



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Our new kitchen
- The new healthy eating activity.
- New volunteers.
- Gardeners' hobbies,
- Lettering for Faringdon.

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## Our New Kitchen

We started work on our new kitchen in August. Our old kitchen had a certain rustic charm but some might say it was getting rather dilapidated.

We were keen to upgrade our kitchen having obtained a major contract to lead a healthy eating project for the Big Lottery Funded *chances4change* programme. This project involves *Root & Branch* and other similar local charities.

We had to clear the old kitchen, screed the floor, assemble the units, and clad and insulate the rough stone wall to take the new units and tiling. Finally, we insulated the ceiling. We are indebted to Ian for managing the project and for doing much of the work.

Thanks must also go to the gardeners and volunteers who helped.

The Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust provided the main funds for our new kitchen. In addition to this funding, special thanks must go to Faringdon Rotary Club for paying for the cooker hood and the materials to insulate the ceiling. Thanks also must go to Sing Faringdon for paying for our new pans.

Much appreciated funding also came from Vale of the White Horse District Council and the parish councils of Steventon, Kennington, Drayton, Blewbury, Shellingford, Watchfield, Buckland and Grove.



Top, new kitchen; bottom old.

Read inside about our new Healthy Eating Project

## From the Root & Branch Manager

Happy New Year, Everyone! No, I'm not late celebrating 2009, but marking my first year at *Root & Branch*, and the start of a second with its own challenges to meet and treats in store.

Amongst our current causes for celebration are the achievements of gardeners past and present, whose photo-profiles now decorate one kitchen wall; the completion of the kitchen refurbishment, and the start of the Healthy Eating Project; the successful signage workshops we've held in the

forgo, and the improvements we've made to our everyday environment, by carrying out the jobs on our practical To Do lists.

Many thanks are due to everyone who has helped, especially our willing staff and volunteers, patient gardeners, generous funders and supporters in the community who make things happen!

I hope we will see many people at our Summer Open Day on 28 June, to share with us the pleasures of being part of R&B.



Faith Mitchell

# New Healthy Eating Project



Sarah leading a discussion on food hygiene

Hello everyone. I'm really excited to be able to join the fantastic team at *Root & Branch*. It has been great to start the new year with a fresh challenge in an environment, both stimulating and welcoming.

For my first couple of weeks I enjoyed getting to know everyone, sharing some hearty homemade soups, most welcome with the

freezing weather, and joining in with some of the activities.

For the last four years I have been studying at Oxford Brookes University, graduating last summer with a degree in Nutrition, Health and Exercise.

I am definitely an outdoors person, having been brought up on a farm and am at my happiest in my *wellies*, whether it is maintaining a

vegetable patch or some other project.

I will be spending a couple of months at *Root & Branch* before working with other similar organisations around Oxfordshire.

**Sarah Lay,**  
Healthy Eating Co-ordinator

**Project is part of the Big Lottery funded, chances for change programme**

*"I'm Ed and like to work in the garden. I discovered Root & Branch through my GP. I have been here for two weeks and am starting to get my confidence back."*

# Lettering for Faringdon

Faringdon Joint Environmental Trust (JET) commissioned *Root & Branch* to forge the letters **Faringdon** to be placed at the Lechlade Road gateway to the town. Work started in November.

The Bridewell blacksmith, Steve, ably assisted by volunteer Gordon, stoked up the

fires at the forge. The letters were cut from mild steel plate by oxy-propane torch. Each letter was then textured with 'formers' on hot iron. Three different textures were used for successive letter.

The edges of the letters were forged to their final shape before being welded together into the larger letters.



The finished lettering

When complete the letters will be set in a dry stone wall.

# Gardeners' World of Hobbies

When you ask gardeners about their interests, you might be surprised that some can find the time to come to *R&B*. For example, Kim writes Poetry, Katherine swims, Ed is into steam railways and Sheila is researching her family tree.

While Nick has some time now, he did

spend five years travelling the world visiting SE Asia, India and Australia amongst other places.

When Alison comes to *R&B* she leave behind her 23 giant land snails, although she did bring a couple in one day for us all to admire!

Despite the high price of petrol, Jim is happy to drive to *R&B* in his large, classic Mercedes.



Alison's giant land snails



Jim's classic Mercedes

Then there is Claire who has created a beautiful blog that often receives more than 100 visitors a day.

Banner for Claire's blog



# Improvements Around the Site



At the moment our hive of bees is being looked after for us by

**New shed for bee-keeping equipment and for rain collection**

Bridewell Organic Gardens. While the bees are away, we have built a new hut to store all our beekeeping equipment.

We have also been able to insulate the ceilings in both the kitchen and the office. The next job is to insulate the craft room ceiling. This insula-

tion was much needed to get us through the dreadful winter.

The person power to build the shed and put up the insulation came from a local firm whose staff have some time to spare. We are extremely grateful for their help.

This same group have done much more to tidy up around the site.

*“I have found confidence and new friends and now know what I want in life”*  
Gardener

## New Volunteers

Our new volunteers include Rachel, Lynda, Miyuki and Peter.

Lynda leads many of our craft activities having been an arts and crafts teacher both in the UK and Japan.

Miyuki trained in Japan as an occupational therapist before moving to the UK and married an English man she met in Australia. Miyuki also helps with craft activities bringing an oriental angle by doing Chinese calligraphy and origami.

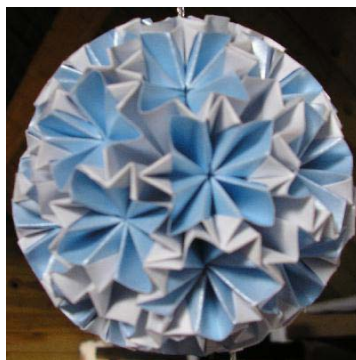
Rachel came to our last open day and liked it so much that she now helps out in various activities.

Peter is a retired lecturer from Shrivensham College and has come to R&B to help out in the wood-work shop. But his first job was

to tile our new kitchen. He did a great job!

**Right—Clockwise from top left: Miyuki, Rachel, Lynda, Peter.**

**Below—Kusudami: an amazing piece of origami made under Miyuki’s direction.**



## Moving On

The great thing about Root & Branch is that Gardeners are able to find their feet and move on.

Angie came to R&B for 5 weeks because she did not know whether she could cope with a full-days work. Her time at R&B soon showed her that she had the

confidence to return to her previous job as a senior administrator. But, she did not leave before learning some new skills including batik printing.

Neil has moved on to volunteer in estate management at the National Trust and hopes to start

a course in cabinet making in the Autumn. He spent much of his time at R&B wood-working and restoring furniture.

**Angie’s batik print**





## Root & Branch Newsletter

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Therapeutic garden and rural craft project for people in Oxfordshire experiencing mental health difficulties.

Located on an organic farm in the beautiful Vale of the White Horse, Root & Branch provides the opportunities for people to engage in a range of interesting activities to help them to

- Learn new skills
- Prepare for future employment
- Participate in interesting activities
- Meet new people
- Recover confidence
- Provide structure to the week
- Spend time in the country

Activities include gardening, blacksmithing, woodworking, crafts, cookery, administration, beekeeping and involvement with the local community.

Come and see us on our Open Day on Sunday 28 June, 2009

# The garden in Winter

In the bleak midwinter, down at *Root & Branch*, earth as hard as iron, water like a stone, hungry birds, drooping parsley, minus 8°. Will the wallflowers recover and stand up again?

We're like birds ourselves with our layers on. Puffed up against the cold, hats and fingerless gloves. And that's indoors on the computer. Lesson with Dave and Rob...

It wasn't all indoor activities; we went for frosty walks, dug new borders in the lawn, gathered willow to make Christmas wreaths and plant supports, watched the broad beans growing outside (slowly) and in the polytunnel (faster), turned compost, sawed logs, enjoyed the birds amongst the seed heads in the borders and on the feeders: spotted woodpeckers, chaffinches, greenfinch, goldfinch, sparrows, blue tits,

**Our store of wood was used rapidly in the cold weather**

great tits, crows, rooks, jackdaws and starlings, and imagined the polytunnel in the summer, a fragrant jungle of tomatoes, basil and tagetes. Then we turned our mind to what we'd like to grow this season, and ordering seeds.

**Cathy Turbinskyj**  
Garden Supervisor



**Our garden as the snow starts to clear**



**The snowdrops fighting their way through the snow**

