



Christmas Tree Festival



St Neots United Reformed Church approached the Group last summer asking if we wished to participate in their bi-annual Christmas Tree Festival which was being held at their church in early December.

Over 40 local groups had agreed to participate in this very popular community event as it raises peoples awareness of the variety of groups, clubs and organisations that meet regularly in our town and district.

We accepted the invite as it gave us a great opportunity to promote the Group. However, rather than just displaying a traditional tree, we decided that we wanted to create a tree that reflected the park, and utilise the abundance of natural materials we have available on our own doorstep.

Over the next few months group members spent time in the park collecting branches and scavenging anything else useful they could find from the ground to make both the tree and decorations. They received a lot of funny looks from other park users, particularly when dragging 15ft branches through the woods.

Those who took part, thoroughly enjoyed the creative process spending many hours designing, building, decorating and putting the whole tree together for the Christmas Tree festival. It was like Santas Grotto with all the little elves making the little bits and pieces in preparation for the big day.

Making the tree

We used a circular saw to cut the branches down to increasingly smaller lengths in an effort to create the classic Christmas Tree triangle shape. We then used a drill to make holes through the centre of all the branches that we had collected.

A 12mm steel rod was then "threaded" through each of the branches in turn from largest at the bottom and smallest at the top.



Decorations

Following “research” trips to practically every garden centre within a 10 mile radius. PPFG members studied the garden centres Christmas decorations. These trips always included a visit to the cafe for coffee and cake, which was a mandatory requirement to discuss designs! We then set about making the decorations from all the seeds, nuts, cones and twigs we had foraged from the park.

With the help of an array of tools including a wood burner, glue gun, paint, ribbons, twine, wire and lots of glitter (which gets everywhere), we created the decorations.



Twigs glued together and then painted with metallic silver paint



Off cuts from the branches, designs created with a wood burning tool



Fir cones painted with
Silver metallic paint



Yew tree twigs & seeds from the Plane
tree covered in glitter



Painted fir cones and glittered encrusted
beech nut cases, with twigs,
conkers and blue cedar branches
entwined into garlands



Conkers and silver painted
acorn cups

Setting up

We found that our tree could be dismantled and re-assembled in minutes, which was a distinct advantage when moving the tree to the church. However, the decorations took a a little bit longer to arrange - decorating perfectionists!



Over the weekend we were approached by numerous visitors asking us what we intended to do with the tree after the festival ended. We had lots of offers to buy the decorations and one person even asked whether we would consider selling the tree and decorations. Unfortunately on this occasion we already had plans for it. However this did give us some ideas on how to raise funds for the group in the future.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to visit the festival and a big thank you to all those who voted for our tree. We didn't win the 'best tree' competition, but it's the taking part that matters!