

# Annual Report 2012-2013

















# The Sharpham Trust

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

#### **Charitable Programme**

I came to the Spring to Life course with mental health problems. However, my time at Sharpham has increased my confidence and I've made some good friends. I now believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Pete, (22)

As someone new to the practice of meditation and never having been on retreat before I was a little apprehensive about coming to the Barn but my week here has been wonderful. The caring staff and the beautiful surroundings come together to create a safe and loving space for people to move forward with their practice and explore any issues that may be present in their lives. This has been a really special week for me. Thank you.

Anne (31), student liaison officer

I see a place here today which has just the right balance of obvious care for the place without overdoing it. I love the atmosphere. It's not over formal or over manicured. This is part of its deep beauty. There aren't intrusive instructions or signage, or "visitor services" on every corner but it feels loved and I feel welcomed. Please keep this balance.

Visitor at the 30th Celebrations Weekend

...thanks for contributing to a great programme last week which went really, really well. The students got a very thorough experience of all the great stuff that is going on round here, as well as having a pretty profound transformational personal experience.

> Hal Gillmore, The Big Green Canoe (a Transition Enterprise)

#### **Supporting Activities**

This truly beautiful house with the charming bedrooms, the lovely public rooms, the fresh flowers from the garden, the delicious food and most of all the warm and friendly atmosphere must in no small part be due to the kindness and attention to detail everyone provided. This was the icing on the cake that made our day such a happy event. My thanks to all concerned.

Francine Goss (Wedding of Zoe and Tim in May 2012)

A wonderful week in a perfect setting. The everchanging face of the river, vibrant autumn colours, an otter and the daily delight of spotting a kingfisher. Oh, and no television. Bliss. Thank you to all concerned.

> Sylvie and Geoff, Visitors to Sharpham Bathing House Nov 2012

Below from left to right: The Sharpham Trustees Carrie Morgan, Claire Ash Wheeler, Julian Carnell, William Lana - Chair, Martin Wright, Daniel Stokes, Tony Kuhl





#### The Chair's introduction

Hello and welcome to the 2012-2013 Annual Report. Sharpham is all about connecting people to the natural world. We love doing this and we love it when you join us. In this annual review you will see highlights of most of the activities and celebrations we held and supported during the year, from events like the Trust's 30th anniversary and star gazing evenings with the Sharpham Outdoors Project, to structural changes on the estate like the increased accommodation available at the Barn Retreat, and the installations of new solar photo-voltaic arrays.

Every year, it is evident that we are reaching more people. It is also evident that the events and activities we provide are helping many deal with and flourish in the changing world we find ourselves in. Sharpham will continue in its endeavours to stimulate creative solutions to environmental and social challenges and we're excited about the partnerships which are building and developing. We know our decisions must be based on demonstrable and replicable actions, and through processes which are true to our aims and with a long term vision. We have started a document that aims to paint a picture of Sharpham in 2033, which we'll make public in 2014... if you'd like to contribute to this vision please email, or post, a paragraph (or a picture) of what you would like to see; we would love to hear from you!

Finally, I want to recognise the huge effort of everyone who has had input into Sharpham's output – including staff, partners, and volunteers. Without your time, heart, financial contributions and integrity, this joint project would not be the beacon of hope and happiness that so many people tell us it is.

#### William Lana, Chair, Sharpham Trust



#### Vision and purpose

The vision of the Trust is to create a world where people realise their potential through 'connecting to the natural world'. The organisation works to a strong set of guiding principles and these principles act as a moral and creative compass in the planning of activities and projects, they

- 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

#### The Trust's Objectives 2011-2015

- 1. To develop a range of innovative educational activities based on a sense of Sharpham as a special place
- 2. To demonstrate sustainable approaches to managing the land and buildings
- 3. To promote greater access to the Sharpham Estate
- 4. To operate a balanced budget with a secure income base

#### The Director's Report

During our 30th Anniversary year much was achieved and our charitable work went from strength to strength. We gained planning permission for a natural burial ground on a beautiful site over the river Dart with views to Dartmoor and the sea. We installed another 50Kwh solar photo-voltaic system and we now generate nearly half of our total annual electrical consumption. While at Lower Sharpham Barton, one of our farmsteads is being steadily transformed from a farmyard with barns into a residential environmental centre with traditional farming, conservation and environmental education at its heart.

Over recent years, this charity has changed as the staff and Trustees work hard to make us relevant and attractive to partners and the local and wider community of South Devon. Our special natural assets of a stunning landscape and a superb historic house coupled with an increasing range of interesting and innovative activities is drawing more people in and they are in turn being touched and enriched by the special magic of Sharpham. Long may it continue.

The wide range and diversity of our courses, events and activities is designed and delivered by a small, mostly part-time staff team and a dedicated group of volunteers. I should like to pay tribute to all those people who work so hard and with such care and enthusiasm, as well as the Trustees who give so much of their free time to creatively support and guide this Trust towards an increasingly exciting future.

#### Chris Nicholls, Director, Sharpham Trust

Left: Visitors to the 30th Celebrations leave memories and stories on a map of the Sharpham estate



**Public Engagement** 

As well as the importance of maintaining the heritage of the estate for the appreciation of future generations, Sharpham is also a life-enriching place where people can explore positive self-directed change, sustainable living and the arts.

We provide a successful year round public programme of interconnecting strands of activity that include:

- Public events, open days and courses
- Outdoor education for the general public as well as for vulnerable groups
- Arts, heritage and Mindfulness
- Residential opportunities for learning and for retreats

Most activities have threads of more than one strand running through them.

#### The Sharpham Programme





#### **Events and Open Days**

We have enjoyed a busy programme as part of our 30th anniversary year, including the following activities and events:

#### 30th Anniversary celebration weekend

Over the weekend of the 7th and 8th of July, we hosted an action packed weekend of free activities as part of our 30th anniversary celebrations.

Highlights included the opportunity to view a specially curated exhibition of over 35 paintings by the Polish painter Zdzislaw Ruszkowski, whose work was collected by Ruth and Maurice Ash. Work from local contemporary artists, who have taken inspiration from Sharpham, was also hung.

As well as a feast of visual arts, there were activities for all ages including arts and crafts, outdoor learning, poetry and, music.

The weekend featured a specially commissioned exhibition from local participatory arts group, *Encounters*, who created a stunning visual timeline of the Trust over the last 30 years.

The exhibition included creative invitations for the public to leave their feedback and responses related to the work of the Trust over the years, as well as ideas for future development.

#### **Sharpham Apple Pressing and Autumn Festival**

Despite a somewhat disappointing apple harvest this year, over 400 people came to celebrate our Apple Pressing and Autumn Festival in October.

This free family event was open to all ages and there were just enough apples to make it worth setting up the community apple press hired from our partners at *Orchard Link*.

The day included a rich and varied programme of outdoor-based activities, heritage tours of the house, as well as arts and crafts such as green woodworking and painting with natural pigment paints.

The day concluded with the unveiling of a newly commissioned sculpture (christened with local Devon cider!) by local artist Mic Chambers as well as the first official reading of a poem entitled *Sharpham House* by Alice Oswald, commissioned in celebration of the anniversary (see photo of Alice on front cover).

#### **Mindfulness for Heath and Wellbeing**

Mindfulness for Health and Well-being courses have been developed by professionals in the Healthcare sector and are being trialled through evidence-based research programmes nationally.

Mindfulness is recommended in the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for the treatment of people with clinical depression. It helps people to:

- Manage stress and anxiety more effectively
- Cope with depression
- Manage chronic pain
  - Make positive choices in life and work



Over the past year we have delivered 12 separate mindfulness courses to 320 participants. Our courses vary in length and style to enable as many people to benefit as possible. The courses have continued to remain popular, with good levels of attendance over this reporting period. Courses for this year have included:

- Introduction to Mindfulness in Daily Life
- 8-week Mindfulness for Health and Well Being
- Mindfulness for Health Care Practitioners
- Mindfulness for Teachers
- Mindfulness Practice drop in sessions
- Mindfulness Celebration Day (a mini day-long conference)



#### **Poetry Conversation**

The monthly Poetry Conversations hosted by nationally acclaimed local poet Alice Oswald, have developed into a rich variety of stimulating ways to engage with poetry. Evenings attract between 12 and 35 participants and the themes for this year included ambiguity, war poetry, poems inspired by Sharpham, by love, Christmas and choral poems.

#### **Artist in Residence Programme**

In September 2012, we launched the first in a series of Artist Residencies, which we aim to develop over the next four years.

The focus for this first year was to work with an artist who specialises in participatory practice and whose work has synergy with the principles and values of the Trust. After a thorough and considered recruitment and selection process, we finally chose Penny Skerrett as our Artist in Residence for 2012.

Penny lived at the Boat House on the river for a period of six weeks during September and October and her work included the creation of a series of short films and two printed booklets.

#### **Residential Programme**

The house continues to be used as a venue for a variety of residential courses. Over this year, examples of some of the groups coming to stay at the house included a partnership with Cancer Life Line South West, who provide an ongoing programme of breaks for individuals living with cancer and their carers; The Committed Dharma Practitioners Programme, an extended course exploring the relevance of ancient Buddhist teachings within contemporary Western life; Quince, a group of educationalist and change agents working to support the next generation of young leaders and Big Green Canoe, a local organisation promoting the need for transformational learning in order to unlock new thinking and inspire new ways of doing things.

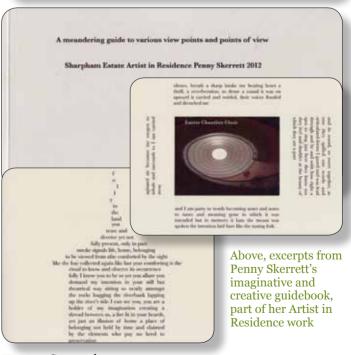
#### Seasonal Programme

Our day to day programme of learning follows the four seasons and this year we have continued to deliver a full programme of activities. Highlights from the year included the following:









- Stargazing
- Into the Woods (forest school activities)
- Green Woodworking
- Birds and Breakfast
- Seasonal Forage and Feasts
- Wild Swimming weekend



#### **Gardens and Grounds**

This reporting year has brought new and exciting changes at Sharpham Gardens. After Jane Pickard's departure in the summer, for a new job at Schumacher College, our apprentice Jesse Hammond was given the opportunity to continue his Level 3 qualification in Horticulture and to become Sharpham's Gardener. Jesse had shown tremendous potential in his role and the progression to Gardener made perfect sense. Jesse says, "I am looking forward to a happy and fulfilling partnership among likeminded people."

There has been another addition to the garden team. Harriet Tipping, has extended her current role as housekeeper to co-ordinate garden volunteers for one day a week. Joanna Kleszczyńska, our resident housekeeper, is growing cut flowers within the walled garden that are used in the main house.

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 Phytophthora ramorum or Sudden Oak Death, found last year, had spread to the woodland garden affecting our rhododendron ponticum. We dealt quickly with the disease and cut back and burnt the infected shrub. While specific plants are being removed, we are also encouraging new trees and varieties at Sharpham. The long grass bordering the main lawns in front of the house has gained two beautiful mulberry trees.

Sharpham continues its partnership with charitable organisations, encouraging volunteers to help in the gardens. Volunteers from St Anthony and Elias regularly work in the gardens.

During the year, the Sharpham Outdoors Project hosted volunteers from Hungary, who made a great contribution while working in the gardens.

We've also had the pleasure of working with another student, Jon Scott, from The Exeter Deaf Academy. He is studying a Level 2 Horticulture course through Bicton College. He attended weekly with his communicator Vicky Barrett and both have helped with many tasks, from digging to propagation, pricking out, cultivation and more.

Sharpham staff enjoyed communicating with Jon so much that he and Vicky ran a short workshop to teach staff the basics of British Sign Language, which was great fun. Nine garden volunteers worked in the gardens this year, bringing the total number of hours worked to an incredible 664. We would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped, including Jon and Vicki, David, and Sue and Ian, our regular volunteers.

Below, from left to right: Jesse Hammond Sharpham Gardener, Vicky Barrett and Jon Scott from The Exeter Deaf Academy.



#### **Sharpham Outdoors**

The year has been one of exciting changes for the Sharpham Outdoors Project. The year started with the promise of a new farm, a new partnership with Robert Owen Communities and a new base at Lower Sharpham Barton, and ended with the promise of continuation funding from Mind, the mental health charity, permission from the local council to build a new bunkhouse and tea break facility and hosting a new trainee via the LEMUR scheme (Ambios initiative).

We hosted more than 40 educational access visits, bringing more than 500 people onto the estate, over 80 days of committed outdoor youth mental health work and in excess of 3500 hours of voluntary contribution to the range of outdoor education and conservation activities offered by the Sharpham Outdoors Project.

The project hosted the European Union Leonardofunded exchange involving twelve Hungarian trainees, who work towards a career in nature conservation. Their training looks at the complex and interrelated work of UK conservation effort. They also contributed more than 2500 hours to the estate either through bird and wildlife





surveys; time in the garden, public events and clearing overgrown paths.

The Project has secured continuation funding for the Ecominds project *Spring to Life* for a further year (2013), which allows us to work with disadvantaged young people suffering the effects of mental health distress.

The reporting year saw us work with over 60 young people from all over South Devon, along with six volunteer mentors, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. The young people share in a ten-week programme of outdoor learning and activities, aimed at building their self confidence in order to tackle some of their mental health challenges. The Sharpham Outdoors Project team are working hard to find ways of continuing the work in the mental health field via either grant funded activity or through referrals directly from General Practitioners.

The main task for the Project this year has been building the partnership with Robert Owen Communities, the long standing tenant farmer of Lower Sharpham Barton

Above: The timeline of work milestones for the new Lower Sharpham Barton Farm outdoors work base.



Below: Spring to Life participants with Sharpham Outdoors Project staff members, Christine Carol (third from left) and Anna McNeill (fourth from left).





Farm, and establishing the base there for Project activity. This year, we have supported over 60 learning disability service users at the farm with continued work-based activity. A challenging year in 2012 with very difficult growing conditions meant a winter of hard work in the garden to bring it back under control. Members of the team were kept up all night during the lambing period helping to bring a new flock of sheep into the world. Wood and metal work activities are thriving thanks to two new fully equipped workshops. Many of the products made can be seen at the farm and many are for sale.

Next year will see the farm and estate outdoor education infrastructure develop further. This includes a new bunkhouse and tea break room, a new management plan for the land via the agri-environment scheme Higher Level Stewardship, and improvements to the Sharpham quarry and campsite.

The team will manage the grasslands to their optimum biodiversity value through a careful grazing regime and increasing the number of educational visits to the farm.

The herd of cattle will be increased as the Project looks for innovative ways of engaging Robert Owen Community members in nature conservation activities. All these plans are displayed on the outside wall of the old tea break room at the farm.

The Project will seek additional funds to continue to work with the most disadvantaged young people and those most disconnected with the natural world, and will continue to offer life affecting and career enhancing work based opportunities to people from across the UK and Europe.



## Spring to Life In the words of a participant's parent;

Although we had done everything possible to support our 16-year-old daughter through her mother's long illness with terminal cancer, there was nothing we could do to change the shock and loss she felt when my wife died.

The severe reactive depression that followed required intensive support from the local child and adolescent mental health services and ongoing support from a very skilled and dedicated psychiatrist.

As a Dad, I was able to support my daughter by setting up a full weekly routine that involved getting out on long walks on Dartmoor every day and having lots of time together. This was enormously therapeutic and gave my daughter the confidence to begin to think about some contact with others beyond her immediate family. I knew that this social integration, along with being outdoors, was a critical part of my daughter's recovery.

A close friend and someone who works supporting families with parenting skills directed me towards the Spring To Life project being run on the Sharpham Estate. The response I got on making contact was so warm and welcoming, as well as informative, it was not difficult to describe the project to my daughter and engage her interest.

Those were still very tentative days and it was extremely hard for my daughter to interact socially with others or to step into new environments. The approach by the Spring To Life project leaders and the volunteers was excellent, just enough to let my daughter know she was a valued new member of the group yet hands off enough to let her find her natural rhythm. The outdoor setting, which is simply breathtaking, the simple activities, the open fire and the camp kitchen all played a significant part in inspiring my daughter to return the following week and each week after that.

There has been an enormous change from that first week when my daughter was unable to speak to anyone and felt very alone in the world to a situation five weeks later where she is looking forward to her Tuesdays at the Spring To Life" project and greatly enjoys the social contact of the volunteers and her peers in the group.

This project has also helped my daughter engage in other outdoor volunteer work at a local organic smallholding two days a week and spending one day a week helping a classroom assistant at our local school.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have been inspired by the impact of this project on my daughter's emotional recovery and I am deeply grateful for the support that has been offered in such a generous and gracious manner during such a difficult time.



#### The Barn Retreat

Every week throughout the year up to ten retreatants come to the Barn for a week's retreat. Some stay for two or more weeks. The Barn's carefully structured weekly schedule - including work on the land, free time, guided Buddhist meditation, teachings and community living - enables the development of mindfulness practice to be used in everyday life.

Three full time residential volunteers and a non-residential manager run the Barn. The volunteers facilitate and join in all the Barn's activities. They each stay for a full year, benefiting from their own mindfulness practice, the teachings and living in beautiful and tranquil environment of the Sharpham estate.

This year, 509 people stayed on retreat at the Barn – an increase of 19% on previous year. Funding support was given to 94 retreatants in financial need, paid by the Sharpham Trust. Of these, 20 retreatants received a bursary of a further 50% reduction - funded by donations from other Barn retreatants.



### Residential Volunteer Coordinator Linda:

The main thing I have learnt during my time at the Barn is a greater awareness of the uniqueness of every single person that comes through our doors. Not so much outwardly (eg what they do for a living, etc) but more in their fundamental characters and behaviours.

The first evening of each retreat often sets the tone for the week - a mellow group, helpful and considerate; they can be noisy and talkative or quiet and reflective, instantly at ease and cohesive as a large group or sometimes smaller more intimate groups within the whole.

Everyone usually finds their space within the group in the first couple of days, although a few take a longer time to reach that easeful state. By the end of the week everyone is normally relaxed and restrengthened to go back out into their 'normal' world.

Am I sad to see people leave each week? No! I find it so exciting knowing that each person takes the calm, more mindful and respectful way of being that they find at the Barn back out into the world to share with others. I see it like droplets of light being spread in ever-increasing circles throughout our world.

Below: Retreatants working in the Barn gardens



# Sharpham Tenancies

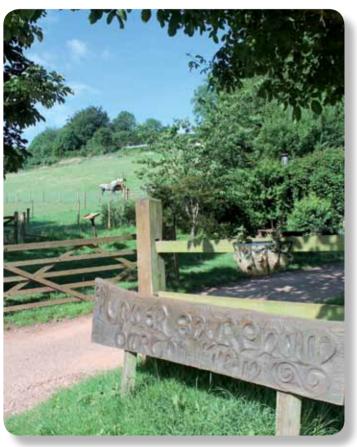
#### **Tenancies**

The charity has a good working relationship with its farming tenants. Five private dwellings are also tenanted on the estate.

#### Lower Sharpham Barton Farm

(approx 80 acres)

The farm is tenanted by Ambios, a not for profit company which promotes environmental understanding and deliver Sharpham Outdoors for the Trust. Ambios runs the farm in collaboration with the Robert Owen Communities (ROC), the previous tenant, and both organisations are dedicated to the long term future of the farm as an educational and agricultural enterprise.



#### **Upper Sharpham Barton**

(approx 100 acres)

After running the farm for over 30 years on Rudolf Steiner's biodynamic principles, Judy Smith relinquished the holding in 2012 and David Camp took over. David runs cattle and sheep on his farm and the whole area is certified organic.

#### **Sharpham Wine and Cheese**

(approx 200 acres)

The Sharpham Partnership's vineyard and cheese dairy have been producing wines and unpasteurised cheeses for over 30 years to local and national acclaim. By producing its own milk on the farm from its closed herd of 65 Jersey cows, about 70 tonnes of cheese a year are handmade in the purpose-built cheese dairy.

The ten-acre vineyard lies between 12m and 25m above sea-level on south-facing, well drained slopes — perfect for growing a range of carefully selected cool-climate grape varieties, from which 70,000 bottles of wine are made each year. New World and traditional winemaking techniques are used.

Both the wine and cheese is made from start to finish at Sharpham, giving a flavour that reflects its unique

position in the South Hams area of Devon. In the regional and national competitions, Sharpham Wines have won trophies every year since 1992 and also never failed to win an international award every time the wines have been entered. Last year Sharpham Wines won a total of 50 medals in both regional, national and international competitions, including picking up a trophy for the 'Best International Sparkling Wine' at the Bollicine del Mundo Competition held in Verona. The Sharpham Sparkling Reserve beat off stiff competition from 192 other sparkling wines from around the world, including Champagne.





A full set of accounts is available on request. The Trustees would like to acknowledge and thank all those who have donated and granted monies during this reporting year including:

#### **Donations and Grants**

Dollor	rurpose	Ainoun
Anonymous	Educational Sites	£6,750

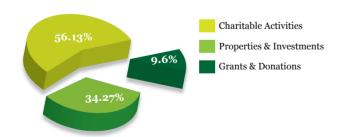


#### **Headline Figures:**

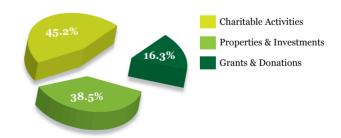
<b>EOY period</b>	March 2012	March <b>2013</b>
Total Income	0.585m	0.543m
Total Expenditure	0.681m	o.800m
Total Funds	5.872m	6.014m
Voluntary Income	0.056m	o.088m
Investment Income	0.200m	0.209m
Charity Activity Income	0.328m	0.245m
<b>Investment Management Costs</b>	0.018m	0.016m
Cost of Charitable Activities	0.646m	0.757m
Governance	0.017m	0.27m
Governance as % of Total expenditure	2.5%	3.5%

The Trustees would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed in excess of 13,822 volunteer hours to the charitable organisation during this reporting period.

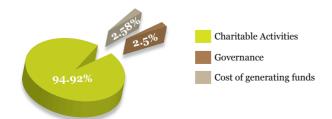
#### **Incoming Resources 2011/12**



#### **Incoming Resources 2012/13**



#### **Expended Resources 2011/12**



#### **Expended Resources 2012/13**





"This is a very large charcoal drawing - 100cm X 130cm on 650 gsm Arches paper that I made in 2011 of the magnificent yew at Sharpham when the cherry was in blossom. It is a meditation on death, of course, but also a homage to the elegance of these old trees that grace the garden at Sharpham. The piece was bought by the Duke of Devonshire and is now installed at Chatsworth House." Sarah Gillespie 2011

#### **Trustees**

Claire Ash Wheeler
Julian Carnell
Romy Fraser (Resigned November 2012)
Tony Kuhl (November 2012)
William Lana (Chair)
Carrie Morgan
Daniel Stokes (November 2012)
Martin Wright (Secretary)

#### Director

Chris Nicholls

#### **Registered office**

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Charity Number 285767

Company Registration Number 1659601

