

DorsetCAN Case Study 3: 'Friends of Turner's Nursery' – Creating a Community Orchard

Once upon a time, in a land not so far away, in the heart of the busy town of Poole, there was a bramble patch that had lain untouched for 40 years. Dense thickets of prickly briars and stinging nettles grew among the tall alder, willow and oak and foxes, badgers and birds made their homes. In springtime, frogs laid spawn in small ponds where the Bourne stream emerged from under-ground springs. Dragonflies danced overhead. Birds sang from the branches. Sometimes a travellers' horse would graze.

The patch of greenery among the grey streets and houses was loved and valued by the people round about. They had fond memories of Bill Turner, the strange old man who had, in years gone by, supplied them with wallflowers and lettuces from his nursery, using his vintage motorbike and sidecar to deliver vegetables to the nearby shops.

Then one day in 2010 a dark rumour was heard. The council was planning to take the land and build. It was their right. Word spread. People gathered. They didn't want to lose their green oasis. What could they do?

In pubs, homes and cafés the good folk of Parkstone met to talk, plan and imagine what they wanted for the land. Outside the school gates, parents and children shared ideas. The vision of Turner's Nursery Community Orchard was born. It was to be a place where fruit was grown, wildlife could thrive and people could play.

A group was formed. Neighbours talked. Coffee was drunk. Leaflets were drafted. Newspaper articles written. Supporters engaged. The Friends of Turner's Nursery took their vision to the council and asked for permission to use the land. They knew that if they could show how much the space was valued then it could be protected. They were willing to work, if they were allowed. After much debate, discussion and patience, the Friends succeeded. They were granted the right to plant.

Ten years passed.



In the heart of Parkstone today there is a beautiful orchard where people find peace in hard times, nature thrives, children play and learn, and the dreaming continues.

The people love the beauty of the blossom in the springtime, the chance to wander in the woods, the space to contemplate, the apples and plums in autumn, the hedgerows where the birds can nest and sing. In the graveyard over the road, Bill Turner sleeps peaceful; his nursery is protected. And yes, dense thickets of prickly brier and nettle remain where the wildlife can live undisturbed.

The way has not always been easy and the future is uncertain but in the present all is well.



If you would like to know more, contact Friends of Turner's Nursery: friendsofturnersnursery@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page.

The orchard is open to all – there is no lock on the gate. It lies between Upper Road and Victoria Road in Parkstone. In normal times, friendly social workdays are held on the first Saturday of each month. All welcome.