

Cherry Tree NURSERY



OPEN DAY NEWS 2012



Welcome to our 2012 Open Days! We hope you will enjoy your visit and perhaps learn more about our work. We would like to thank all our visitors for their support and interest, and hope you will continue to follow the story of Cherry Tree Nursery.

Over the three Open Days you will have the opportunity to see our wonderful new sustainable Volunteers' Tearoom, Kitchen and Toilet Block, built for us out of local natural materials by the wonderful workers from the Dorset Centre for Rural Skills. The nursery volunteers, friends and staff are eternally grateful to all the generous individuals and organisations who made this achievement possible. The improvement in the mental health of those who use it is visible and life-enhancing, as is the great boost to their self-esteem from having such a fantastic structure.



Although work on the building was more or less completed by the end of the year, it was not opened until March 2012, because we had a very special guest to open it.

At the suggestion of our friend, Mrs Anthony Pitt-Rivers, the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, HRH The Princess Royal agreed to come at very short notice, giving us lots of hard work to complete, but it was all worth it! The Princess arrived by helicopter, landing in the field outside the gate. She was very interested in the new building and spent a long time talking to Rob and the builders from DCRS. She toured the nursery and met the

volunteers, speaking to them and shaking each one by the hand. The visit did wonders for the volunteers' self-esteem, and marked a real recognition of the value of our project and of each person's worth and dignity.

The visit gave the nursery some very welcome publicity, as it was well covered by the local press, leading to a lot of public interest. The result was that the March plant sale was our most successful ever, raising over £17,000. Many thanks to all who came and helped to make it such a success.

*Other recent visitors include the High Sheriff of Dorset.
Our local MP Conor Burns will be visiting again soon.*

In January we hosted a Kinson Community Team Meeting which proved very productive for the nursery, as it led to Knightstone Housing setting up a monthly floating support clinic here, which has proved very useful.

2012 has been a year of staff changes at Cherry Tree. Firstly, Sarah Giles, now Assistant Manager of Chestnut Nursery, came here for three month's induction. She then swapped places with Jez Norris who became Cherry Tree's new Horticultural Assistant. We now have two part-time Office & Plant Sale Organisers, St John Mauger and Ray Alderton, and we are all very pleased with our new staff team. Our sister project at Chestnut Nursery now has a new Manager, Laurence Jackson, who is settling well into this new role. After 13 years of dedicated hard work, June Perryman retired in May. We can't thank her enough for all she has done for the volunteers, but fortunately we will continue to see her regularly as a Trustee. We have also now been joined by her excellent replacement, Tish Borrowman, who already feels like an old friend.

The trend for an increase in the number of referrals, so noticeable in 2011, continues and our numbers have again increased. We now have a total of 156 people on our books, and a stream of people wanting to join us.



Trading this year has been particularly challenging. Having gone through the wettest April and first half of May since records began, our income, like that of other nurseries, has been seriously dented. This has been our first year growing our own roses, and sales of vegetable plants are soaring as the appetite for "growing your own" continues. Every year we endeavour to source new plants and are always on the lookout for new and exciting varieties.

However, the fundraised income of charities nationwide has been drastically reduced by the current financial situation, and we have had to accept that it may be a long time before we get our new office!

Volunteers thoroughly enjoyed our new Healthy Eating/Basic Cookery class this winter, and are



looking forward to further classes. Diana Guy's course this year has been entitled "The All Year Round Garden" and she has also offered courses to the general public on Hellebores.

Trips they have enjoyed since the beginning of the year include Monkey World thanks to the Princes' Trust, Kingston Lacy House – in torrential rain – thanks to the Allotment Project, Lymington, a walk in the New Forest, Stanbridge Mill for their Open Day where we have a stall, strawberry picking, and boat trips.

The annual Weymouth caravan holiday was enjoyed by all in spite of the dreadful weather!

We are particularly grateful to the wonderful group from Nationwide who provided a delicious Valentine's Day lunch and are joining us for a weeding day, as well as helping us with cooking a barbecue for our sister project at Chestnut Nursery in August. Helga Aldersey has twice opened her lovely garden in Talbot Woods to raise money for us. Thanks also to Susbus the band for playing at our Plant Sale.

The volunteers of Cherry Tree Bolivia group are within sight of raising the total amount of money needed to provide a seventh community in Bolivia with safe clean water. The transformative power of realising they can help others continues to offer a testament to Cherry Tree's ethos that you get back more than you put in.

It is now twenty years since the Rotary Club of Chateau Gontier in France funded our irrigation system, and we are pleased to say our relationship with the Rotary Club of Bournemouth North, and now also of Westbourne, continues; they are kindly providing a barbecue for our plant sale. We have agreed that we need more ways to remember our late Trustee, friend and supporter, Harry Roffey, in addition to the Annual Coach trip in his memory, so a plaque is to be installed.



The wildlife pond is still blooming and flourishing with an enormous number of frogs spawning this year. There are also newts, water boatmen, grass snakes and slow worms. Many varieties of birds visit including lesser spotted woodpecker, jays, robins, sparrowhawks, goldcrests, bullfinches, goldfinches and reed buntings. Among the butterflies, we have seen the orange tip, speckled wood, peacock, comma and brimstone, along with crickets, water spiders, poplar hawkmoths, and foxes, weasels and pygmy shrews. We are delighted to have discovered that our friend, Pam Shrubb, paints wildlife information boards and have commissioned one from her for the pond.

We have lost some people we love very much this year. Tim Boswell's brother Jonathan presented us with a magnificent donation in his memory and we held another celebration of his life. Then came the news of the death of Bob Algar, known to many as "Indian Bob", who was also with us since the beginning, and who was instrumental in establishing the project. We were delighted that he was buried in a hay meadow

with a magnificent view over Dorset and Somerset surrounded by flowers.

At the end of May volunteer Sue Tourle, who was so vibrant and full of life, passed away unexpectedly. She was helping us produce a booklet of volunteers' experience of Cherry Tree; it has been produced for this Open Day in her memory. Please take a copy. Also we have very sadly lost some of our well-loved pets, who have both had to be put to sleep peacefully – Cherry the cat at Christmas, and Jake the dog in June. We miss them daily.

There is huge pressure on those with mental health problems to go back to work, despite the fact that many of them have not been able to work for a considerable period, and some have never worked at all. This pressure, combined with the increased stigma now associated with mental illness following a media campaign against those surviving on benefits, has had a drastic impact on the mental health, self-esteem and well-being of many who are doing their very best despite enormous disadvantages. Only 10 per cent of people with mental health difficulties are in employment.

It is clear that economic uncertainty is one of the main reasons for the recent increase in mental health problems. In 2011, 46.7 million antidepressant prescriptions were dispensed by community pharmacists.



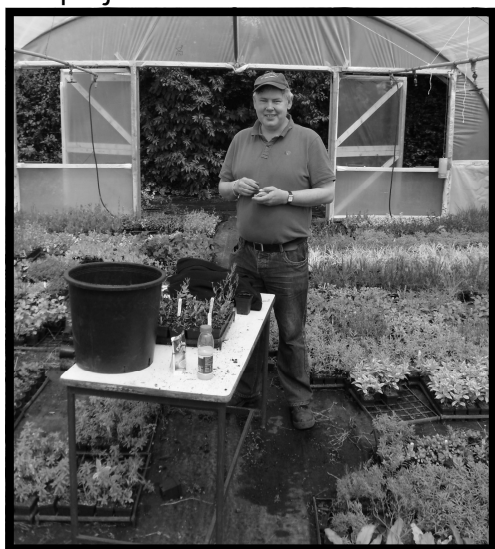
Earlier this year a report from the National Trust concluded that "UK children are losing contact with nature at a dramatic rate" and their health and education are suffering as a result. A report on children in inner-city London demonstrated that the children were "disconnected from the natural world".

Then in May 2012, an article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences concluded that "a lack of exposure to a 'natural environment' could be resulting in more urban dwellers developing asthma and allergies".

Yet another study this year illustrated the link between the lack of green spaces and higher stress levels. "If you live near green spaces, you are likely to be healthier."

All these studies reinforce Cherry Tree's core belief that there is a close connection between our mental well-being and our relationship with the natural world. All living things are connected, and if we damage our mother earth, we also damage ourselves.

As the national situation deteriorates, more and more people are recognising the need for land-based projects to provide therapeutic rehabilitation for those who in one way or another are damaged, excluded and forgotten. We have always valued our role in assisting the set-up of these projects, and are delighted to now be part of the Dorset Land Network, which is trying to link everyone involved with, or hoping to set up, this kind of project.



It is very distressing to us that the measure of recovery from mental illness now seems to be whether or not people get a job. People come to projects like ours completely lacking in any sense of self-worth. They have often experienced rejection, abuse, and been continually told they are a failure. To watch them begin to blossom again

is like a miracle, and through loving each other they gradually begin to feel themselves worthy of being loved. This is our measure of recovery.

There are many, many people we need to thank for their help and support – too many to mention them all, so we hope that you will all accept our

grateful thanks – we could not manage without you all, and we hope you all know how much we value and appreciate the help and support you give us. This year we celebrated our 22nd birthday, and it is due to all of you that the project can continue to thrive.

One of the volunteers has asked us to end the Open Day News with this quotation from Martin Luther King:-

**"Darkness cannot drive out darkness
Only light can do that
Hatred cannot drive out hatred
Only love can do that."**

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