

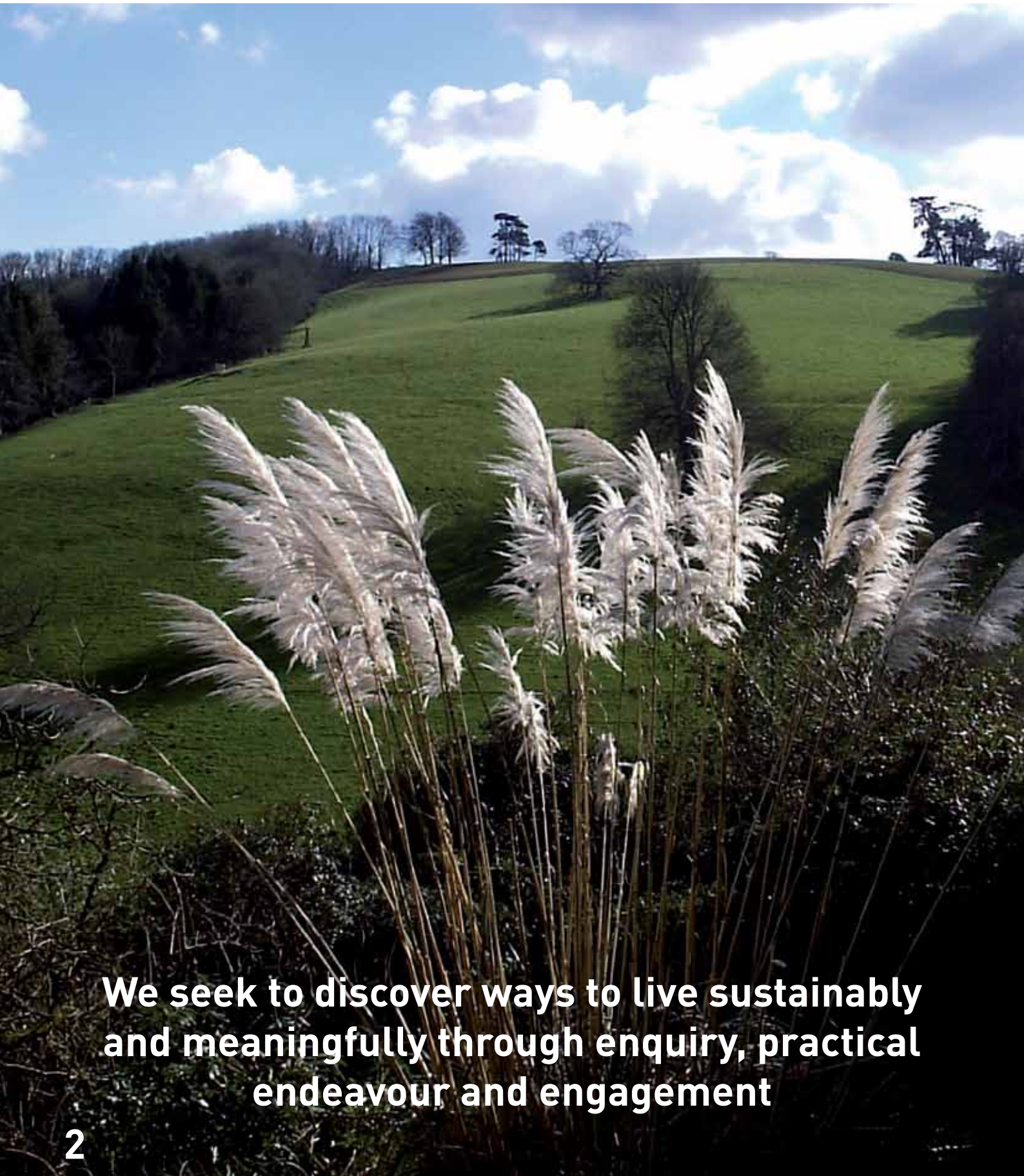


# The Sharpham Trust

Annual Report 2009-2010



# The Sharpham Trust



**We seek to discover ways to live sustainably and meaningfully through enquiry, practical endeavour and engagement**

## The Purpose

To provide opportunities and educational facilities that encourage:

- An understanding of the interconnection of life
- A deep respect for the natural world
- A belief in learning through experience, creative engagement and enquiry
- An acknowledgement of the value of stillness and awareness
- Well-being and sustainable living

## The Trust's Objectives 2009-2010

- To develop and deliver a whole estate/whole programme approach by maintaining, conserving and enhancing the land, buildings, resources and biodiversity of the Sharpham Estate for public benefit and in pursuance of our vision
- To provide opportunities for physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual learning through activity, reflection, creativity and enquiry
- To continue to realise the potential of the magnificent and unique assets of the Sharpham Estate
- To continue to make the life of the Sharpham Estate environmentally sustainable and a model for others to adopt
- To increase the opportunities for all sectors of the public to benefit from improved access to the special environment of Sharpham
- To identify groups that would benefit most from participation in Sharpham activities

**The Trustees have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report for the reporting period April 2009 - March 2010**

## The Chair's introduction

The Trust continues to balance its responsibility for the conservation of the historic buildings and landscape with increased accessibility for public benefit. The following pages detail ways in which we achieve this.

April 2009-March 2010 was an encouraging year for Sharpham. Over 1,500 people visited our first Open Weekend, followed by over 500 visitors to the Apple-Pressing day. An invited group of 70 people came to sing carols within the splendid interior of the house.

We are privileged to be able to offer volunteering opportunities and to receive a substantial commitment in return. We have strengthened the partnerships with Ambios, BTCV (British Trust Conservation Volunteers), Connexions, Gaia House, Lifeline, Robert Owen Community, Torbay Youth Service and many other groups (see pages 4-9).

Three new staff appointments were made during the year: a newly created post of Programme Administrator, a manager for the Barn Retreat Centre and a manager for the Sharpham Outdoors programme. Examples of their work appear within this report. Similarly the strengths of Trustees appointed in 2009/10 have been shown throughout the year.

The last few years had been dominated by refurbishment of the historic house to bring it into a more practical form for course participants. This has been achieved without compromising the integrity and intimacy of the atmosphere; it neither feels like a museum nor an institution. Chris Nicholls, the Trust Manager, is thanked for his sensitivity and attention to detail in achieving this success. Increased numbers benefit from our developing programme of charitable activities. Our challenge is to maintain the tranquillity and restorative powers of the place whilst increasing the numbers of people who can benefit from them. When the local AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) group celebrated their 50th anniversary, Sharpham was chosen as the obvious location. The river Dart borders and enhances the historic landscape, which supports charitable, sustainable as well as commercial enterprise. Many estate-based developments are shown through the following pages.

The Trust has been the fortunate recipient of two legacies during this year: one invested to provide small bursaries for course fees and the second to commission a feasibility study for the conversion of the Grade 2 listed coachyard to become a residential Environmental Centre. Meanwhile, as well as seeking grants to further its work, the Trust has enjoyed spending funds from the previous year's generous donations.

# The work of the Trust - its charitable activities

## Public Benefit

The Trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The following pages demonstrate the ways in which the Trust has made the house and estate available for public benefit by running both residential and non-residential courses, and by inviting the public to visit on open days.

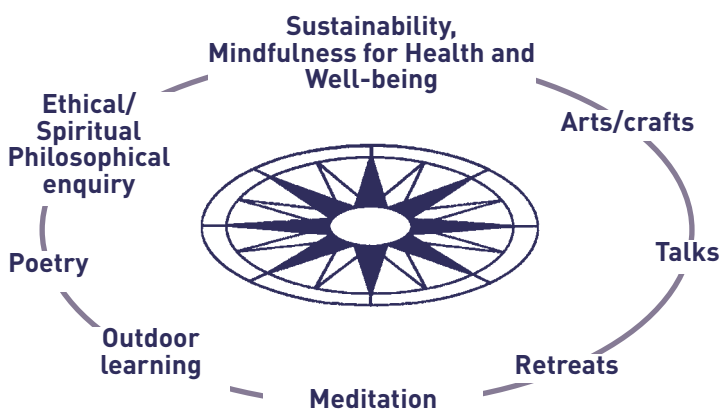
## Sharpham House

The Trust has a core responsibility to conserve Sharpham House (redesigned in 1770). It is surrounded by a 550-acre estate of sustainably farmed land that follows a three mile stretch of the River Dart. The House and the estate are the base for the Trust's charitable activities and attract ever-increasing numbers of visitors.

## The Sharpham Programme

Weaving activities together across the estate to create rich educational opportunities.

The Sharpham Programme is designed to support and encourage enquiry, contemplation and creativity. Regular yoga and meditation sessions, monthly poetry evenings, a programme of public talks and occasional films were scheduled in the House and South Wing.



Our programme of Mindfulness for Health and Wellbeing aims to help people to cope with the stress and strains of daily life. All four courses scheduled during the year were well attended and filled to capacity. Courses vary from day or weekends to eight weeks. It is intended to extend this work further.

Almost 500 people attended the Tuesday evening programme of talks scheduled during the Spring and Autumn.

The monthly poetry evenings attract between 15 and 25 people. The participants are invited to respond with a

favourite poem on the theme of the evening – poetry is defined broadly and has included many art forms during the year.

For those wishing to explore the place of Buddhist values in a contemporary Western society at a deeper level, Sharpham offers the Committed Dharma Practitioners' Programme with local retreat centre, Gaia House. A residential course was held over two years divided into six five-day modules at Sharpham with a silent retreat at Gaia House. The course was full to capacity.

## Seasonal Events

The seasonal open days are intended to reach out to our local community and to as broad an audience as possible to give a flavour of the diverse range of projects that take place across the wider estate.

- Spring - Easter Egg Hunt
- Summer - Estate Open Weekend
- Autumn - Apple Pressing and Autumn Festival
- Winter - Tree Planting

### Easter Egg Hunt

The Trust hosts an annual Easter Egg hunt for families associated with the estate community and the village of Ashprington. It is an opportunity for local people to enjoy the spring gardens, while the children have fun seeking eggs.

### Open Estate Weekend

Over 1,000 people visited the estate each day during the Open Weekend to discover more about the work of the Trust. Taster sessions of many activities were on offer along with talks, walks, tours and opportunities to visit and learn about the house and its history as well as Sharpham estate's three tenancies. A limited edition of poet Brian Patten's poems, together with sketches by artist Sarah Gillespie was launched. The book, *View from the Boathouse*, celebrates the time spent during the 1970s and 2007 respectively, when the two artists were based on the estate. *Short Shrifts* – a series of short plays written by Peter Oswald – was performed in the Courtyard behind Sharpham House.

Great emphasis was placed on providing low-carbon ways of visiting the Sharpham estate with over 200 visitors arriving by bio-fuelled rickshaw and community bus and many arriving at the restored North Quay by water-taxi or canoe.

### Apple Pressing Day and Autumn Festival

We held an Apple Pressing and Autumn Festival Day in October. The Apple Day attracted over 500 people and included activities demonstrating seed collecting, willow work, traditional rake making, watercolours, environmental games and campfire cooking. Approximately 500 litres of apple juice were pressed from apples grown on the estate and those brought by visitors.



### Tree Planting

The Trust collaborated with Transition Town Totnes and local charity Trees for Health for an annual tree planting event in February. A small grove of nut trees was planted on the estate near to the cycle path with the intention of increasing the future number of food cropping trees in the local community.

### Volunteer Programmes

During this period, approximately 2,000 volunteer hours were contributed to the Sharpham Outdoors Programme; garden volunteers contributed over 40 weeks; local organisations use Sharpham as a base for conservation. On Track, an organisation that works with pupils excluded from mainstream education, used an area of the walled garden as part of its programme. Sharpham Outdoors hosted a Trainee Ranger as part of the Lemur scheme for a nine month period, and six volunteers completed an NVQ level 3 in Environmental Conservation.

The 'V' (Volunteer) Project, funded through Ambios, now in its second year, continues to provide conservation and wildlife monitoring activities on the estate for groups of four resident volunteers participating in four 15-week blocks.

### Partnerships

These have proved very positive. Sharpham is now working with a number of organisations including Ambios, Torbay Youth Service (TYS), Connexions and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) to extend the number and range of activities that can be offered. The shared energy and reinforcement of our vision and that of our colleagues are greatly valued.

## Sustainability

Feasibility Study for a combined Biomass project discussions continue between three neighbouring organisations to develop a Green Energy Society to benefit the local community.

Feasibility Study for biodiversity of Sharpham Marshes into the restoration of Sharpham Marsh has been carried out by Ambios Ltd. The 1840 engineering works have been decaying. This study provides a vision of what might pragmatically be achieved at the marsh site, how there could be compensatory intertidal habitat, how this plan would move forward the Sharpham Trust objectives for the marsh and how the interest of other stakeholders on the river Dart (namely the Harbour Authority and the Environment Agency) would be affected. The study covers the present marsh habitat, the conservation value and suggests future management including biodiversity implications, navigation concerns and public access/ education issues. This study replaces the feasibility study into the potential for hydrogeneration in the marsh site.

Woodlands at Sharpham cover about 120 acres. Tree-planting continues on an annual basis. Apples and pears were harvested this year from the recent reinstatement of an orchard below the house. A new study is being carried out to suggest management approaches to improve access, biodiversity, sustainability and agro-forestry opportunities.

Low Carbon options for buildings are constantly under review; for transport, low carbon approaches are used when possible but the Sharpham Estate continues to present logistic and access challenges.

## Grounds and gardens

The walled garden and the glasshouse help provide the house with a regular fresh supply of organic vegetables and fruit that is used to feed those on residential courses.

The World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) initiative has been taken up on the estate. During this, its third year, the Trust has seen 20 weeks of WWOOFERS, as the volunteers are known, from all over the globe, involving 13 individual volunteers.

In addition, four locally-based volunteers help 15 hours per week in the formal and walled gardens.

The gardens also act as a host venue to groups such as St Anthony and St Elias, who visit regularly and work with vulnerable people. While working in the walled vegetable garden they carry out therapeutic work with these students. Such groups work for around 12 hours a month.

**Below: Sue Patterson, a regular garden volunteer, puts in some spade-work in the walled garden.**



# The Trust's charitable activities continued

## Sharpham Outdoors

### Overview

The reporting year 2009-2010 has been successful for Sharpham Outdoors with 1,150 people participating in the outdoor and environmental activities hosted by Sharpham Trust. As usual, the spring/summer period was the most active, with visits from King Edward VI Community College (KEVICC), St. John's Primary School, South Devon College and Devon Youth Service in addition to a ten-week programme with Connexions Plymouth. However, the autumn/winter period also saw a steady stream of groups including Plymouth University, Torbay Youth Services, Marldon Primary School and Polsham Pupil Referral Unit. Overall, Sharpham Outdoors hosted 218 adults, 579 young people (aged 14-24) and 352 children (less than 14 years old). During the last six months of the year Sharpham Outdoors worked with Trustees, other Trust staff and some external partners to develop a strategic plan for Sharpham Outdoors and to define Sharpham Outdoor programmes in terms of what we are delivering to different groups locally. A summary of those different programmes is provided below.

### Forest School and Youth programmes

Twenty-one Forest School programmes were delivered in 2009-2010, reaching 219 people, mostly children. In addition, 58 youth programmes were delivered, reaching 483 people (302 young people, plus supporting adults). Both Forest School and the youth programme aim to encourage and inspire individuals of any age to develop core life skills through positive, empowering outdoor experiences. Activities that are often included are team challenges, sensory awareness development, environmental arts and crafts as well as bushcraft (fire lighting, camp fire cookery and shelter building).

### Inspiration and Reflection Days

Two hundred and seventeen people mainly from the University of Plymouth attended nine inspiration and reflection days at Sharpham during this period. The aims of each day are defined by the group leaders (and often the participants themselves) and include building friendship, creativity, innovation, leadership and teamwork through fun and creative engagement. Activities are all delivered outdoors and include campfire cooking, innovative team challenges and opportunity for reflection.

### Public Events

One hundred and eighteen people took part in five public events at Sharpham, which included a family bushcraft day, a family pond dip, an estuary ramble, a canoe and campfire and a Halloween lantern-making and storytelling campfire. The Christmas wreath-making and solstice natural decoration-making events were also as popular as ever, both selling out several weeks in advance.

During this time, significant work was also put into planning a revitalised primary school programme and developing ideas for day and residential summer camp programmes. One primary school programme was held, with 32 adults and children from Marldon Primary School visiting Sharpham for a Viking-themed day.

### Funding

Funding was received from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for 50 free visits, which Sharpham was able to use to attract groups that would otherwise have been unable to attend programmes. Feasibility and fundraising assessments were also conducted into converting the coachyard behind the main house into residential space for Sharpham Outdoors to expand its programmes. An application was submitted to EcoMinds for £60,000 towards the youth programme (see page 10).

### Looking forward to 2010-2011

Sharpham Outdoors looks forward to increasing the youth programme, building on the success of its work with Connexions and using funding from EcoMinds. The Primary School programme and a day summer camp for 8-14 year olds will be launched next year, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to finance an intern to develop and lead the programmes. Away-days will also be developed, working in partnership with Transition Town Totnes.





## Sharpham Outdoors Case Study

I started volunteering at Sharpham two years ago, as part of my rehabilitation after serving in the armed forces.

I suffer with post traumatic stress disorder, which put me in a very bad head space for a long period of time.

Volunteering at Sharpham has been the best thing in aiding my recovery as it has helped me re-engage with children, especially those in the 15-18 year group who have behavioural problems, and with adults.

As for learning new skills, it's been immensely helpful. Everytime I have been to Sharpham, I have learned some new aspect to working outdoors or in the office.

I am working towards an NVQ in environmental conservation, which hopefully will lead me on to Forest School Leader B Tech course next year.

I never would have thought that I would become a teacher. The future is looking bright for me as a result of volunteering here.

I really appreciate the support that I've had and that I still continue to get. Sharpham is a great place and environment in which to work.



Darren Southern

## Sharpham Outdoors Case Studies

"It was a really good couple of days. I think the children's favourite activity was the earth painting and they focussed really well on this. The visit was really helpful for our arts week and the staff really liked the relaxed nature of the day – sometimes school trips are so manic that you don't feel the children have really had the chance to fully appreciate their surroundings. We really appreciate all you did in organising the event and providing the children with a lovely, memorable experience."

Rachel Shaw, Ashburton Primary School

"Thank you for a fantastic day. Both the children and staff enjoyed our time at Sharpham. The activities were perfect and were matched exactly to our topic. We thought that the potions-making activity was brilliant! The children really rummaged around to find materials for the large collage – the younger children in particular loved making 'Bob the Snail'. Can we thank all of the volunteer helpers for their enthusiasm, time and patience - they were all excellent and brought the activities alive. We will definitely come again – hopefully next time by boat!"

Jane Whitcher, Stoke Gabriel Primary School

"A fantastic day was had by all our students. The reflection time at the end of each activity was especially valuable. The dynamic between the instructor and the students was fabulous."

Lucy Carpenter, Heles Secondary School, Plympton



# The Trust's charitable activities continued

## The Barn Retreat

Set in a stunning hillside location overlooking the river Dart, The Barn Retreat has been a friendly, Buddhist-based meditation retreat centre for over 20 years. It is a place where people re-connect with themselves and nature in a tranquil, supportive environment. Within a structured framework, small groups of retreatants take part in activities, which include sitting meditation sessions, manual work in the organic garden and woodlands, discussions with meditation teachers and visiting speakers, as well as the obligations involved with living communally.

Although the teaching at the Barn is based on Buddhist traditions, the retreat is non-denominational and all are welcome. Many newcomers love the openness of the practice.

Garden retreats are offered at a reduced rate as they are primarily work retreats that greatly benefit the Barn community. They are designed for people who like gardening and being outdoors but who would also like to participate in meditation and Buddhist enquiry.

For all retreats (except garden retreats) we offer a sliding scale reduced rate for those on low incomes. The Barn's two residential managers hosted 277 retreatants during the year. Some stayed for extended periods of up to six months.

In January, a non-residential manager, Peter Mallard, was appointed.



## The Barn Retreat Case Study

I try and spend a week at The Barn every six months. Before my first visit, my life had gone through tremendous traumatic upheaval and I was looking to find a way to introduce a more spiritual dimension into my life to try and help me make sense of what I was going through. I found the Barn on the internet, and liked the sound of what it had to offer as it seemed to be pitched at the right level for me.

Every time I visit, it helps me grow as a person and as a human being. I love the mix of community, work and meditation, the ethos behind the Barn and the gentle Buddhism I'm exposed to.

I appreciate the basic values of life, of living with others in community, sharing, caring, working towards a common goal. Life at the Barn is a simple existence, free from the pressures of modern society.

When I'm carrying out my work duties I learn to appreciate that whilst I am an individual, my work contributes to the existence of the community as a whole, not just whilst I am there but for others who follow.

Participating in meditation practice helps me understand who I am and what goes on within me. The more I understand about myself, the more I can deal with how I react to the pressures of modern life and grow as an individual whilst maintaining the calm, centred stillness that I find deep within.

The Barn experience has significantly changed me, mentally, spiritually and physically. After a stay, I feel that I am more able to mentally deal with life, myself and the world. I feel centred and calm, a fuller person.

I feel spiritually improved, understanding more about compassion, forgiveness, kindness, community and, dare I say, love. I am more at peace with myself and if I feel good about myself then life and dealing with its ups and downs is easier.

Physically? Yeah, good food, physical exercise, fresh air...need I say more?

What I learn at the Barn helps me appreciate that living the fullest life today is the most important way I can live. If I can appreciate the moment, treat myself and others with respect whatever their views then the future will take care of itself.

I want to thank everyone who helps make the Barn experience what it is today, those who have been before and those to come. May you all go in peace.

Simon J Griffiths



# Sharpham tenancies

## Tenancies

The charity has a good working relationship with its tenants.

Lower Sharpham Barton Farm is leased to the Robert Owen Community, a charity providing working opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. It is also run on biodynamic principles.

The Sharpham Partnership Limited produces award-winning wine and cheese from its herd of Jersey cows at the Home Farm and from its vineyards on the estate.

Upper Sharpham Barton Farm is leased to Judy Smith and her family who farm according to the principles of Rudolf Steiner's biodynamic system. An annual week-long family camp is run on this farm by the tenants.

Eight private dwellings are also tenanted on the estate.

## The Robert Owen Community

(approx 80 acres)

The Robert Owen Community (ROC) aims to equip each person with the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to lead a full, purposeful and satisfying life and to contribute to the quality of life of others.

People with a learning disability are encouraged to learn skills and confidence through engagement and challenge. ROC offers individualised programmes of learning as the basis for achieving certificated vocational skills and supporting independence.

## Sharpham Wine and Cheese

(approx 200 acres)

The Sharpham Partnership's vineyard and dairy have been producing wines and unpasteurised cheeses for over 20 years to local and national acclaim.

By producing its own Jersey cows' milk on the farm and growing a range of carefully selected cool-climate grape varieties in the vineyard, the Partnership is in control of production from start to finish. The results are individual, hand-made wines and cheeses, which have a special character and flavour that relates to this unique position in the South Hams area of Devon.

## Upper Sharpham Barton (approx 100 acres)

Upper Sharpham Barton Farm is run biodynamically according to the principles of Rudolf Steiner.

The farm also runs a friendly, family camp for a week in the summer. There's lots to do for all ages, including workshops, activities, entertainment, sports, farm walks, kindergarten, therapies and talks.



Above: Robert Owen Community staff member Rob Wyatt (left) helps Adam Windley to move hay bales.  
Below: Harvesting grapes for the Partnership's award-winning wines.



# The Future

## The Future

The future looks both rosy and expansive in terms of opportunities and partnerships that are developing well, yet, in terms of the economic situation, disconcerting and trepidatious. The Trust has built up a talented and committed staff and we are keen to keep those who live and work on the estate in good employment. We must do this by conserving our resources, seeking new revenue streams and bringing a strong level of public benefit to those who wish to participate in opportunities provided by the Trust. In Sept 2010, William Lana will succeed Lynette Gribble as Chair and be supported by Martin Wright, as Vice-Chair.

Sharpham Outdoors has an excellent reputation for ecological and environmental activity. This has been recognised in a successful bid to the National Lottery as one of only eight projects to manage an Ecominds programme over the next two years. This will provide training and experience for twelve volunteer mentors who have used mental health services to work with 216 young people who are experiencing mental health difficulties. This project starting in December 2010 will combine two of Sharpham's strengths: providing positive and life-enhancing engagement with the natural environment supported by a mindfulness experience of the world within us.

A grant has been proffered for a residential Mindfulness-Based Leadership Training Course for those in the caring professions or charitable sector. This course will be piloted at Sharpham during the summer of 2010. Similarly, a non-residential Mindfulness in Schools programme is being considered by the Trust.

The Barn Retreat Centre has been full for several weeks and has requested an adjacent space to provide for more retreatants.

The second residential Committed Dharma Practitioners' Programme run in association with Gaia House is already recruiting for 2011/12.

Sharpham's stunning setting is becoming increasingly popular with performance groups who are looking to enhance their audiences' appreciation. The second Open Weekend will see a unique performance of Alice Oswald's poem, Dart, set to music by four local composers and sung by three choirs.

After hosting weddings for families connected with Sharpham, the Trust has decided to seek a licence to hold up to ten wedding celebrations a year. The nature of the house and grounds is such that responsiveness and creativity should be the hallmark of the occasions. Other forms of celebration are expected to be held from time to time. A small number of these occasions will supplement the Trust's quest for sympathetic income generation. The Trust expects to increase revenue from providing summer accommodation in its historic Bathing House, set in its idyllic location beside the river Dart, with winter accommodation provided for an artist-, writer- or ecologist-in-residence.

We wish our tenants, The Sharpham Partnership, a fruitful year. The wine harvest promises to be good again and we congratulate them on their award for Best English White wine for 2009. The reputations of their wine, cheese, vineyard and cafe continue to spread around the world.

Negotiations are beginning with the Robert Owen Community to renew its lease. We recognise the important contribution that is made for adults with learning difficulties on the Lower Sharpham Barton farm.

Meanwhile, the ever-popular Family Camp at Upper Sharpham Barton will be held for the 10th consecutive year.

**Left: When Philemon Pownoll rebuilt Sharpham House in the 1770s, he also commissioned Robert Taylor to design an octagonal tower beside the river. A later Victorian addition provided the Bathing House.**



# Financials

Please note: The income and expenditure figures for the last four years have been distorted by the House refurbishment programme.

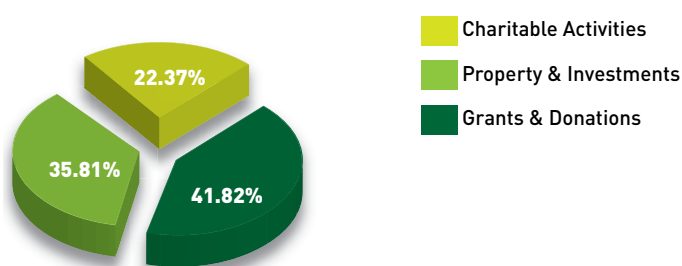
A full set of accounts is available on request.

The Trustees would like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed a total of over 8,500 volunteer hours to the charitable organisation during this reporting period.

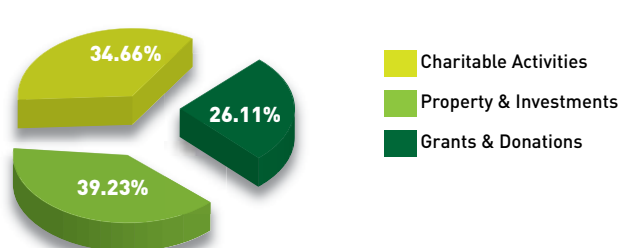
## Headline Figures:

EOY period	March 2009	March 2010
Total Income	0.575m	0.441m
Total Expenditure	0.727m	0.450m
Total Funds	5.121m	5.812m
Voluntary Income	0.241m	0.115m
Investment Income	0.187m	0.166m
Charity Activity Income	0.129m	0.153m
Other Incoming resources	0.018m	0.007m
Investment Costs	0.028m	0.031m
Cost of Charitable Activities	0.678m	0.397m
Governance	0.021m	0.022m
Governance as % of Total expenditure	2.89%	4.89%

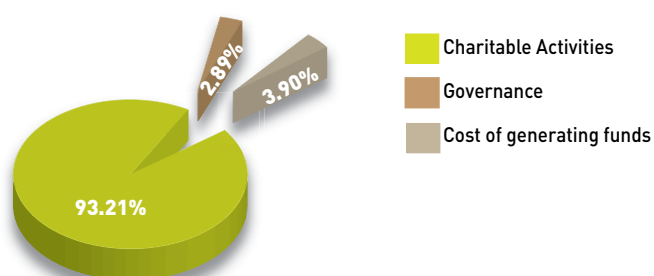
## Incoming Resources 2008/09



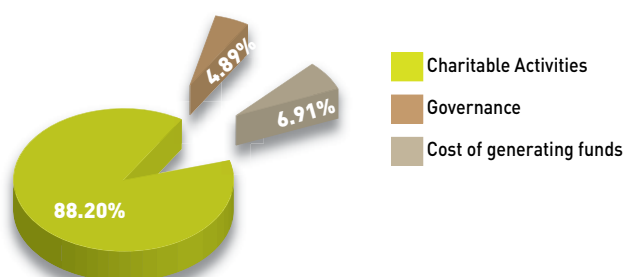
## Incoming Resources 2009/10



## Expended Resources 2008/09



## Expended Resources 2009/10





## Trustees

Claire Ash Wheeler  
Alice Astor  
Julian Carnell  
Romy Fraser  
Lynette Gribble (Chair)  
Stephen Jones  
William Lana  
Anna Leatherdale  
Carrie Morgan  
Martin Wright

## Chief Executive Officer & Company Secretary

Chris Nicholls

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