

HISTORY OF CHERRY TREE

The Sheltered Work Opportunities Project was set up by a group of concerned people who had been involved in supporting people with severe and enduring mental illness. They wished to help educate and rehabilitate by providing a range of opportunities for therapeutic land-based activities such as horticulture.

The initial committee consisted of the Reverend Canon Roslyn Aish, Cyril Speller, Cyril Davies and Brenda Butcher, who all had some involvement with mental health. They needed to find individuals who had the relevant experience in business, law and industry and recruited Peter Allsebrook, Richard Bagley and Martin Stewart.

SWOP was granted charitable status in November 1989.

The Sheltered Work Opportunities Project was set up and granted charitable status in 1989. A former nursery site from Bournemouth Borough Council was secured and the venture was under way. At this time the site was just a piece of overgrown land that needed fencing, clearing and cultivating. It was decided to concentrate on shrubs, as these can be sold at any time of the year.

August 1989 saw the first Open Day and the first donations were forthcoming. In 1990 water and electricity arrived and initial stocks of 1500 "Mother Plants" were planted. The Dorset Healthcare NHS Trust provided an old mobile chiropody unit portacabin and a greenhouse was erected.

Chris Legg was seconded from the NHS trust for 3 days a week as manager, and the first four volunteers started in April 1990. The first polytunnel was built.

By October Jessica Davies was employed as horticultural assistant, enabling more volunteers to attend and the nursery to open five days a week.

The target of 15,000 cuttings was reached and by Christmas the nursery had taken 25,000 cuttings, achieving a 98% success rate of rooted cuttings.

At the beginning of 1991, twenty volunteers were on the books, including several on Employment Training who were also studying at Kingston Maurward College, who gave Cherry Tree two transit vans. One of these was used to operate the Christchurch Gardening Service for the Elderly and Disabled, using Christchurch-based volunteers.

Standing-out beds were created, by laying Mypex sheeting with paving slab pathways between, enabling 16,500 plants to be potted. Extra buildings had been erected providing a work area and temporary tearoom. By the end of the year there were twenty-six volunteers, with an average of twelve attending each day.

The quality of plants being produced won SWOP second prize for their stand at the Kinson Horticultural Show. The nursery was featured on Meridian TV news.

In 1992 there were thirty volunteers on the books, averaging twenty per day; lack of space was becoming a limiting factor. As the volunteer to staff ratio increased, volunteers gained more confidence and independence and started to care for each other and socialise outside the nursery.

This year saw the first Potathon, which involved a visit to the TVS studios in Southampton for SWOP's second TV appearance.

Comic Relief were so impressed by the project they agreed to fund a Horticultural Assistant for two years. Graham Wood was appointed to the post in July.

An irrigation system was installed and paid for by the Rotary club of Bournemouth North and their French twin at Easter. Plant sales began increasing.

Summer 1992 saw the completion of several major building projects, including a wildlife pond, raised flower beds, a barbecue, tool shed and potting shed.

Volunteers were changing and started to worry less about themselves and to show concern for others, creating a friendly supportive community.

In autumn 1992 Chris Veale, a former volunteer, was appointed Office Supervisor.

David Pressey started work as our bookkeeper. He says it is the best thing that has ever happened to him.

By the end of 1992, Cherry Tree had been donated a computer and permission was given to put a "Cherry Tree Nursery" sign on the roundabout.

A separate display area was set up containing examples of, and information about, the shrubs, both helping the volunteers to learn about horticulture and informing the customers about our plants.

A group of volunteers organised a mail shot to landscapers, nurseries and other potential customers.

The nursery was becoming so successful that meetings were held with Bournemouth Borough Council with a view to increasing the area of land available to the nursery.

In 1993 a toilet block, shower room and washing machine arrived.

The number of volunteers attending was increasing and, after fundraising, an ambulance and mini-bus were acquired which were used for visits to other local nurseries and places of interest. British Gas also donated a Sherpa van.

By the end of 1993 a decision was made to grant the nursery a new licence for the rest of the site, which enabled the nursery beds to be extended and increase the number of volunteers attending.

More success was the winning of the Allsebrook Award as a role model company providing training for adults with special needs.

Sales were so good that the nursery had to be registered for VAT by the end of 1993.

There were fifty volunteers on the books, many of them attending Kingston Maurward College to study horticulture or estate management.

On the initiative of the volunteers, Michael's Night Shelter for the homeless was adopted as SWOP's special cause and regular fundraising events were held.

1994 - The first job in 1994 was to enlarge the car park, and after more fundraising, a new post was advertised and Roger Wyatt joined the team.

With the new land available there was lots of work that needed doing, starting with clearing the logs that had been stored there since the 1987 hurricane. The site also had to be cleared and levelled, and a team of volunteers fenced the entire site. There was an increase in volunteers, so both the tearoom and the offices needed extending.

May 1994 saw Cherry Tree's third T.V. appearance, when BBC South Today featured the nursery stall at the Bournemouth Garden and Flower Show where we won a Gold Award.

In September 1994, Liz Pitkin, a former volunteer, was appointed as part-time clerical assistant to help cope with the large amounts of paperwork created by the expanding project.

By 1995, the nursery was settling firmly on the new land. The area was drained and levelled, paths were laid, beds were gravelled and five polytunnels were erected. A central path was laid, and after the Potathon, the entire nursery was filled with potted shrubs.

Easter marked Cherry Tree's fifth birthday, celebrated with a fish and chip lunch!!

There was a visit to the House of Commons, organised by MP Diana Maddock.

A representative from Cherry Tree was invited to speak at a National Conference entitled "Gardening, Mental Health and Community Care" held at Reading University, which led to national recognition of SWOP and many enquiries from all over the country.

Volunteer numbers were increasing, and they needed more and more help with filling in forms for benefits and advice with other problems. The Rev Canon Roslyn Aish had been holding occasional advice clinics but in June, Cherry Tree was able to appoint a specialist Disability Advisor, Midge Mitchell, from the Citizens' Advice Bureau, who started holding weekly advice clinics.

1996 - Another new post was created, that of Assistant Manager and David Mould started work in January.

Cherry Tree now had fifty-six volunteers on its books.

1996 was a year of great expansion. The whole nursery was laid down to slabs and gravel and the number of large polytunnels increased to six. The display area was expanded and paths created.

Over 20,000 shrubs were planted in the May Potathon, once again completely filling the nursery with potted shrubs.

The nursery received a grant from the National Lottery Charities Board enabling a Horticulture Technician/Propagator, Trevor Randall, a former volunteer, to be appointed, David Mould moved on and Roger Wyatt was promoted to assistant manager.

Literacy and numeracy classes started on a weekly basis, courtesy of the Dorset Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit.

There was a visit to Kew Gardens, courtesy of Harry Roffey and the Rotary Club of North Bournemouth. This became an annual event – a visit to a large famous garden.

1997 - Cherry Tree had sixty volunteers on its books, so the tearoom space had become inadequate. The Fire and Rescue Service in Dorchester generously donated a large portacabin, which was converted into a tearoom by the volunteers.

The old tearoom was converted to a computer room, fitted out with donated computers, which meant that and computer training courses could start, courtesy of Julie and Anne from Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education.

A new sales and information area was created and a new information hut was built with a photographic display of the nursery's progress and history, and information about the work of the project and mental health issues in general.

A major project this year was building the new glasshouse/propagation unit, officially opened on May 9th. The new glasshouse was a major landmark in the progress and development of Cherry Tree as a shrub nursery.

A representative from Cherry Tree spoke at a second national conference in London entitled, "horticultural opportunities for people with mental Health problems."

There was a fourth TV appearance, on Meridian TV, and organisations from all over the world e.g. Malawi, Russia, and Slovenia were approaching Cherry Tree for help and assistance in setting up similar projects.

During 1997, thirty-seven new volunteers started working at Cherry Tree and twenty-six moved on.

Steve Jailler started working as Nursery Supervisor replacing Graham Wood, who went travelling.

We had three new patrons, Sir Stephen Hammick, Elizabeth Allsebrook and Baroness Maddock. Cyril Davies retired after nine years as treasurer and was replaced by Helen Lynton.

1998 - The volunteer register reached the then agreed maximum of seventy and a waiting list had to be initiated, showing how valuable this kind of project is for adults with mental health problems, and how important it is that Cherry Tree is here.

During this year fundraising enabled Cherry Tree to install shading in the new glasshouse, and to acquire a heated bench to improve propagation. Propagation figures were computerised on a programme designed by a volunteer, accompanying a database set up by another volunteer.

In April the SWOP Trustees purchased a new computerised cash till to manage the increased sales.

The volunteers erected another polytunnel during the winter. They also constructed a large shade tunnel next to the Information Area.

Thirty-five new volunteers joined Cherry Tree, and twenty-six moved on, seven into employment. There were also twenty-five on the Friends Register.

The Annual Open day was moved from September to July because the nursery always looks its best at this time. This proved to be a great success, so it has remained in July ever since.

A glossy illustrated colour brochure was produced and designed by volunteers.

A delivery van, complete with shelving, was kindly donated by Wessex Water, which proved very useful since plant deliveries were increasing at the time.

At this time, The Rev Canon Roslyn Aish was undertaking research hoping to show how much volunteers' hospital admissions were reduced after they start attending Cherry Tree, and how much their mental health consequently improved.

Harry Roffey, a much-loved Trustee, sadly died on December 1st, and it was decided to create an Annual Harry Roffey Day coach outing with a picnic in his memory, which continues to this day as a reward for doing the Potathon.

Cyril Davies and The Rev Canon Roslyn Aish retired this year through ill health.

1999 – During 1999 volunteer numbers reached one hundred for the first time.

The first construction project of the year was to build an extra large polytunnel, to increase the winter protection area, and a very large shade house.

The nursery suffered a weekend of vandalism, causing major stress and anxiety. A lot of damage was done, but the culprits were apprehended and came in with their parents to apologise to everyone.

The public response was overwhelming and a special fundraising day was held, on which the Nursery took more money in one day than ever before, enabling the damage to be repaired and the polytunnels re-covered.

Cherry Tree took on two allotments and two of the volunteers received an award for "Best New Plot" in the Bournemouth Borough Council Allotment Competition.

Two volunteers started producing the Cherry Tree Newsletter.

One of the volunteers studying at Kingston Maurward received the Keith Hix prize for the student showing the most endeavour and commitment, which was celebrated at a special ceremony there.

There was a visit to The House of Lords, arranged by Baroness Maddock.

The volunteers went on lots of outings and to festivals, including a holiday in Weymouth and day trips to France.

Three new Trustees were appointed: Jenny Waterhouse, John Gillies and Alan Livingstone.

Cherry Tree was also able to take on a new Office Co-ordinator, Lesley Cake, a post which had been vacant since July 1998.

2000 - In January Cherry Tree was able to advertise the post of Horticultural Assistant and Sheila Wiggins was appointed on March 1st. A new Treasurer was also appointed, Keith James.

At the beginning of 2000 there were one hundred and twenty five people benefiting from being at the nursery. Twenty-two new volunteers joined and seventeen moved on, seven of these to employment.

After successful fundraising, a new quiet room, toilet block and brand new computer room were purchased. The quiet room provided volunteers with a room to go to when feeling unwell and allowed a pleasant environment for volunteers' keyworkers and other professionals to visit.

The kitchen and tearoom were improved and upgraded by the volunteers.

A new advocacy clinic was also started.

Work started on establishing quiet sitting areas for the volunteers. A courtyard with decking, a pergola with seats, raised beds and a water feature were added. Gardens were constructed in memory of John Saunders, Brenda Lowe and Graham Clarke, three volunteers who sadly died in 1999 and 2001.

At SWOP's tenth birthday Martin Stewart announced that SWOP would have a second project. The charity would be taking over the old bedding plant nursery, formerly run by the Poole Borough Council at Kingland Road, which would continue to produce bedding and houseplants.

SWOP joined the Horticultural Trades Association, which proved very useful. It was also decided to keep a few varieties of ferns and palms and to pot some varieties of plants into five litre pots.

The Potathon was a huge success, with 29,000 plants being potted in two days.

Everyone was saddened by the death of The Rev Canon Roslyn Aish on 12th September. Cyril Speller and Roslyn Aish were the inspiration behind SWOP. It was decided to name the new workshop, 'Roslyn's Workshop' in his memory.

Matthew Israel, a former volunteer, took over Roslyn's research and increased the study to one hundred volunteers over a ten-year period. The research was published in 2001. It concluded that we saved the NHS an estimated £2.75m by helping these volunteers over this ten-year period.

A mobility fund was set up in memory of Cherry Tree volunteer, Brenda Lowe. Its purpose is to enable volunteers to attend the nursery when their normal means of transport is not available or is temporarily inappropriate.

In 1999 planning permission was given to erect a new barn to be used as a workshop, and the footings were dug following the Annual Open Day in July 2000, but construction progressed very slowly, as it was the wettest winter for many years.

The volunteers and staff worked throughout autumn and winter in upgrading the irrigation system, constructing two capillary beds together with several soakaways to alleviate the flooding problems.

2001 – The new extended sales area was finished in time for the beginning of the new season in March 2001.

The problems experienced by the volunteers regarding benefits, form filling and housing problems continued to grow and Cherry Tree needed to increase the hours worked by June Perryman from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The opening of the Eden Project inspired a new venture in Cherry Tree outings – the overnight stay. Staff and volunteers stayed for two nights in caravans and visited the project in April 2001. It was a great success.

On June 1st Sheila Wiggins was appointed the Manager of the new project in Poole and Chestnut Nursery opened. Sheila Halsey, formerly a Friend of SWOP was appointed Horticultural Assistant in her place at Cherry Tree.

The literacy and numeracy group was awarded the Group of the Year Award (Dorset), and volunteers were presented with a certificate from yachtswoman Tracey Edwards.

THRIVE, a project promoting therapeutic horticulture, held a network meeting at the nursery. Many of its members were shown round the nursery and were very impressed.

It was decided to make a video of the work of the project, and Simon Cox, a Friend of SWOP, started filming. The video was launched in July 2001. It was to be used for helping people to set up other projects and for fundraising, and every volunteer received a copy.

Propathons began in this year.

2002 - The year started with slabs being replaced and the information area extended. There was consolidation of work in the car park, capillary beds and mypex stock bed.

The computer system was upgraded and a security system with cameras was installed and paid for by Neighbourhood Watch.

Ex volunteer, Matt, produced a business plan for fundraising.

There was a slab appeal this year with friends, supporters and customers being encouraged to buy slabs to make the paths safer.

We were visited by “Britain in Bloom” judges in relation to Bournemouth’s entry into the national competition.

Elizabeth Allsebrook sadly died in this year. She was a highly valued patron of SWOP.

This year saw a record potathon, potting 32,527 plants in two days, completely filling the nursery.

A partnership was established with the Matthew Trust. This helps people with mental health problems, by giving money in emergency situations or sending them on holiday for much needed respite.

This year we started encouraging people to donate through Gift Aid, and an appeal was started asking people to give regular donations by standing order. It is these donations that really keep the nursery going, because it gives security knowing that we are going to get money regularly. This is as important now as it was when it began.

A new computer arrived to produce plant labels.

2003 - The year started with volunteers replacing cracked slabs and laying new paths. Work continued on the capillary beds and upgrading the stock bed.

Fundraising became harder and harder, and volunteers responded by undertaking two fundraising projects. They had bric-a-brac sales and had stalls at car boot sales. They also raised money to buy a new tea urn and an accessible toilet for disabled persons.

More herbaceous varieties and hardy plants were grown which proved very popular. Cherry Tree also produced more specimen plants.

The potathon was very successful, potting 30,000 plants.

Cherry Tree volunteer, Colin Tiller, began teaching "Introduction to Computer" class while the literacy and numeracy classes continued with a new teacher, Karen Russell.

A new brochure was being produced and the local fire brigade came with their hydraulic "cherry picker" to take some aerial views.

A multi-span polytunnel was being erected thanks to the generosity of a local charitable trust, giving more space for indoor growing and for plant production early in the season.

We had another party of Japanese university students who came and spent a day at the nursery, seeing how horticulture is practised in other parts of the world. This had become an annual event.

There were more trips, including a trip to St Paul's, the Millennium Bridge and Tate Modern. A special highlight of this year was another three-day visit to Cornwall, including the Eden Project.

The nursery also acquired two new patrons in the course of 2003, Richard Drax from the BBC and the comedian Bill Bailey.

Sheila Halsey and Lesley Cake left the staff team but Sheila returned as a Friend of the project and continues to volunteer here.

Jay's Fish and Chip shop across the road started fundraising for the nursery and they continue to support us by holding regular charity days for us and having a charity box.

One of the highlights of the year was winning the "Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for voluntary service by groups in the community." The award was presented by the Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset, Captain Michael Fulford-Dobson, at Cerne Abbey in July. Receiving the award gave the volunteers a great boost of self-esteem.

A small group of volunteers attended the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

Two new members of staff joined in this year, Stephen Long as Horticultural Assistant and Laura Kellett as Sales and Office Co-ordinator.

2004 - During 2004 twenty-three new volunteers started attending and eighteen moved on. There were also thirty-eight Friends.

One of the highlights of the year was being the overall national winner of the "Lilly Reintegration Awards Recognising Outstanding Achievement in Mental Health," for moving volunteers' lives forward.

The award was presented at a ceremony held at Claridge's in London. The judges were very impressed with the project and said it was by far the best horticultural project they had seen.

A second piece of national recognition was when Liz Pitkin, the nursery's secretary and fund-raiser, went to the House of Commons to receive the "Older Volunteer Hero" award sponsored by Sir John Butterfill MP.

Another volunteer, Jane Colleau, started conducting a research project into the value of volunteering at the nursery for people aged sixty and over with mental illness, a group which otherwise stands a chance of being "written off."

The nursery's long-running research project into the impact of attending the nursery entered its second stage: volunteer-led evaluation. Jane moved on to a detailed questionnaire that was to be completed in 2005.

A new twinspan polytunnel was erected in this year and the tunnel was ready quickly enough to enable potting to be started earlier than usual.

For the first time this year, the nursery had the three annual special reduced price Plant Sales on Saturdays in March, July and October. These days were so popular that they have continued to be held on Saturdays ever since.

Another successful new development was opening the nursery all day on Saturdays throughout the spring and summer.

The potathon broke all records - 33,076 plants were potted over two days.

The new improved colour brochure was launched at the Open Day along with the volunteer-produced "What SWOP Means to Me."

Laura Kellett, the Office Organiser, left the nursery to teach horticulture at Sparsholt College and Gemma Bennett took over the position.

Enid Nixon started running the literacy and numeracy class by herself for the first time.

The party of Japanese visitors came again and were in for a surprise when they found that we had a volunteer, Diane Hayes, who could speak fluent Japanese, and was able to translate for them and explain to us the Japanese Tea Ceremony that they performed.

THRIVE, the national charity promoting horticultural therapy, invited Cherry Tree to write an article for their magazine Growth Point.

The Rt. Hon. Rosie Winterton MP, Minister for Health, came to visit in the summer.

The road into the nursery was covered with tarmac thanks to the generous help of two local companies.

The shade house was extended and provides much-needed extra winter protection.

A very popular development initiated by the volunteers was to use Fair Trade products wherever possible. The Nursery continues to do this.

Cherry Tree extended its range of perennials over the year and started growing larger specimen shrubs and selling a selective range of ornamental garden trees.

2005 - there were one hundred and two volunteers attending the nursery and forty-three friends.

120,000 plants were produced during this year as well!

At the beginning of the year the volunteers were busy replacing the original entrance with a wooden fence, a trellis and an entrance gate, all painted dark green. The flowerbed by the entrance was revamped by two of the volunteers.

The car park was also enlarged, as more and more customers were coming in.

26,500 plants were potted during the potathon, filling the nursery to bursting point!

This year saw Cherry Tree's first trip abroad, to France.

Cherry Tree's stall won the Ellingham Flower Show Nurseries Challenge Cup at the Ellingham and Ringwood Agricultural Society Show in August for the fourth time.

A highlight of the summer was a wedding celebration for two of the volunteers who married their partners in August. Volunteers took on all the catering, and designed and put up the decorations.

During the year both the main and reserve irrigation pumps broke down and there were a series of leaks inside and outside the nursery. Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water Company were very helpful, while other organisations helped during long, dry, desperate periods of watering everything by hand.

This had been happening for much of the year. To improve the situation volunteers dug a 100 metre long x 1 metre deep trench, with the aim of installing a bigger pipe to increase the water supply.

The volunteers were keen to help a poverty-stricken region in the third world and, after much research, the volunteers chose to help an Aymara-speaking area in highland Bolivia. The theme was to help provide clean water because of the high death rates of children who are forced to drink contaminated water.

£3000 was raised very quickly and clean, safe piped water was installed by Christmas 2005, providing water to a community that had forty-two families. Fundraising events included an exhibition of volunteers' and friends' artwork, stalls at

car boot stalls, home-made cake stalls, raffles, tombolas and competitions, and a very successful sponsored walk.

Cherry Tree was asked to become a Southern Regional Partner for the national network of social and therapeutic horticulture organised by the charity, THRIVE, and was asked to write the foreword to the publication of their three year research programme "Health, Well-being and Social Inclusion."

The nursery stepped up its involvement with local schools, giving talks and holding visits for the children. The nursery also supplied some plants to the Prince's Trust for a garden that is being developed in a local school.

The nursery appeared in a prime-time programme on Meridian T.V. in October called "Coming Up Roses," and some volunteers were interviewed for the programme.

The nursery increased its production of larger plants and found that palm trees, phormiums and bamboos sold very well.

More disabled facilities were made available at the nursery, including a donated battery-operated vehicle and walking aids.

The next big project, was the building of a Function Room. The foundations were laid during this year and the construction began at the beginning of 2006.

Other winter projects included a bamboo nursery bed, polytunnel repair and renovation and more path replacements.

2006 - Affectionately known as the year of the Function Room! The year began with the arrival of lots of planks of wood and no instructions – a bit of a puzzle! This continued as the volunteers and staff put it up, took it down again and then put it up again!

The Function Room is now used for training courses, meetings, presentations and activities that previously had to be held in cramped conditions.

The official opening was in April and Mrs Katie Cox from the Talbot Village Trust, which funded the building, was able to perform the ceremony.

With more grants and donations the room was equipped with a proper heating system, some tables, and a variety of teaching aids including a PowerPoint system to make presentations about Cherry Tree and all its work.

In the summer the room was used by a very large group of seven-year-old pupils who came for classes and work experience based around the theme of "Caring for people, caring for plants". This was organised by Cherry Tree volunteer Anita.

A first for 2006 was a one-day Potathon. Over 22,000 plants were potted and it was so successful it would be a one-day event from then on.

During 2006 Roger Wyatt and Gemma Bennett left the staff team and two new members of staff were appointed, Jane Nicholls as Assistant Manager and Julie Gill as Office Organiser.

Sue Cheeseman started a new class, "English with the aid of computers".

In June of this year the nursery was Highly Commended for the prestigious Beacon Prize for “philanthropic achievements”. The prize was awarded “in recognition of our outstanding contribution to charitable and social causes”.

Nan Brushett, a much-loved friend and supporter of Cherry Tree, died and the information area is now named after her. The last of the three founder figures, Cyril Davies, who was such an inspiration to everyone at Cherry Tree also died and the Function Room is now named after him. Three volunteers also died in this year.

The Cherry Tree Bolivia group raised enough money to pay for safe, clean, piped water supplies to be installed in two communities in Highland Bolivia and started raising money for a fourth community. In total £9000 had been raised.

The retail area was upgraded with the donation of some aluminium tracking for displaying plant information labels.

Wessex Natural Stone very kindly donated a standing stone and a “sitting” stone.

Other projects included re-laying slabs, re-staining benches, replacing two potting stations, one of them in a new site, and re-covering a polytunnel.

Upgrading the second side with new fencing completed the entrance. The wildlife pond was also moved.

There were one hundred and three volunteers and forty-six friends.

Cherry Tree designed and supplied the plants for the Ellingham and Ringwood Agricultural Society show entrance, where the nursery won the Large Gold Medal in the horticulture section.

Simon Cox came and produced an updated the version of “The Cherry Tree Nursery Story” on DVD and video.

2007 – There were one hundred and fifty-one people on the books. During the course of the year twenty-seven new volunteers and nine new friends joined. Twenty-five volunteers moved on, three into full-time work.

The new entrance was completed with fence panels, trellis and a new gate. More new paths were laid, many benches were re-painted and the Sales area was enlarged again!

The wildlife pond was created and planted by the volunteers. Behind the pond there was a beehive. Helga is the beekeeper and adviser.

There was a course held in the new function room called, “Stepping Up to Employment”, which led to six volunteers going on work placements.

The function room has proved to be invaluable. It has been hired for training and meetings by groups including, “Cultivations” and the Institute of Horticulture. It has been also been used for information-giving and fundraising purposes – for example, a “Solicitors and Accountants Day” – and for presentations.

Thanks to a donation from a generous friend, an upgraded and refurbished cash till was purchased, which helped to produce more accurate figures and plant sales information, Chip and Pin facilities were also made available.

Cherry Tree now produces larger plants and was promoting more trees, palms, bamboos and other architectural plants, and the volunteers constructed a new tree area.

22,201 plants were potted at the Potathon in one day, which was excellent.

A special donation was made during this year from a charitable trust which specified that the money was to pay for educational horticultural visits. The first trip was to Kew Gardens, and the second a short holiday to the National Botanical Garden of Wales.

As part of the continuing commitment to research into the benefits of therapeutic horticulture and to conduct an ongoing assessment of Cherry Tree's work, an ex-volunteer designed an evaluation questionnaire. Volunteers completed this anonymously and the results were analysed to highlight any issues that needed to be addressed.

Cherry Tree Nursery is part of the Stour Valley Local Nature Reserve, which received a Green Flag award in the summer of 2007. The flag is now situated at the gate following a ceremony at which the Mayor, accompanied by local dignitaries, raised the flag and then came back for tea at the nursery.

During 2007 Cherry Tree sadly lost some highly valued friends and supporters. Our much loved friend and Trustee, Peter Brushett passed away in August, followed by our exceptional Patron and Benefactor, Miss Sylvia Bowditch. Also a volunteer, a friend and the Cherry Tree quiz master all died in this year.

The old Information Centre and Sales Hut was demolished and a new improved larger version began to be constructed. It was named "The Nan and Peter Brushett Information Area" and was opened in 2008. The aim of the building is to provide much more information on Cherry Tree's work, and on mental health issues.

The Cherry Tree Bolivia group continued fundraising and reached a total of £10,000, which was used to install clean safe piped water to three communities in the Sorata valley in Bolivia. The group were already one-third of the way to raising the money for a supply for a fourth, much larger community.

The nursery had two Bolivian visitors in this year who came to help us out and find out how Cherry Tree works. They introduced the nursery to a Bolivian band who came and played at the plant sale in the summer and continue to support us.

2008 – Cherry Tree had one hundred and sixty people on its books. During 2008, thirty people started at the nursery and eighteen moved on, two into full-time work.

Bad weather delayed the completion of the new Information Centre until the end of March. The Brushett family opened the building in memory of Nan and Peter Brushett.

It is bigger, has more doors, and will hopefully be more comfortable and pleasant for customers. Most importantly, it gives us much more space to display and generally make available information on mental health issues, the work and history of the project, other support services, and the therapeutic value of horticulture.

The nursery continues to increase the number of plant varieties that are grown.

The new Information Centre was complemented by the construction of a special area for ornamental and fruit trees. There are more bamboos and unusual plant varieties. There are also Cherry Tree jute and cotton bags, cards and honey on sale.

Enid Nixon, the literacy teacher, retired this year and was replaced by a new teacher, Sue Cheeseman.

Canford School donated twelve computers from their school, which greatly enhanced the computer room and the computer classes. A group of students came to Cherry Tree once a week to help and held a "mufti" day which raised enough money for to pay for a pressure washer to clean the slabs and paths.

A recycling area was created thanks to a donation from Bournemouth Borough Council, and a local recycling firm makes a weekly collection of different items.

Thanks to the Supported Employment Scheme, Cherry Tree employed Ses Harley in February as a part-time driver. This was a huge success, enabling regular plant deliveries and more volunteer outings.

Cherry Tree had stalls at the offices of JP Morgan Chase, the Ellingham Show, Stanbridge Mill and the local Stour Valley Festival.

Vicarage Fields (next to Cherry Tree) was a subject of controversy in the summer, when a decision was made to site the Traveller Transit Site on that piece of land. The decision led to a worrying time for everyone, which was thankfully resolved.

Bournemouth Borough Council extended Cherry Tree's lease to six years, which should hopefully make fund-raising applications better.

Three different MPs visited over the summer.

The explorer Colonel Blashford-Snell came to give a talk and film show about his travels to Bolivia.

Cherry Tree's long-term commitment to research and promote the connections between mental health and the natural world continues, with Matt (ex-volunteer) continuing with research and producing an excellent report for Open Day.

Cherry Tree began working with the recently opened "Centre for Well-Being and Quality of Life" at Bournemouth University, and had a presentation on Ecopsychology from Dr Paul Stevens who hopes to set up a research project at the nursery.

The Cherry Tree Bolivia group completed their project to raise £8,453, which enabled one hundred and seventeen families in Chuchulaya, in Bolivia to have safe, clean piped water. This was the fourth community to benefit from the fund-raising at Cherry Tree. In total the group had now raised £23,000.

Winter work included improving the information area, painting benches and improving the irrigation system. Two polytunnels were re-covered and a new potting station was built.

Cherry Tree also had signs put on the New Road Roundabout.

Helga, a Friend of Cherry Tree, held four Open Days during this year, with the proceeds of tea, cake and plants sold going to Cherry Tree.

Thanks to two local charitable trusts the electricity supply was finally upgraded during the winter. This was the first step to enable future plans to renew the dilapidated buildings.

Ray Bere, a much-loved Trustee had to retire due to ill-health in this year. John Thompson, one of the nursery's long-standing customers died in this year.

2009 – Cherry Tree saw a further increase in volunteer numbers with one hundred and sixty-eight people on the books.

2009 was a year of ecology, environment and education for Cherry Tree. Two volunteers built and installed a large number of bird boxes, all of which were used for nesting by bluetits, sparrows, and robins.

With financial support from Bournemouth Borough Council a recycling centre was built.

Cherry Tree was selling more fruit trees and bushes, vegetable plants and herbs.

Sadly Cherry Tree's three-legged cat, Moogi, disappeared, but the new black and white cat, Twinkle, settled in very well!

During the winter, thanks to the generous donations from local charitable trusts, a new 3-phase electricity supply was installed and connected at the nursery rather than at the front gate. This was needed to cope with the current level of usage and for future expansion.

Cherry Tree continues to support the homeless project, based at Michael House. A group of volunteers visited to present the proceeds of their Christmas raffle.

Cherry Tree made friends with Henry Quinney and the volunteers at the New Leaf allotment project, and we are hoping to work together in the future.

Ex-volunteer Matt created an evaluation survey conducted by staff in the form of a review. The final results will be collated and this continues with the research that was started by the late Reverend Canon Roslyn Aish.

New volunteer, Cheryl, an experienced graphic designer began working at the nursery. She completely re-vamped all the display boards in the shop and designed new flyers, flags, banners and the signage outside the nursery.

In June of this year long-term volunteer Bob died suddenly. Cherry Tree had a memorial for him at the nursery and will be launching the Bob Anderson Camping Fund.

The minibus appeal started in this year. SWOP urgently needed to replace the minibus for use by both projects.

Bournemouth Borough Council gave the nursery a six-year lease, which was great news and would help with fundraising.