

# ANNUAL REPORT

Tortworth Forest Centre  
Community Interest  
Company



May 2019 - April 2020

Conservation \* Education \* Wellbeing

# INTRODUCTION

This year, thanks to our volunteers and supporters, has been our busiest yet.

We have increased our activity across all of our work in the arboretum, from restoring and managing the tree collection to increasing opportunities for people to access nature.

Despite a wet winter and many tree failures, we have improved the collection. We have cleared new areas, planted new exotic trees, and created new clearings, pathways and signage. We finished our Heritage Lottery project mapping each tree and creating the collection's first mapped and accurate tree lists.

Our funding success means we have worked with more volunteers than ever before, and continue and develop The Hawthorn Project, for women in recovery from addiction.

We raised capital funds to purchase our minibus, and towards the end of the year new grants allowed us to hire new staff.

This has given us more time to spend planning management tasks and prioritising ground work as well as increase our community engagement.

Thanks must go to our incredible volunteers, supporters and funders for believing in the project.

Rebecca Cork - Director and Founder



# OUR WORK

## OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our mission is to restore and manage the exotic tree collection at Tortworth, and create a vibrant outdoor learning space available to a broad section of the community.

Two pillars form our work:

### RESTORING THE ARBORETUM

With the dedication, enthusiasm and passion of our volunteers, our aim is to restore, replant and maintain the arboretum for the enjoyment of future generations.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We run programmes which aim to improve lives by reconnecting people with nature, for physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We do this through conservation volunteering, wellbeing programmes, outdoor events and courses.

Our priority is to provide opportunities for groups who may not usually access the benefits of nature and the outdoors.



# RESTORING THE ARBORETUM

## MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



This year we managed to get more work done on site than ever before, though we were slowed down by the number of tree failures over a wet winter, and we ended the year deciding to postpone our volunteer days as Covid-19 arrived in the UK.

Our most significant achievement is the move from prioritising clearing and restoring, to new planting. We gathered together in October with volunteers and visitors to plant the first new trees in the arboretum since we have managed it. A full list and photos can be seen on our website: [www.tortwortharboretum.org/planting-a-new-generation-of-trees/](http://www.tortwortharboretum.org/planting-a-new-generation-of-trees/).

## OUR MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019/2020

- We created and shared accurate maps including suggested walks around the site, as a result of our year long mapping project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund
- Two of our staff renewed their first aid course certificates
- We cleared new large areas and planted our first new trees
- Gary our Maintenance Officer restored our new-to-us mini tractor 'Doris the Donkey'
- We bought a second scythe to keep on top of the bramble cleared in previous years, an activity much loved by volunteers
- We have built new steps and bridges to improve access around the site
- We have started to plant aromatic plants such as lavender in strategic places to create interest for visitors and to secure banks
- We have spent a significant amount of time processing the many fallen mature trees that came down over the wet winter, including a large red oak, scarlet oak, beech, several silver birches and significant limbs on mature ash.
- We have continued with our rhododendron plan, pulling root balls out by hand
- We bought a small chipper to help clear deadwood and provide wood chip
- We discovered trees previously unknown to us and not seen on any existing tree lists, including mulberry morus alba 'Laciniata' and a rare dogwood cornus kousa.
- We were able to start actively managing more trees, rather than spending our time clearing overgrown areas and restoring pathways
- We started more work to identify our drainage issues
- We bought a minibus in spring 2020 meaning we can bring more volunteers to the arboretum each session.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## OUR MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019/2020

### THE HAWTHORN PROJECT

Thanks to The National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, we were awarded 100% funding for our four-year project for women in recovery from addiction. Women are invited to the arboretum weekly to enjoy campfire food, crafts, mindfulness, foraging, and whittling. We have now finished the first year, and each week we have between 6 and 12 women attend, most returning for a second term. Feedback is positive with women telling us that they feel more relaxed in the woods, and they enjoy learning new skills.

### OPEN DAYS

We held a spring and autumn open day, with visitors joining in to plant new exotic trees. We estimate 100 visitors on each open day, including families.

### COMMUNITY GROUPS

Among others, the arboretum was used by Scouts and Beavers, the School for Social Entrepreneurs, wildlife groups, Tortworth Primary School, mental health groups, a school for visually impaired children, a Woodland Women group, as well as regular volunteers with autism attending to cut back bramble.

# FINANCE

## GRANT INCOME

This year we have had welcome grant success, with £91,842 raised, up from £25,601 last year.

The first grant success was a four year project, The Hawthorn Project, funded entirely with a grant from The Big Lottery Community Fund.

This grant covers £110,000 over 4 years to cover women in recovery from addiction attending the arboretum during term time. This grant includes capital income for our minibus.

Our second large grant was from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. They have granted us £100,000 over two years towards the management of the arboretum and a series of community focused events and open days to encourage more people in to the arboretum.

We received £9,530 from The National Lottery Awards for All towards our weekly volunteer days, and £2,000 from Postcode Lottery Local towards our community tree planting days and open days.



## OVERVIEW

Our financial year is 1st May 2019 to 30th April 2020.

Turnover £53,495  
Expenditure £55,169

We have small reserves at £205, down from last year.

## OTHER INCOME

Our trading income is £1,174, up from £588 last year. This is a combination of events and courses held at the arboretum, and sales of merchandise.

Donations from individuals and companies remained at roughly the same amount, £822, up from £740 last year, including ongoing support from Absolutely Tree and Hedge Care. Special thanks must go to Jess Stein, Peter Collins and Jenna Bee Photography for your continued donations.

£53,495

Turnover,  
increased from  
£26,929 last year

# SOCIAL IMPACT

## Sunday community volunteer group

Our volunteer days take place monthly on a Sunday. Our average number of volunteers each session is 11.5, totaling 104 days' worth of volunteer support on site. We held 9 sessions, with 2 cancelled due to the weather and one due to Covid-19. Funded by Heritage Lottery Fund.



## Nature Nurture Project

Funded by Awards for all, our weekly mental health volunteer days take place once a week. This year we welcomed 6 regular volunteers and two staff members each session, with two sessions cancelled due to weather and one due to Covid-19. A report on the Tuesdays is available on our blog.



## The Hawthorn Project

We have run the project for a full year with an average of 8 women attending regularly, and most continuing on to a second or third term with us. Our evaluation report is available on request.



Our women tell us that they feel safer in the woods, they laugh more, they have made new positive connections and that it is the highlight of the week. They make meaningful contributions to improve the arboretum's facilities.





# WOODLAND HIRE

TAKE YOUR EVENT INTO THE WOODS AT  
TORTWORTH FOREST CENTRE

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A BEAUTIFUL, IDYLIC,  
AND SPACIOUS VENUE FOR YOUR EVENT THIS  
SUMMER? WHY NOT TAKE IT INTO THE WOODS  
AT TORTWORTH FOREST CENTRE.

20 ACRE WOODLAND AND ARBORETUM  
BEAUTIFUL WOODEN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM  
WITH A LIVING ROOF  
PRIVATE PARKING  
BANQUET TABLE AND FIRE PIT

2 MINUTES FROM JUNCTION 14 M5  
25 MINUTES FROM BRISTOL/STROUD



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[www.tortwortharboretum.org/hire](http://www.tortwortharboretum.org/hire) for more details.