

WHAT SWOP MEANS TO ME

Last year the volunteers at SWOP were invited to write a piece which tells in their own words ***What SWOP Means To Me***. There were quite a lot of entries, and here they are!!

I think the first one to come in was by **Ses**, so that seems a good place to start. She called it...

MISTS OF CHERRY TREE

As you walk down the chalky gravelled path leading towards the misty dews that hover over the much loved and appreciated grounds of Cherry Tree Nursery, you feel a great release of pressure in your head, no more turmoil. It just lifts and disappears, as does the mist, and disperses into the morning fresh atmosphere taking all the stresses of coping in the "Real World" away.

Life at Cherry Tree is different to the "real world" for there is no competition and the people there, whether it be staff or volunteers genuinely care.

You are greeted with genuine "good mornings", and "how are you?", treated with respect and definitely NOT taken for granted. You are appreciated for all the hard work you do, whether it be putting large glass houses up, to doing a spot of weeding, everybody is at one with each other, and works well together like one big happy family with a whole new

Laughter is also a big part of the care at Cherry Tree, as it is contagious and uplifting. It is also therapeutic, just as working at Cherry Tree is to all that use it... If only the "real world" could be so therapeutic and equal, with no competition, life would be so rewarding to a lot more people.

Now a piece written by our secretary **Liz Pitkin**:

SWOP is a lifeline for me. Without this lifeline I would have no reason for getting up in the morning. I would be without the help, support and encouragement I need to provide a purpose for my day.

I have been at SWOP for nine years now and during this time I have progressed, with SWOP's support and encouragement into being able to show important visitors around the Nursery telling them about its aims and objectives.

I have become computer literate and able to create databases and well-designed documents for office use and for fundraising applications.

My confidence has thus grown so that I am able to attend outside meetings and I have gained enough plant knowledge to be able to advise customers at the Nursery and at outside Plant Sales and Shows on their choice of plants.

I have planned and arranged outings for the volunteers and am also able to enjoy a day out by myself.

From the beginning I decided that I wouldn't hide my illness but that I would try to enlighten people with a view to reducing the stigma which is attached to mental illness.

I feel that in keeping a well-balanced outlook myself, that I can give encouragement to new volunteers that it is possible to survive a breakdown and become a useful person.

I think it's time now to introduce some of the people at Cherry Tree Nursery, and who better to do that than **Val**? She wrote two pieces on this subject, and if she has missed anybody out, I am sure she would want to apologise and would probably go back and write another one!! So,

WHAT SWOP MEANS TO ME

Cherry Tree Nursery is a safe place, where we don't get pushed around, and everyone is like a family member, we all matter to the staff who are always happy and kind.

I like coming to SWOP because there is always a lovely atmosphere, and the staff always find us something to do, all the year. Living alone as I do it is important that I have somewhere to go where the people are all nice; at present I don't come Fridays as I go to the NSF- 'Rethink' drop-in club, and I see other people there.

Jessica the manager is like a Mother to us, she is always on the telephone to anyone who isn't in, and sending her best wishes. Jess is always there for anyone who may be suffering a 'bad day', and her kind manner seems to make people feel better.

Sheila has got a lovely manner, and is like an Auntie to us, and does not give us something to do, which she hasn't done herself. Sheila will do anything for us, only recently she took one of the lads to the Vets to have his young cat spayed.

Nothing is too much trouble for her. She has a cat at home, so this is probably why she will feed the two cats we have at Cherry Tree.

There are two Tortoiseshell cats who live here and their purpose is to keep the vermin down, recently the mice have been a nuisance. Cherry and Moogy are like pets as well because they are often in the tearoom and love a warm lap and a bit of dinner, so they are part of Cherry Tree's family. I like to feed them when I get in, although I have got a cat at home, called Simba. The cats are not having very much food at present, so they will hunt, but we usually give them some dry food on a saucer.

There is a little black terrier dog called Jake, who belongs to Trevor, the propagation manager, Trevor is small with a beard and lovely hair. Jake is lucky as he gets taken out for a walk at lunchtime, with either Sandi and Phil, or I take him around the local nature reserve nearby. Jake loves just sniffing as he goes. Trevor is kind and like a brother, and when it is cold he puts a gas-fire on in the propagation room at the back of the greenhouse.

There is Steve who recently had his hair cut, and now has it shoulder length. And he is the Horticultural Manager, and Steve always has a

lovely way with him, making a joke. Only the other month, we were collecting manure, Alistair, Steve and myself, and Steve came up with a song about Manuré. It was hard work, but it was made to feel like fun, and we were singing this little song too.

Then there is Roger, the assistant manager, who is like an uncle to everyone, he has crinkly blond hair, and a beard and always a joke or two. Roger likes making a bonfire at the top of the nursery, and driving the milkfloat, you could imagine him having been a milkman. Roger has a partner, Christine and daughter Sophie. He has a lovely expression for breaking wind, 'shooting bunnies'.

In the office there is an important person Lesley, she is the office co-ordinator and organises many things, Christmas Parties and barbecues, and the Potathon. Lesley has been married twice, she is currently married to a lovely man Ron, who often helps at SWOP at barbecues, Lesley has three daughters, and some step-children. She is just fifty, and yet keeps young.

I will return to Steve and say he is married to Suzanne, and they have a young daughter Imogen, and a baby son, Gabriel. They have a cat called Lettuce, possibly why Cherry likes laying upon his lap in the mornings. Sometimes Suzanne brings the children to see everyone, usually at lunch-times.

There is a nice young man called Colin, who takes a computer class on a Thursday morning, and he is more like a brother, he never hurries us. I like going into his class in the Winter because it is good to keep up with a skill, I don't think I want to take any exams, but just so I could use a computer when necessary; I have an old computer at home, and use it to write letters on.

Colin writes funny accounts of outings which the volunteers go on,. And when we went to a farmer's farm, who was an archaeologist, Colin wrote an account which described how we went walking around another field, seeing yet more sheep!

We must not forget Lorraine who comes from Ferndown, and answers the telephone for Jessica, she has a good telephone manner; and she does domestics too, and helps keep the tea-room clean and tidy. She has a loud laugh, and is friendly to everyone.

Lorraine is a nice girl who smokes a lot, perhaps she will give it up one day. One day in 2001 Lorraine and Pat took me to the great Dorset Steam Fair at Tarrant Hinton, it was a good day

out, and Pat and Lorraine came and had a cup of tea at my lovely flat at Ringwood. They saw my lovely pussycat called Simba.

Steve is a volunteer, who lives with a young lady, he is quite cuddly. Steve will move plants about when we are doing things to them, he is a mischief.

Richard is near retirement age, and he has heart trouble, and is a Coeliac. He is a friendly man and always busy. Richard due to his diet, frequently breaks wind. He is married to Dot,

and is very kind to her, he rides his bicycle around the nursery. He likes to joke, and has an infectious laugh.

George is a chubby man, who loves to cuddle the ladies, he was an accountant, so he helps in the office. I cannot escape and usually have to have a cuddle too. George is happily married to Hazel. Sometimes she makes us some scones.

Paul is a tall middle-aged fit man, he cycles from West Moors to SWOP, and although quiet, enjoys a laugh. His Mother packs him up a varied lunch-box. He has a Golden Retriever dog at home, and each evening Paul walks with his brother to exercise it. It does Paul a lot of good coming here, as it brings him out of himself.

There is Roger who is in his late thirties, and cycles each day from Parkstone to get here, and enjoy everyone's company. Roger works hard, and is a religious man, and believes we can all be at one with Jesus.

Then we have Steve who hasn't been at Cherry Tree for very long, it is a very important place for Steve; he was quiet when he first came here, now he chats to anyone.

Now we have Nigel who has been coming for about four years, and wouldn't speak to anyone to start with, but he came out of himself, and now talks quite loudly about his beloved Bournemouth and things.

Andy is a quiet chap, who reads papers a lot, and likes his food, he is good on the computer; and often helps in the office, but does work outside for a day as well.

Some people are moved quicker than others by SWOP, and yet all these people find it of great benefit to them.

There is Martin who is middle aged and lives with his elderly Mother, and attends SWOP often, but he has to look after his Mum as well, he is a nice guy; and works well, and I'm sure benefits from attending the nursery.

SWOP is very important to me because of all these people, and the nursery and the work, it means I have somewhere to go where I'm treated well, and made to feel as though I matter.

Because I am well at present, thanks to SWOP, I drive my little 2CV in to Cherry Tree, and sometimes I give Ray a lift home on a Thursday. Ray has only been coming to the nursery for a few months. He is a quiet guy, and enjoys coming.

I own a special cat, who came along to me in 2001, and looked very thin and dirty, and now after TLC and regular flea treatment, she is a magnificent looking cat. Simba makes up for me not having a dog, as I love dogs as well.

This is why Cherry Tree means so much more to me because they have the animals here, everybody loves the animals. I am a vegetarian, and have been for over twenty years.

There is Sue, who is a good friend to me, she lives at Fordingbridge, and comes to the nursery twice a week, she can drive, but was ill due to the job centre stressing her, so is on

tablets at present, and has to leave her car at a friend's in Ringwood. Sue is a quiet lady, yet works hard, and enjoys coming here. So, I hope she'll be able to drive again before too long.

There is Brian who is a quiet man, and he lives in sheltered accommodation where the lady has a couple of dogs. Brian likes to sweep up in the tunnels, and generally help, he is a very polite man, and likes a cuddle too.

Then there is Paul D who lives in a flat in Hinton Admiral, near the Railway Station, and he now drives himself here, Paul likes to look after the other volunteers' interests. He is a good worker, and likes to pot the plants.

An important event will happen in my life this year, I shall be fifty in late June 2003, I don't feel fifty. Thanks to SWOP. It would be nice if I could have some of these lovely people to a little get together.

There is Dave who has many pets, and he is very fond of Cherry, he is very good on the computers, and is usually doing labels or something for Cherry Tree. Dave is very good at recording CD's.

There is Linda who has not been coming for very long, and lives with her elderly mother, and has a couple of sisters, a cat, two rabbits and two guinea pigs. She is a hard worker, and will be fifty this year, in May I think.

There is a man called Brendan who lives in sheltered accommodation and is a quiet man, and his Mother lives in Ireland, he doesn't smoke, and I think he likes listening to music. He works well, and enjoys potting, he is good company.

There is a man called Robert, he is also quiet, but is very good on computers, and likes studying, and is a good worker, and is also in sheltered accommodation.

Then there is Paul C who is forty, married to Maureen, has a little Bishon Frisé dog. Paul is very good at making the drinks, and likes helping with domestic work, and washing up. Paul likes to come up the nursery and watch what we are doing, sometimes he likes to join in.

Then there is Tim who is currently in sheltered accommodation, he comes in a few times a week, using public transport, and likes to help on the nursery. He is a character and good company.

Then there is Alan who is married and has ten children, he needs to come to Cherry Tree as a break, and works hard when he's here. He is a nice man, is usually in the smoking room at breaks.

Then there is Neil who has been coming for about a year, and is always talking, he likes to know if everyone 'is all right', and usually stops for a chat with everyone. Neil is always in one of the tunnels weeding or de-mossing. Neil likes to chat with everyone as they walk past. He is a friendly soul.

There is Kelvin who has only been coming since September 2002, he is rounded, and has learning difficulties, but is nevertheless a nice chap. He lives next door to me, and often comes in for a cuppa, when I'm there, and not at SWOP. Kelvin needs quite a lot of help,

and I hope he will receive it on a Monday when he attends SWOP for the literacy class, which I hope will help Kelvin a lot with his reading and writing.

There is someone else I haven't mentioned, Peter, he is a nice man, who is a grandfather, and he drives the minibus and vans for SWOP, and comes into the computer room and does some work on the nursery computer. Only recently Peter took a lot of us to the Oceanarium at Bournemouth. We all enjoyed that very much.

There is also Adrian R who is a very jolly man, and he always has a word or two to say, he visits his Mother regularly; and he enjoys a good social life too.

Here I have tried to explain what SWOP means to me, by writing a little about some of the volunteers, the friendship of the nursery, and there is the relaxed atmosphere that is always present here. And the ability of the staff to always find us something to do.

Many times lately I have thought it would be nice to have a job again in the outside world, but then I think there would be the old pressures again, and I know I couldn't cope with that; and there's SWOP which is so special, with no pressures. As long as the job centre doesn't bother me, I should be able to come for many years yet. And of course as long as I keep well.

One day it would be nice if I could have a medium sized rescue dog, when Simba is older, this may not be until I'm at least 60; and maybe I could come down to SWOP for a day, or even half a day, it seems a long way off. My flat is very comfortable now and warm, so I am very fortunate to have somewhere as nice as SWOP to come to, and a lovely little car, and a lovely flat to rest in.

SWOP now has an Urn to boil the water in for our tea or coffee, and it is so much better not having to wait for kettles to boil, we have been giving donations and thinking how we can raise the money to pay for the Urn.

These dark days of winter are not the best to attend the nursery, when the warmer days come we watch the shrubs growing in their liner-pots. And everything feels so much nicer. We are lucky because when it's cold, Roger usually puts a calor-gas heater on in one of the tunnels for a few of us to work in. These people do what they can to keep us warm, and cheer the winter months along.

It always amazes me how full the page of the register book looks at the end of a day, there has been a lot of people attend SWOP on yet another winter's day. And even if some of them have only come and drank some tea or coffee, at least they have felt the benefit of this special nursery.

I only hope that we can receive the necessary funding to enable SWOP to continue to help all the people it needs to, those I have mentioned and any I haven't, with the shrubs to sell we try to be self-supporting, but everything being expensive, we always need donations. Besides, mental-health problems can affect anyone at any time, so there is always a need for Cherry Tree Nursery. It is only a shame we haven't one in Ringwood, as there are many people who need help, and in many more towns in Hampshire.

And here is VAL's second piece:-

WHAT SWOP MEANS TO ME PART TWO

It was just a normal February morning, cool and damp, and sunless; when Valerie arose in her ground floor flat, in the market town of Ringwood. Her tortoiseshell and white cat was curled up on her fleece blanket, on the top of the two seater settee, she opened her green eyes when Valerie came through into the kitchen, Valerie stroked her pet, and said "you beautiful Simba", then she came over to the kettle, and filled it with enough water to fill the little tea-pot.

Valerie pulled the kitchen curtains back, and looked up the garden, to the shrubbery, which she had only planted the previous spring. Already the smoky blue leaves of the Phlomis has reached a few feet high. And the Primroses are out a deep blue, and the border is waking up from its winter sleep.

Valerie took some light cheese spread from the fridge, and six Ryvita out of the cupboard, since being on the medication she has to be careful, when she had done her lunch, she made the cup of tea, the kettle had just boiled. She decided to have some porridge, so measured out some into the cooking dish, then poured some skimmed milk onto it, and put some water too, then this went into the microwave for three minutes. Then Valerie poured a cup of tea out, and scraped the saucer of left over food into the toilet, and washed the saucer. Simba may like some rabbit food, so from the cupboard she took a tin of supermeat rabbit; opened it and sniffed the top of the tin, it smelt very rabbit. She forked some onto the saucer, and mashed it up, then put it onto the mat which Sue had given her in Christmas 2001. It is a cat feeding mat.

By now Valerie's porridge was ready, so she transferred it into a Pyrex cereal dish, and the wiped up any from the microwave plate, she blessed it for boiling over yet again. After carrying this into the lounge, and placing it onto the table, she started to eat it, it was very warm, but Valerie thinks this will keep her satisfied until lunchtime.

After having the breakfast, Valerie went over to the settee, and sat next to Simba, and finished her cuppa. She went through to the kitchen to pour another cup of tea, this one was well brewed, she took herself a banana and two apples out of the larder, and picked her sandwich box up, putting them into the rucksack, which was on the rocking chair, and she felt the mobile phone which was in there and she thought she had not charged it up again last night, hoping it will be all right if she needs it in an emergency.

She went in to the bathroom and combed through her fine dark hair, she wondered whether she would get more grey hairs this year, she has hardly any yet, and will be fifty in four month's time. Then she walked through to the bedroom, and made her bed. With a duvet it doesn't take much making.

The man on the radio said it is eight thirty one, so Valerie got her bag, went to switch off the wireless, she went to run her hands over Simba's soft coat, and to kiss her head, and say she had better be off now. So she made her way to the front door, and locked the door, and made her way to the little 2CV, Valerie checked her tyres were all up, and unlocked the steering, started the engine, and ran it for a few minutes, then she was off, there are a lot of side roads to come out of to get to the road, soon she was driving along the Christchurch Road, and out of Ringwood into the countryside, around the bends along the road, Valerie did not like to go too fast, so went about forty to forty five mph.. The dear little car went well, and they were soon travelling along the causeway, and past the airport, when she reached Parley Cross, Valerie looked right and waited until the way was clear to go. Then they were off along the road which leads to SWOP. Soon she was turning into the dusty driveway into the nursery. She always thanked her little car for getting her here. It is eighteen years of age, and she got out and got her boots out of the boot, and put her coat on, and went in to the office to sign in, the time was just after nine, nearer nine ten.

Valerie always looked forward to coming to Cherry Tree nursery, and went to find Sheila or Steve, and see what they would like her to do today. Sometimes it was moving plants from one part of the nursery to another, sometimes it was snipping something. The jobs varied, sometimes it could be cleaning an order up, or gathering an order of shrubs up, sometimes it may be Liner-potting, this is transferring the cuttings in plugs, from their plugs into the little square pots. If it were to be liner potting, sometimes Linda would be doing it with me, and we have a good chat whilst we are doing this. Linda has a cat as well as two rabbits, and two guinea pigs.

Linda is very good to her rabbits, and puts them out into their runs for a while when she gets home from SWOP. She walks from Kinson to Cherry Tree, and is getting stronger every day. She is a laugh and has a good sense of humour.

There are times when we go on various trips with one of the members of staff, who drive the mini-bus. The large white and green vehicle doesn't get used so much in the winter so they have to charge the battery up. We are supposed to be going bird - watching to Arne with Trevor soon, this is a good outing. There is some countryside and some heathland, and we have to keep our eyes peeled, in case we miss any birds.

The large kitchen at Cherry Tree is light and airy, and now there is an urn to heat the water for our drinks. We need to raise a lot of money, 400 pounds to pay for this, and there is a car-boot sale sometime, money is hard to come by, being a charity, some years are better than others. There are the shrubs we sell, and these raise some money of course.

When a person has suffered a mental health problem, they want to do something, and are pleased to come to this place, to help keep it running in the way Steve wants it to. This time of the year Steve likes to water, as the plants don't dry out as quickly, and they like them kept dryer in between their drinks.

We sometimes are required to help out selling the shrubs at the shows, from about April until August, we do various shows, at outside events. Valerie normally takes her little car, to most of these, but she is nervous to drive where she doesn't know where she is going, in case she gets in some other motorists way. So sometimes Sheila or Steve pick me up from Ringwood. We have to set the shrubs out like they are in a garden, and they all look pretty and people come past and look at the colourful array of pinks and blues, and whites.

When it is coming warmer we sit outside at our breaktimes, on the assortment of benches, and the two tortoiseshell cats Cherry and Moogy are usually right there waiting to be petted. Cats do like company as well, and these are on their own from four o' clock, and right through the night until eight o' clock the next morning. And on Sundays they don't see anyone. They are quite affectionate little cats, Cherry is a dark colour, and Moogy is black mixed with tortoiseshell, and some white on her.

All too soon it is three forty-five, and time to go to the toilet, and sign out, and get into the little car and go home again, sometimes Valerie gives a lift to Mike, a thickset man in his forties, or a man called Ray, slighter build, and he hasn't many teeth left, he is in his mid fifties, Ray is quiet, and also lives in Ringwood.

The little red car starts up to the turn of the key, and within a few minutes we are rumbling along the dusty road towards the roundabout. And up the road towards the traffic-lights. Before we know it we are travelling along the Christchurch Road into the market town of Ringwood, past the row of terraced houses, and Valerie pulls off the road to drop Ray off, or on a Tuesday Mike. Then she carries on up the road towards the little back-roads towards Home. As Valerie reverses into her parking space, she sees Simba in the mirror, and Simba rises, knowing the car. It takes about half an hour to drive home from SWOP. I don't know how long Simba has been outside for, but if the weather is dry she is waiting out there for me.

After locking the car up, Valerie unlocks the front door, admiring the little Daphne in the tub near the door. Simba has a cat-flap to come and go whenever she likes.

Now a very different kind of piece, written by **Ann**. This was the winner of the *What SWOP Means to Me* competition, judged by TV personal ity Richard Drax, who al so presented the prize at the 2003 Christmas party:

The Big Glass Room
March 2003

In these early days of the new Century, words like 'synthetic chemical s' and 'cloning' are out of favour, and 'organic' is considered to be the only way forward. These apparently innovative methods are actually far from new. Without them, that superb specimen in the stunning cottage garden some fifty years ago, would surely have passed into memory and folklore. Instead, with the help of cherishing, nurturing, cloning and the careful administration of tried and tested simple

chemicals, I and my siblings can help recapture those memories and extend the pleasures given by my ancestors.

I should introduce myself, as I stand in a two litre pot, at Cherry Tree Nursery, hoping to catch the eye of a down to earth plant lover. Of course, I hope for the perfect home, just as unwanted pets and abandoned people everywhere dream about the future. My family have put down roots in so many places over the years, and that is an adventure in itself. More recently, however, I have been part of a remarkable set of circumstances, which I do think are well worth recording.

I am a 'Rosemary officinalis' an easy going shrubby herb used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. I stand up to a second look all the year round, but I am at my very best when I burst into a profusion of lilac flowers and bees and butterflies pay me a good deal of attention. My strong and distinct aroma, when my stems and leaves are crushed, are there for all to glean, even in the deepest winter or hottest summer day.

Nature's annual cycle makes it hard to know just where to begin, a bit like the chicken and the egg. Perhaps I started my independent life when a couple of the staff, browsing the nursery one morning, agreed that the untidy shrubs could do with trimming. The clippings were taken to the propagation unit, where I met with a small group of cheery folk, sharing news of both world and personal importance.

Gradually the area turned into a workshop with compost, containers, labels and snips. The clippings were sorted, trimmed, dipped, planted, watered and sprayed, until I found myself surrounded by tiny cuttings, just like me.

There were trays of us, and we were placed together in this enormous bright Room and abandoned! I felt odd. Deserted, unimportant, but still I had a few leaves and some dormant buds.

As I looked around I could see dozens, maybe hundreds of other trays, but they had different cuttings, fancy stems, showy leaves in every colour you can imagine. In the distance were trays sprouting tender new shoots, but all around me there was a feeling of anxious curiosity.

Time takes on a modified perspective here at Cherry Tree. The rush and bustle of daily living is on hold and all the folk on site focus on daily tasks and exchange both light and deeper conversation, without the pressure of close supervision, report writing and deadlines so familiar in today's workplace.

Strangely this freedom seems to motivate. In the propagation room they set themselves targets. On my day, they wanted to take four hundred from my family and three hundred each from two other varieties. The concentration and dexterity was awesome. It reminded me of ant colonies that I have felt around my roots in the past. Each person working away and together a substantial task is complete.

Out in the Big Room day turned to night and, soon after dawn, my propagators returned. They glanced around our trays but walked on by. Days passed, faces changed, sometimes a few extra folk, sometimes fewer. On special days a newcomer would join them. They were easy to spot. They seemed a touch uncomfortable, a little bit lost, despite much reassurance. Every regular made sure the newcomer knew just what to do. Showing how to do it again, if there was any doubt. Surely any novice must feel very cherished and valuable. I do hope that is how I shall feel - given time.

Weeks passed. I had come to recognise the pattern in the Big Glass Room. I knew the folk who came every day, those who came once a week and all the variations. Some are always chirpy and bright, some naturally subdued.

In times of crisis, which may be about money, housing, transport or the family, all these folk shared, commiserated and helped to solve the problem, calling in extra help if needed. In good times, the unit was overwhelmed with joy and laughter, and the targets met in record time.

Sundays for me were so quiet that I spent my time looking forward to spotting the odd snail, and envying the trays at the far end, whose shoots had sprouted and grown. They were new plantlets of the future.

At last I felt this odd sensation at my base. Next day the feeling was stronger. It was as if my very base was growing fingers. It was hardly painful, but it was definitely an uncomfortable feeling. Another unknown, and the future is always a bit scary.

By now, our tray had been moved along in the Big Glass Room. Those plantlets I had envied before had gone, and we were shifting along towards the far end, while new cuttings were filling our former place. Suddenly we became the centre of attention again. My propagator came to look at our tray every time she was here. Sometimes touching me or my neighbours. I heard her say one day "They must have all taken. Look at these lovely young leaves. The roots are coming out the tray! This

was a really good batch." I felt proud. All the folk in the propagation unit had a super day, as they searched the trays for their successes.

It was time for us to be moved on. Our tray was gently carried back to where we started, and using different compost and individual pots, we were transplanted so that we had more space for our roots to grow, and our shoots to spread. Time to move out of the Big Glass Room to another part of the nursery. Here I looked towards the end of the tunnel and saw much, much bigger plants than us. After a week or two they were taken outside, and we were moved into their place, just like the Big Glass Room.

Again I felt vulnerable. Where were they being taken? What would become of me?

I need not have worried. Whether a plant or a person, at Cherry Tree Nursery, differences are valued and encouraged, fears are voiced; and comforted or challenged according to feelings on the day. Nothing is impossible, and opportunities are boundless. My next move saw me transferred to a yet larger pot with my very own label. I felt rather small and insignificant once more, but by now was becoming familiar with the routine of being moved around the site.

By the time my label showed I was nearly a year old, I had sprouted and grown just like the older plants I had envied in the Big Glass Room. Those emerging rootlets which had once bothered me had become a mass of tangled roots, searching every corner for nourishment, anchoring me firmly in the rich fine compost, awaiting the life-giving daily spray of cool fresh water.

In between my leaves the dormant buds had swelled and burst into tiny shoots, from which yet more shoots developed. I just knew, somehow, that some of these buds would turn into flowers, and welcome the bees and butterflies, just as they had on the motherplant from which I was cloned.

So, at last I am ready. Ready to catch the eye of a gardener who thinks I am just perfect for that chosen spot in his much loved plot, to transplant me yet again. Perhaps I shall be there for many years to come. Maybe they will use me for new clones to be nurtured from my clippings, just as I was once trimmed from my overgrown untidy parent.

One thing I know. Though I cannot recall every rebirth of Rosemary officinalis in the last fifty years, I am certain that the most memorable time of my life, past and future, has been my time at Cherry Tree Nursery, where life for plants and people is valued beyond jewels.

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And, as they say, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Here is my effort. Sorry, but I had to put it in somewhere!!

WHAT SWOP MEANS TO ME

Well, what SWOP means to me is, if you have two cards which are the same and I have two different cards which are the same, then you give me one of yours and I give you one of mine, and then we each have one of each of them. That's about it, really, isn't it? Except, of course, as I remember it, some cards are much rarer than other cards, because there aren't so many of them, and you may have to swop several of the common ones for anyone to give you one of the rare ones. So obviously you have to be careful about all this swopping business. And then there are

wives..... No, no wait a minute, I may be on slightly the wrong tack here...

This is the trouble when you put the title in capital letters - you don't know the difference between swop and SWOP, and anyway the spellchecker says it should be spelled s-w-a-p, so the whole joke has gone down the drain (and it wasn't very good to start with).

So, SWOP, what is that all about? It seems to be a place which grows plants, run by people nobody else wants, and then it sells them to people who want to buy them. The plants, that is, not the people nobody else wants. That's about it, really, so I'll have to think about this whole thing. there must be something else to say.

Ah yes, plants, so what is the deal with them? Now, I have nothing against plants, as such. If they want to grow, that is perfectly all right with me. But some people at SWOP spend all their time actually helping the damn things to grow. Not me, however, I have more sense. If plants want to grow, fine, but they should do it by themselves. They never helped me to grow, so I am not going to help them. I'm very mean like that. Well, OK, the other day I did help to move some of the things around, but this has given me an idea. If they need to move around all the time, why haven't they got legs, then they can do it by themselves. You see, everyone but me always misses the most obvious solutions to things. With all these wonderful genetic modifications going on today, it shouldn't be much trouble to fix this, and make life easier for everyone. Of course, there was a film once about triffids. They could move around by themselves, and they weren't very kind to people. So you have got to be careful with this kind of thing. We'll just have to make sure that these plants with legs show the proper gratitude.

OK, plants at SWOP. They grow lots of flowers, and also grasses. Now flowers are bad enough, but GRASSES!!! Where I come from grass just grows by itself, and you can't stop the blasted stuff, so that is beneath my contempt to even consider. So, let's consider flowers. They're nice enough to look at. Pretty things, bright colours, all that stuff. Husbands give them to their wives when they have done something bad. But that's about it. It's clear that this is where they are going wrong. You have to grow things that people need and want, that's how you make the money. What do people need? Food! They can eat that! And it's a little known fact that plants can be food. Vegetarians have been known to eat little else - entirely ignoring the fact that plants are just as alive as animals, even though they don't move around as much. (When my idea above comes into practice, vegetarians are going to starve - I hadn't thought of that! Oh well!!!!) So the type of plants they should grow at SWOP would be fruit. We could grow apples and pears and plums and oranges and bananas and pineapples and even pommy-granites (if anyone really eats them). That way the money would roll in.

I think if you grow bananas you have to have elephants to help you, but they'd fit in the shed somehow - even if it took a little rebuilding. With my business acumen, I sometimes wonder why I am not the manager. It's all so simple!

Actually the whole thing is not too bad, even as it is now. Everyone seems to be happy doing what they do, and even I can help a bit too. As I said back a bit, it does help give people nobody else wants a chance to do something worthwhile including me. So it'll do for the moment. (That's high praise where I come from. pardner!) And, of course, thanks to Roger, Trevor, Ann, Steve and maybe others. They give me a smoke sometimes, even though I don't deserve it. Yes that must be what SWOP means to me: something to get up in the morning for, and somewhere to nick a smoke now and again. That's enough for anyone, isn't it?

So, let's hear from **Roger** now:

Jessica is the Manager at SWOP since 1992 and has helped to steer our 'Ship' in the right direction. There is a 'family' feeling at the Nursery, everyone looking out for each other. If someone is unwell and the staff have not noticed then one of the other clients, or more than one, will come and tell us "Fred isn't well today, I can tell, I bet he hasn't taken his pills - I did that once, I can tell". This is not an actual example but very similar to what happens.

There is so much sympathy and empathy that our volunteers/clients express and share such a feeling of pride and joy and caring that most people who visit the Nursery notice it.

I have seen volunteers arrive at SWOP for their first day, nervous, timid, agitated, apprehensive, quiet, shattered, and with kindness, help and patience we see them getting better and happier.

The gift of laughter is treasured and cherished amongst us all and to 'learn' to laugh again is a big stepping stone on the road to recovery for anyone, no matter what their illness. The sound of laughter around the Nursery is welcome, together with volunteers singing to our local radio station, 2CR. The local DJ, Geoff Barker, is a hero to many of our volunteers and calls in from time to time to give out 'T' shirts and to play requests on the station. This is appreciated and much talked about by everyone. The prejudice which may exist in the 'real' world does not exist at SWOP. An amazing amount of work is carried out by a group of people who may have been 'written off' by the competitive and pressurised commercial WORLD but by gentle encouragement, love and care, volunteers whose lives have (in some cases) been shattered in the past are slowly pieced back together again.

Selflessness is a word that springs to mind when I think about Jessica, she is never too busy to lend a sympathetic ear to anyone. I know she will hate me for singing her praises but I truly feel - in fact, I know - that SWOP would not be the same without her. However, I can hear her words now "It's not just ME, it's everyone that makes Cherry Tree Nursery what it is and indeed that is true, but you need a good Captain, Leader, Figurehead and that is Jessica.

Make no mistake, Jess can tell people off and I am no exception but her criticism is always valid and done in 'the best possible taste' for staff, volunteers and friends alike.

Our project is reputed to be one of the largest in the country, it is also mostly self-funding. Shrubs are such a nice produce to sell. Problems are many and varied - vine weevil, greenfly, blackfly, all the aphids, fire blight on pyracantha, eelworms on buddleia, scarab fly in the soil, drought, overwatering, too much heat, too little heat, too much shade, too little shade, severe winds, severe frost, etc, but the Nursery has survived all these plagues and flourished since its start in 1989. Eight years on and doing well - three of our volunteers have been at Cherry Tree Nursery since the beginning and I am sure they will stay here for many years to come - God Willing. Some of our volunteers will never be able to return to their former work - many of them very skilled - engineers, office workers, mechanics, drivers - people from all walks of life, all social classes.

Mental illness has no prejudice, it could happen to anyone at almost any time, possibly with no warning. The loss of a loved one, a bereavement, a marriage split-up, any number of causes could be that traumatic, stressful event which causes a person to become mentally unwell.

A very large percentage of the population has probably experienced some form of mental illness at some stage of their lives or has known someone who has. The acceptance of recognising the illness could well be the first step in the recovery process, but a place to go and mix, meet and share your experiences with people who have also suffered is a very necessary ingredient in the healing process. Our environment is covered with so much concrete and tarmac that if we live in a built-up area, it is easily forgotten that the beans in our beans on toast were grown from a tiny pip, and wheat used in the breadmaking was a tiny grain, and all grown in soil. Nature and soil - getting back to basics - that of digging a hole, planting a seed and harvesting the crop can seem so remote when we are in a supermarket in this hi-tec world.

Horticultural therapy involves many skills but the main area of activity is in the open air; an environment that is therapeutic for most people whether they have a problem or not; to lose sight of nature, the land and the soil would be to lose sight of our origins.

Gardening is said to be the second most popular hobby to fishing. Gardening programmes are popular on TV and more and more gardening centres, fish and pond shops, etc are appearing in our High Streets and shopping centres, reinforcing the popularity of making your garden an extra room in your house - your own 'paradise'. The value of horticultural therapy cannot be over-emphasised. Some of our volunteers have been able to make a sufficient recovery to move on, either to further education, other schemes or to self-employment.

Everyone who spends time at Cherry Tree Nursery could not fail I am sure to feel the warm, friendly and HEALING atmosphere which exists here. Gardening is good for our well-being generally, both mentally and physically and whoever we are.

Time for some shorter pieces now. First this one by **Paul**:

What SWOP Means To Me

I like gardening, finding out about the different plants, planting the plants and seeing how they grow.

I like learning at SWOP. I like spelling and learning how to write things out. I also like using the mouse and computer. I typed this out in my computer class.

The people at SWOP gives you confidence. They are friendly and I have made new friends.

I've been to outings to Kew Gardens, Hampton Court and Bickton Gardens. I liked it as it was enjoyable and had a good packed lunch. Kew was very interesting.

We are treated to fish and chips generally on a Friday. I really like eating fish and chips.

And next, one by **Kevin**:

Why I like SWOP

I like SWOP because it is very helpful and they are very nice. And I like the outside working and it is nice. There are very big plants and I like doing weeding and sorting the plants out. I like working in the tunnels with the other volunteers. When we have a break we can chat together.

Cherry Tree is near Bournemouth airport, and I like the aeroplanes. I like Moogy and Cherry, the cats, and Jake and Ben, the dogs. The staff are very good. I enjoy it very much.

This one was written by **Tim**:

I work at SWOP. I find it is very good work to do. SWOP helps people who have had emotional problems. If it was not for SWOP, a lot of people who have had problems would find it very hard to get some form of work anywhere. As finding normal employment anywhere would be hard, as they want to know our past work record and people who have been unwell have generally not a good works record, because of illnesses.

We are all kept very busy at SWOP, plant potting, weeding, cleaning up the grounds, etc as well as relaxing in tea breaks. We are at the moment helping with an irrigation system, to help to water all the shrubs we have, and there are a great amount of shrubs to water.

We all get on well with each other here, as we all have basically the same problems. We joke with each other, have a laugh and talk about anything and everything. We get together at times to discuss where to go together. Some of us are going to a disco soon. If we do have any problems, we all try to help each other, and Jess, the lady manageress of SWOP, tries her best to help and support

us with things and others do as well. I think the doctors find SWOP is an encouraging place for us to come to, as doctors would like to see us doing something to help ourselves rather than just sitting around and getting depressed. There are a lot of people behind SWOP, helping to keep SWOP going, which we appreciate very much. We get a lot of donations from different people and firms which is all very helpful. If it was not for SWOP many of us would find it hard to get anywhere or do anything with our lives, and SWOP is a good stepping stone to help us get somewhere.

The following one is by **Graham**:

This is an article on SWOP - a very successful and unique project which provides horticultural training for the long-term mentally ill. It has turned out to be an extremely beneficial project indeed. For, in giving volunteers interesting and varied work, it also produces literally thousands of shrubs. There are big stock beds, well maintained, which provide us with lots of cuttings, five or six greenhouses and also some rows of shrubs, well watered in the summer.

I, as a volunteer, thoroughly enjoy coming here. I have learnt many useful tips from members of staff and other people, and also have made many friends. As a charity we rely on donations from various organisations and they have been very generous fortunately. And the money has been spent very wisely, buying pots, compost, tools and other useful things. So, after many months of hard work we now have a nursery to be proud of.

This next piece is a very special one by **Jeff**:

Prior to attending Cherry Tree, I was at various day hospitals, centres, drop-in centres over many years. I never found any hope, happiness or stability in any of them, mostly doom and gloom.

I first got told about Cherry Tree a few years ago by a "shrink", but at that time I really was not myself and also did not have the right back-up team under the mental health system to pursue the matter.

Quite a few years later Cherry Tree came up again, and this time I had the right team. A visit and guided tour round Cherry Tree was arranged for me: my first impressions were that I will never cope, everyone looked so very happy and contented, feelings I wanted.

Fortunately, they had a mad two days coming up called a "potathon", and I was invited to attend, though I was not officially on the books yet. I was very surprised how quickly I fitted into a team working together and how I was accepted as a member of that team.

I got my official start at Cherry Tree a couple of weeks later. Again old problems arose: would I cope, fit in, manage or even bother to attend? By now I was in my sixties. I went, and have never regretted a day, despite my past record.

I think the first question I asked my fellow volunteers at Cherry Tree was "What do you do in the winter?" I know now they carry on working and are happy and contented.

There is a made-up road into Cherry Tree, then you go through the first gate down a rough track. To me now, every time I go through that gate the world seems so peaceful and safe. Once through the gate, to me, I can hear the birds singing, the dogs barking and the cats meowing. Yes, we have dogs daily and two lovely friendly cats permanently, which I consider helps all.

To me it seems no matter what a person's abilities, disabilities, moods or whatever, everybody is treated as equal at Cherry Tree. No classifying, you are all the same, which to me is wonderful, being treated as an equal.

I, personally, have been in hospital a few times since starting at Cherry Tree, but none of my admissions have been due to them. Always outside matters, events, happenings, which I find hard to control and sometimes release my feelings about.

The trips, outings and special treats are something else. I sometimes think Cherry Tree are too kind - the only way over that is for me to try harder, if possible, to repay their kindness to me. That way, as well as respect for Cherry Tree, I will get some self-respect back again.

Confidence, yes Cherry Tree builds up your own personal confidence. A few years ago I got a benefit which I was entitled to and quite a bit of back pay. I was encouraged by Cherry Tree to take a holiday. Since then I have been on several holidays, all abroad, something I could never have imagined a few years ago. My holidays have always been in winter months when things are slack and the weather in the UK is not so wonderful - that's being sensible!

I also now volunteer for all the plant sales Cherry Tree do at various shows, fetes, etc. This involves dealing and talking to the public, and selling plants to them. I found it hard at first, but then I thought that at some age of the development of the plant into a lovely sellable item I was most probably involved in talking to the public. Well, that's quite a new experience for me, as I am naturally very reclusive. That's confidence!

Although now I have only been at Cherry Tree for about four years, it seems a lifetime! In my will, after I am cremated I have requested my ashes to be spread at Cherry Tree. If I cannot be there in body, then I will be there in spirit forever.

Thank you, Cherry Tree.

Next, **Steve** gives us an account of his day:

A typical day at SWOP for me:

I arrive at SWOP just before 9:00am and grab a quick cup of coffee. Then it's off to computer training where I am currently learning word processing and spreadsheets which are good to know, as they are the basic skills needed in a lot of workplaces.

Tea break is at 10:30am until 11:00am, then it's back to the computers until 11:30am, just enough time to do some printing of the morning's work. Computers finishes, and it is time to join the others outside in the nursery.

The old paving around the nursery is being replaced, so there is the chance to gain some experience in laying paving slabs. It's 12:30pm and lunchtime has arrived. The exodus to the rest-room has begun, and the two resident cats are looking out for the opportunity to devour someone's packed lunch.

1:30pm comes around quickly and it's time to return to the nursery. This afternoon there is an order for plants which needs to be picked up from the nursery stocks and moved to the car-park ready for customer collection. This keeps about half a dozen of us busy for the next hour, and also gives us the chance to familiarise ourselves with the huge selection of plants.

2:30pm and it's tea break again and a chance to have a look at the notice board and to see what outings there are in the next few weeks. There are trips out to Stapehill Abbey, St Pauls Cathedral, Kingston Maurward and many more to add to the outings already, which have been to the Glastonbury Festival, Bournemouth Aquarium and Compton Acres. The list goes on.

At the nursery during the year there is also the annual barbecue, which is always very popular with the volunteers and staff, as is the Christmas party held at Pelhams where the volunteers are treated to food and presents.

3:00pm and it's back to the nursery and there's a plant bench which needs painting, so a few of us grab some paintbrushes and are kept busy for the last half an hour of the day.

3:30pm, end of another day for me at Cherry Tree.

Now a piece by **Pat**:

I have been attending SWOP for 2 years now. 2 years ago I never had a purpose to my life, I found that I could not get up in the mornings as I had nothing to get up for. I also took an overdose whenever life got difficult because I did not know of another way to cope. Since going to SWOP my life has changed. I attend 3 days a week and I get so much help from it. It gives you a purpose in life, you feel that you are part of a team and the peace I get in attending SWOP is great. When I feel life getting difficult, instead of taking an overdose I talk things out with the members of staff and we look at things from a different angle. I never thought I would be any good for working again after my illness began, but now I really think that I can take part in the nursery life, and this makes me feel that I am giving something to society. There are still bad days in my life, but I still go to SWOP on these days and the members of staff and the other members who attend help to lift my spirits.

If I have a really bad day, I can still attend and talk to the staff, but I am not pushed to work if I feel unable to do so. I have made a lot of new friends at SWOP, which is nice as I feel that again I can give something to that friendship.

I work in the shop selling plants to traders and members of the public once a week. This helps my self-esteem and helps me to interact with members of the public which I would not otherwise do.

I look forward to going on the trips that SWOP kindly takes us on, whereas I would not get the chance to go to these places otherwise. Last year we had several boat trips to Wareham, which was so peaceful and I would never get the chance to go on a boat otherwise. The staff at SWOP help to achieve things I thought I would never be able to do again, and they push in such a gentle way to make the most of your days and make you feel an important member of SWOP.

The next one is by **Jill**:

SWOP is like looking at an imaginative film. Yes, the word 'imaginative' is exactly what Cyril Speller and Roslyn Aish were, as they were the people who decided to start a garden nursery for people suffering with a mental illness. It was a major task for anyone to take on but land was eventually found, staff interviewed and then gradually volunteers began to come to help start the garden nursery. Hard work was ahead, but gradually things began to take shape and after a few years, with the help of funding and selling plants and advertising in local newspapers, SWOP began to get more and more stable over the coming years.

I joined SWOP about 4 years ago and I found a different atmosphere to the outside world where people were rushing all the time to get from A to B, whereas as soon as you drive off the main road at Northbourne and drive down a country lane towards the garden nursery you start to feel more relaxed, as you feel you are coming into a place full of tranquillity. Dogs and cats scamper about the place and people greet you with such warmth. There is a feeling of caring about each other and you feel part of a family, either working in the Propagating Unit, potting plants, stocking up the sales area or attending computer classes. When a volunteer first starts at SWOP they are feeling pretty low with not much enthusiasm or energy, but what is incredible to see after say 3 or 4 months is the change in that individual, who is now joining in more with the work at the nursery, talking and even laughing occasionally. It must give the staff a great deal of satisfaction to see this.

The staff work endlessly at SWOP, arranging outings, barbecues, sales and struggle to find the funds to keep the place ticking over.

Being with SWOP has helped me get on my feet again, more confidence, a feeling of being useful, and thank you Cyril Speller and Roslyn Aish for your wonderful idea, and this comes I am sure from all the volunteers at SWOP.

Here is a piece written by **Jane**, soon after she arrived here:

Life's a bowl of.....

I haven't been at Cherry Tree very long, in fact only three weeks, but I can honestly say it has already turned my life around. My place at Cherry Tree came at a time when my mental health was doing its best to ruin my life. My driving licence had been revoked because of voice-hearing and medication side-effects, and I was feeling more and more isolated. I was at a stage in my life when I didn't want to live such a miserable existence. And then a place at Cherry Tree came up.

The nursery is only a 40 minute walk away, and on good days I can ride my bike. I consider myself extremely blessed that Cherry Tree is so close to my home.

I must admit I was nervous on day one, but needn't have been because everyone was so friendly. The warmth of the people I met was overwhelming, and any nerves I had were soon subsiding.

I have a purpose to my life now. I love getting up and going to work. I look forward to being given jobs to do. I love the variety of the jobs and it feels good doing something helpful. It is also a huge boost to me that I am being given some responsibility which is starting to build my self-worth.

I have met some lovely people and made friends already. The understanding of the people at Cherry Tree means a great deal, and not being judged is a huge lift in my life. I was feeling so isolated, but now I can talk with other people who have the same problems as me and feel that people really do understand.

The good thing about Cherry Tree is that not only has it changed the way I feel, but also my family and friends have seen a positive change in me. They tell me I am happier, I've got the sparkle back in my eyes and they've got the old Jane back.

It is wonderful to be involved in such a successful project and feel part of a team. I look forward to my day at Cherry Tree and for the first time in years I feel excited about my future. After being signed off work over seven years ago through ill-health, I never thought I would feel passionate about anything again - but I do, and it feels fantastic!

And this final one (plus the poem) are by **Maggie**:

I have been a member of SWOP now for seven months and it has done more for me than I could have done for myself in seven years. The help, support and encouragement you receive is beyond compare and second to none. I was extremely nervous of joining Cherry Tree SWOP, even though Jess had helped enormously by putting me at ease at my interview, I was very apprehensive when it came to my first day. I really need not have been, as I have never found anything as meaningful to become a part of. I already knew two of the other people attending, Elizabeth and Richard, who I had met at a weekly relaxation class we attend. They had been a big part of helping me settle at this class and

control my nerves, it is down to them that I first heard about Cherry Tree Nursery and SWOP. I am so grateful to them both.

There is always a magic cloud over Cherry Tree, which is most definitely felt as you start your progress down the driveway, to the main entrance gate. To be part of a community where everyone is readily accepted with no questions asked or judgements made, is a truly great feeling, especially after feeling for months that the whole world is against me. First name terms are used by all, and although it is very hard at first to put names to all the faces, others seem to remember yours and so you very soon begin to feel a part of this very special group of people. This alone is a great help to your confidence and starts to make you feel that you don't need to hide away from life completely, also that some of your problems are not always as bad as they seem. Other volunteers seem to be able to shelve their own problems some days and really help you to start climbing out of your big black hole. I only hope that in time I shall be able to help others in this way.

There is never a dull moment at Cherry Tree Nursery with so many jobs to be done at all times of the year. All the staff are amazing and soon seem to assess which jobs you like and which you don't, and there always seems so much to learn. If you have a day when you feel particularly down, staff are always willing to have a chat and help you through, and if you don't feel up to working with somebody else or in a group, it is never a problem to do a job by yourself. I usually find that if I start off like this, before very long I am able to move on to another job with someone else. Friendships are formed at Cherry Tree, and again one feels that judgements are not being made, which would normally be a huge hurdle for me that I would probably be unable to get over. It is so hard not to see the negative side to everything you do, but staff and friends at Cherry Tree nearly always seem able to help you find some positives. I have been told on many occasions throughout my life that a SMILE is a great way to put others at ease, and I try hard to put this into practice even on the bleak, black days. The thought that I could be helping others, even in a small way, also helps me.

SWOP is helping me put back into my life thoughts and feelings that I really thought I could never experience again, and I am so grateful for this.

Many outings are made from Cherry Tree Nursery, covering a lot of different subjects of interest. So far I have only attended the pantomime trip and the Christmas party, both of which I was very nervous of attending but thoroughly enjoyed. I hope that in the not too distant future I shall be able to take part in some other trips.

Another enormous lift I have felt is being able to attend computer classes. I had never touched a computer before, and thought that at my age, to try and learn something that appeared to me to be very complex would be way beyond me. Yet again I was proved wrong. After initially knocking over the big barrier and getting myself into the first couple of lessons, Jenni really put me at ease and has helped me so much in understanding and starting to use a computer. Once again no judgements appear to have been made, and the individual help you receive is brilliant. I really worry about being able to keep up with other people,

but this was completely unfounded, as everyone is able to work and learn at their own pace. It is an amazing feeling to think that you are starting to accept a big challenge, and what is more really enjoying it.

Thank you, Jess and all your team, for the help and encouragement you give us. The list of things you all do is immense. For myself you are restoring my faith in people, helping to rebuild my self-esteem and take an interest in life again. I must also say a big thank you to Pete who is breaking down my fear of being in a car without my husband by my side.

Thank you never feels to be enough. On our visit to the pantomime a lot of shouting was done, but amongst it all I would like to shout,

IT'S CHERRY TREE SWOP b - e - h - i - n - d you!

SHELTERED WORK OPPORTUNITIES

ENJOYED BY ALL,
FRIENDS TO SUPPORT YOU SHOULD YOU TAKE
A FALL,
A FEELING OF SAFETY AND SECURITY FLOWS,
A HAPPIER COMMUNITY NOBODY KNOWS.

WORK EXPERIENCE IN MANY WAYS,
A FEEL OF ACHIEVEMENT TO HELP YOUR DAYS,
LEARNING THINGS ABOUT PLANTS I NEVER
KNEW,
CHERRY TREE SWOP IT'S THANKS TO YOU.

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND FOR

EVERYONE,
WITH TRIPS AND OUTINGS FOR EXTRA FUN,
MAKING FRIENDS OF PEOPLE YOU DIDN'T

KNOW,
FILLS YOUR HEART AND MIND WITH AN EXTRA GLOW.

PROJECTS PLANNED BY CARING STAFF,
A TRIP TO THE PANTO TO MAKE YOU LAUGH,
SWEETS GALORE TO MAKE US FAT,
BUT NOBODY WANTS TO THINK ABOUT THAT.

Following on from the tremendous, huge and positively overwhelming success of the original *What SWOP Means To Me*, the writing competition has been started up once again. So, that means a brand new collection of masterpieces, and here they are!!

The first one of the new batch is by **Hayley**:

I would just like to say that without Cherry Tree I don't know where I'd be today, because before I started here I had all sorts of trouble with Job Centres, etc, which in the end had me reduced to tears. Then I got introduced here and the nerves nearly got the better of me, but I plucked up the courage and came. When I got here I couldn't believe the friendly atmosphere, people understood me, and I got all the support I needed and made real friends.

Recently my dad got poorly and, coming to Cherry Tree, I got a lot of help and support which helped me through the worst time ever. Then my dad passed away. I hadn't realised that the people here are so loving till then, right from a friendly smile through to the big hugs and people being able to drive me to the doctors or home.

Most recently, I saw Jess helping someone, with those big arms and hands for the biggest, most supportive cuddle – that was when I realised how lucky I am to be at a place like Cherry Tree, and have made some really, truly great friends, which has prompted me to write this for you to read.

Edited, illustrated, and otherwise sorted out by Colin Tiller

So, if you don't like it, you know who to blame...