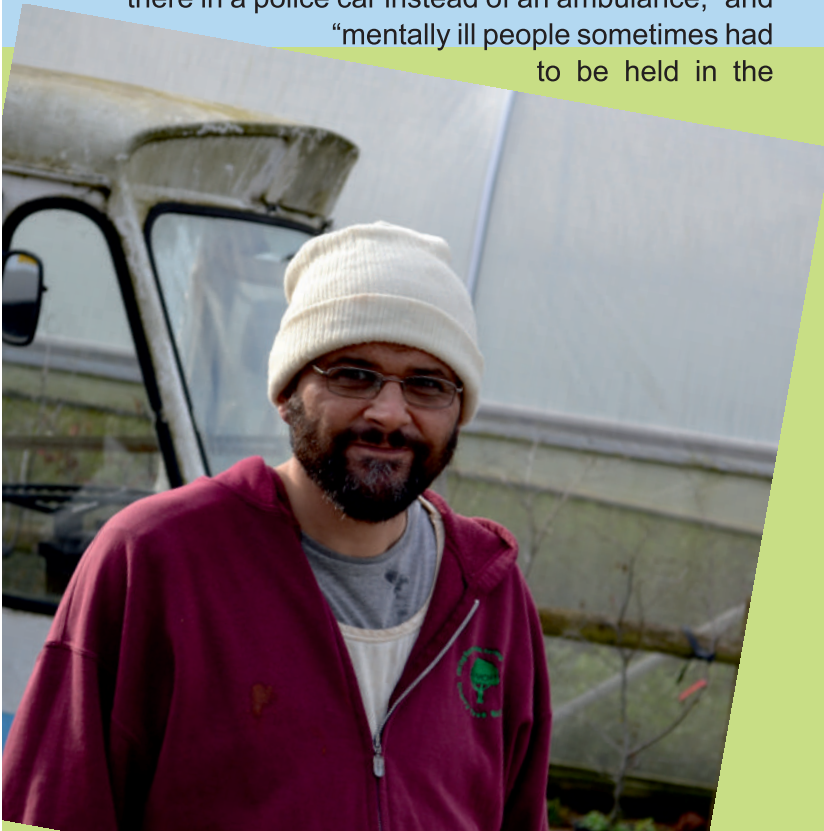
We are always pleased to have students come to spend the day working with us to learn about what we do. This November, for the third time, a trainee police officer joined us for a week. This placement is particularly relevant at a time when an acute shortage of mental health services has resulted in many police officers spending 25% of their time dealing with people with mental health problems, according to the Home Secretary, Theresa May. A recent article in the Guardian quotes a new report which "shows that more than 75% of people being taken to places of safety go there in a police car instead of an ambulance," and "mentally ill people sometimes had to be held in the

police car or van which had brought them until a place became free." It says that nearly half the people under 18 detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act are taken to police stations rather than healthcare provision. In 2012-13 people with mental health problems were detained in police custody more than 7000 times because no beds were available.

Mental healthcare, or the lack of it, has been in the news a lot recently. "The continued cuts to funding of mental health services are taking a significant toll on their quality and availability," according to Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind. Yet it is very clear that people who do not receive help in the early stages of their illness can suffer profound consequences. One-third of families include someone with a mental illness, and mental health problems account for one-third of all GP visits and 23% of the total "burden of disease" in the UK; they are the biggest killer of men aged 20-49. The Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies says mental illness cost the economy £100 billion last year, yet 75% of people received no treatment at all. She reports that the number of working days lost to stress, anxiety and depression has risen by 24%, yet over the same period the number of beds available has decreased by 10%. "Mental illness causes more suffering in our society than physical illness, poverty or unemployment, yet we do little about it."

Despite the relatively high profile mental ill-health has achieved, discrimination and lack of understanding unfortunately continue. An article in the Independent this year revealed that over 60% of people with mental health problems believe that the result of the discrimination they experience is worse than the symptoms of the illness. According to research by Bupa, 94% of UK business leaders believe prejudice is still an issue.

Poverty and loneliness are growing problems. The Child Poverty Action Group says that "the proportion of people in absolute poverty in families living with disability has gone up each year since 2009 and now stands at a shocking 22%." In October, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said global inequality was at its worst levels since 1820. Loneliness has become an epidemic among young people. A 2014 survey by Age UK showed that more than two million people in this country are "often or always" lonely. "Social isolation is as potent a cause of early death as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Loneliness is twice as deadly as obesity," wrote George Monbiot in an article 'The Age of Loneliness is killing us.' The essence of humanity, he says, is our connectedness, and this is what we have lost. We cannot cope alone.



An increasing concern is the increase of 25-30% in the numbers of children and young people seeking help for serious psychological problems each year. Self-harm and suicide attempts are rising; the charity Young Minds calls it a "hidden epidemic," says the digital world massively increases young peoples' stress levels, and emphasises the acute shortage of help available. These risks were highlighted in The Daily Echo on 5th November. In an interview Martyn Underhill, police and crime commissioner for Dorset, points out that only 6% of the mental health budget is spent on children and young people. "Why can't we treat someone who is mentally ill with the same respect as if they were physically ill? Mental illness is not taken seriously enough, not enough resources are put in..."



We would like to thank from the bottom of our hearts everyone who has helped us over the last 25 years. We know that we are still here because of the goodwill and generosity of spirit of all of you, and we want you to know how much this is appreciated by the over 700 people who have passed through Cherry Tree's books. It is not easy for charities to survive, as more and more pressure is put on them, and resources are very scarce. We hope you may feel moved to support us in some way during our 25th year, if only by buying your plants from us. The best way to support Cherry Tree is by standing order, which is why we have enclosed a form. A very small amount helps ensure a regular income. Or organise a coffee morning or sponsored event! Our love and thanks goes out to you all.

Our wonderful volunteers continue to be active supporters of the local Food Bank, collecting food and money throughout the year. They strongly believe in giving back, in solidarity and reciprocity. Many of them donate part, or all, of their annual Christmas gift to charities like Médecins sans Frontières. They have just completed another year of fundraising to bring life-saving clean and drinkable water supplies to desperately poor Aymara communities in Bolivia. Another remote community, which has over 260 nights of frost every year and no means of heating, is now having a piped water supply installed thanks to money raised by our hard-working volunteers. They also organise their own Knitting and Sewing group, which takes place locally, and they have now invited the Dementia Knitting group to join them. They organise their own Christmas dinner outing, as well as looking forward to the annual Cherry Tree party. One of them wrote recently: "From the moment I started attending Cherry Tree I felt an amazing sense of belonging, of community and of hope....Had it not been for Cherry Tree, I do not believe I would be alive today....."

A recent donor wrote: "I enclose a donation to mark your 25th birthday. I have been lost in admiration of the work you have done through the nursery over the years – particularly how you have coped with the increasing complexities of helping people with mental health problems, rather than just complaining about them!"



“If humanity still has hopes of survival, it is through our astounding capacity for human tenderness, and our hope of growing better together with others.”

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