



**Annual report**  
1 May 2024 - 30 April 2025



[www.tortwortharboretum.org](http://www.tortwortharboretum.org)



# Introduction



**This annual report covers 2024-2025 - our tenth year as an organisation. It was a year of reflection and commemoration, culminating in our huge 10th anniversary celebration.** People from across our community enjoyed marking the occasion and reflecting on the achievements of the last decade. This two page spread shows the journey we have been on as an organisation and the huge progress in restoring the arboretum, as well as some of the highlights from our tenth year. We are now looking ahead excitedly to the next decade!

See you in the woods soon!

## 2014

Woodlands.co.uk purchased the abandoned site and invited Bec Briar to make use of it. A small group of volunteers began clearance work, marking the start of monthly Sunday volunteer days.



## 2015

Tortworth Forest Centre CIC was born! The Hawthorn Project, a wellbeing day for women in recovery from addiction, began on site. Early funding success allowed monthly volunteer days to continue.



## 2019

The mapping project was completed with more than 600 trees recorded. For the first time since abandonment, new specimen trees were planted in the arboretum.



## 2016

Weekly Woodland Management Days began as an internship funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, offering structured support for volunteers struggling with addiction and other mental health challenges. We hosted our first major public events, Arborfest and Chestnut Day, and welcomed a flock of resident goats to help with restoration.



## 2017

The rediscovery of original stone steps and pathways restored access to the upper arboretum. Our team learned from experts from the Forestry Commission, Westonbirt Arboretum, and the Ancient Tree Forum, and took part in the Royal Bath & West Show.

## 2018

Volunteers carried out huge amounts of clearance work, tackling bramble, bamboo, and rhododendron. We experimented with different shelter designs, celebrated modest funding successes, and began a tree mapping project with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



# Celebrating 10 years

## 2022

The Oak Tree Project was launched to provide wellbeing days for both men and women. We commissioned an artist for the World in the Woodland heritage project, culminating in our first audio trail.

## 2023

The National Lottery Community Fund awarded four years of funding for our Woodland Wellbeing Programme, and we launched our Friends of Tortworth membership scheme. We were proud to register as an official site for the International Conifer Conservation Project.

## 2021

The first 50 trees were relabelled after their original tags had been lost. Regular visitor days and maps were introduced, and a board of directors was recruited. We started rewarding our volunteers' with hoodies and t-shirts.



## 2024

We celebrated three milestones: planting our 100th specimen tree/shrub, building a new roundhouse, and hosting our 100th monthly Sunday Community Volunteer Day. We were mentioned in arborist Thomas Pakenham's book *The Tree Hunters*.



## 2020

A two-year restoration and heritage programme was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Volunteers began growing trees from the collection's own seeds.

## 2025

Ten new trees were planted with sponsorship from local businesses. Our 10-year anniversary was marked with a celebratory event, the launch of the community blog series *Tales from Tortworth*, three new commemorative benches, three new audio trails, and a vibrant community mural. We also launched a new family discovery trail and hosted artist residencies culminating in an exhibition.





# People



## Hawthorn Project & Oak Tree Project

We supported 39 people to boost their wellbeing and resilience through nature connection, by taking part in our women only or mixed-gender groups. Participants practiced mindfulness, learnt how to identify wildlife, and to make crafts using natural materials, as well as sharing a nutritious meal. The groups planted sponsored trees, and several participants proudly contributed to the Tales from Tortworth blog series.

*"I have a reason to get up, and I can escape my everyday life for a few hours. I have something to look forward to."*



*"My life has changed, for the first time I've found a group of people that I feel truly safe around. My confidence has grown and I've learnt to love my genuine self. When I started I was broken, recovering from an abusive relationship and overly stressful job but this group has healed me and helped me regrow into someone ready to move into the next stage of my life."*

## Woodland Management Days

Our weekly Woodland Management volunteers play an integral part in the ongoing restoration and maintenance of the arboretum, whilst developing their skills and confidence. This year the group has gone from strength to strength, with strong friendships forming and volunteers instigating their own projects.

*"I now look to the future with optimism and great hope that I will integrate into society."*







*Impact aim: Resilient people empowered to connect with nature for their long-term mental health & wellbeing*



2024-2025	Sessions	People
Hawthorn Project	40	17
Oak Tree Project	37	14
Woodland management Days	48	22
Community Volunteer Days	10	54
Community Events Programme	20	873

## Community Volunteer Days

Our monthly volunteer days continue to offer a vibrant and friendly opportunity for people to take part in arboretum restoration work, learning new skills and enjoying a shared lunch together. We regularly welcome over 20 volunteers at a time - a mix of first-timers and regulars - to tackle some of the larger tasks on site.

*"I feel so lucky to be part of this really magical space - it's very special to me and I think it makes a difference to how I feel daily knowing it's here and that I'll be back again soon."*



## Community Events Programme

We held our largest public event to date this year, with 350 people attending our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. In addition, we ran an events programme throughout the year with a focus on seasonal highlights, such as snowdrops, bluebells and autumn colour. We also trialled our first dog-free event, which proved popular with attendees.

*"It was wonderful to walk around the arboretum and see everyone, of all ages, enjoying it."*







In our tenth year we added **44 new trees and shrubs** to the collection, 10 of which mark our anniversary, and will be sponsored by local businesses and individuals. This brought our total to 144 trees and shrubs planted since the organisation started, with many more planned for the next planting season. Amongst the trees we planted this year were more *Acer palmatum*s that our volunteers had grown from seed, as well as the specimens *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, *Juglans nigra*, *Carpinus kawakamii*, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, *Acer davidii*, and *Pseudotsuga menziesii*.

We started **labelling champion trees** in the collection.



A highlight this year was the installation of a **new roundhouse and accessible pathway**. The improved accessibility has already enabled more people to participate in our projects.

Volunteers added new steps at the top of the site, creating a **winding curiosity pathway** leading to the veteran acer and pewen trees.

A **new welcome sign** has been installed at the pedestrian entrance to greet visitors, along with new leaflets about the organisation and collection.



We created a new **Tree Risk Management Policy**, detailing how we manage tree risk and an improved timetable for tree surveys. On the back of the new policy, a full site survey was commissioned, with a series of recommended follow-up works carried out in early 2025.

Glendale Services kindly offered their **stump grinding** services to us pro bono, grinding 7 tree stumps and enabling us to use those areas for new plantings.

This year we recorded 141 observations of flora and fauna using iNaturalist, ending the year with a total of **374 species recorded on site**.





# Tortworth Forest Centre



*Impact aim: A flourishing & sustainable organisation that will support our community & trees for future generations*

Our tenth year has been full of pride and celebration, but brought with it several obstacles to overcome, including staff absences, the failure of our old roundhouse, and an increasingly competitive funding arena. We have had to dip into our financial reserves this year to cover funding shortfalls and unexpected expenses.

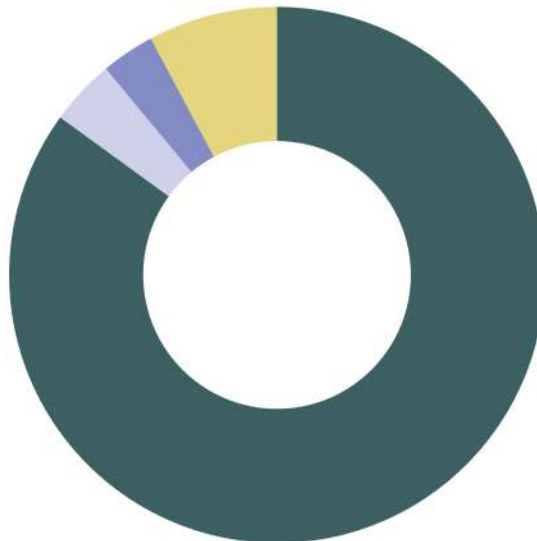
We ended the year sadly saying goodbye to a much loved member of our team, Gary Davis, who has played a hugely impactful part in Tortworth's story for the last 10 years. He has become terminally ill and unable to continue in his role. The whole Tortworth community misses him and holds him in their thoughts; Gary hopes to visit when he feels well enough.

We enter our eleventh year amidst a difficult fundraising landscape, but are very optimistic about the future. We plan to transition to a charity, which will bring some challenges but many more opportunities. Alongside this transition we will recruit new trustees to the board, and we are working to develop relationships with corporate sponsors.



## Income

- **£174,347** from **grants**  
(up from £168,995 last year);
- **£8,164** from **workshops and events**  
(up from £7,853);
- **£6,588** from **venue hire**  
(down from £10,338);
- **£16,009** from **donations**  
(up from £8,826); and
- **£0** from **sale of goods**  
(down from £141).



## Turnover

**£205,108**

(up from £196,153)

Expenditure: £204,398

Surplus: £710

Reserve: £28,259





# Thanks



With thanks to all of the individuals, funders, businesses and charity partners who have given financial or in-kind support during our tenth year.

[woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk)



Barchester's Charitable Foundation  
Barratt Homes  
BDP Recovery Choir  
Bentley Motors  
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Frances Patrick  
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Global Organization of Tree Climbers  
Green Play Project  
Healthier with Nature  
Heritage Insider  
International Conifer Conservation Programme  
Jack Lane Charitable Trust

Johannes Roux  
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Quartet Community Foundation  
Renishaw  
Richard Solomons  
Sophie Rae  
The Honourable Company of Gloucestershire  
Thornbury Chamber of Commerce  
Thornbury Volunteer Centre  
Tortworth Primary School  
Wessex Water Foundation  
Westonbirt Arboretum Community Access Scheme  
Yasmin Jones  
Zariq Rosita-Hanif

**Our biggest thanks goes to our community of amazing volunteers and project participants who are at the centre of our work and make Tortworth such a special place.**

**Donate to support our work:**



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