

## Clare Blatchford-Hanna

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**From:** Chris Parsons <landworks@dartington.org>  
**Sent:** 21 October 2013 12:45  
**To:** Clare Blatchford-Hanna  
**Subject:** DLW Update 21



Dartington

## DLW Update 21



**Hello**

Among the varied work activities at LandWorks, we have been making bespoke benches and everyone has made at least one. Local timber is cut, worked and honed in our new and rather lovely...self-built, timber 'A' frame shelter/workshop. The benches are good quality and everyone plans to take one home, a real mark of achievement and for all a first.

These benches are genuinely made with love, sweat and tears. The tears from sheer exasperation, feelings and emotions seem to pour out, years of frustration and self doubt can be dramatically let loose... A saw whistles through the air, a hammer smashes into the ground and loud expletives clearly explain that not all is going well and amongst other things suggests I may need to revisit the risk assessment!

I have a completely homespun and probably highly inaccurate theory, but... people who enter the penal system at a young age, are in many different ways, frozen in

time, missing out on great chunks of development. These same people reappear in later life still grappling with teenage desires, impulses and even tantrums... seemingly odd behaviour for a 30 year old man and certainly easily misunderstood.

Benches can be built in a relatively short space of time and the end result provides an instant thrill but also something of real worth. I suspect this gratification helps to fill a void for an ex-heroin addict and satisfies the trapped inner teenager.

As with many things we do here, there are tense, faltering starts, even complete collapse, but we manage to move on. Slowly confidence builds and then suddenly not only are items of great beauty appearing but also people are so engaged, wanting to do more and feeling good, very good.

Hard work, sweat and thought have caused the bench designs to evolve. Skill levels have risen, wood is now worked for hours, all to reach a new found quality standard. Oak is painstakingly sanded to a mirror finish, great pride is taken in achieving new shapes, and beautifully oiled surfaces are compared and discussed. The more experienced amongst the guys are now stepping up to help, reassure and encourage the others.

Built with Love and now... For Sale.

**Chris**



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