



THE
Sharpham
TRUST

Annual Report 2013-2014



Vision & 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 act as a moral and creative compass in the planning of activities and projects, they are:

- 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

Objectives

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



Staff taking a break on the Trust Staff Development Day

Chairman's Comments

Hello and welcome the 2013-14 Annual Report, Connecting people to the natural world is what we do. You hold in your hands a synopsis of how through experiential learning, mindfulness, and effective action we are gently – but solidly - building a path to a more sustainable and just future.

The last 12 months have been busy as we brought a number of projects on line (from completion of the Sharpham Outdoors/Robert Owen Community structure to the launching of the Sharpham Natural Burial Meadow) and had a major change of staff as we said goodbye to Chris and Susie Nicholls and welcomed our new Director, Julian Carnell and Programme Manager, Ben Ballard.

Life these days often does seem busy – and one of the threads that run through what we do at the Trust is to encourage attention to our senses; slow down a bit, become a little more observant, smell the proverbial (and metaphorical) roses, celebrate little things... and I invite you to try to be a little more present as you look through this report ... Are you standing or sitting, how does that feel? What can you hear and smell around you? Are you actually at Sharpham, and if so, is there a chance to go for a short walk outside? Enjoy your life, and if you can, share it with others.

Thank you to all the people who have put something into the Sharpham experience over the past 12 months, and thank you to those who resolve to do so in the future.

With kind regards, William Lana
Chair of Sharpham Trust

Director's Report

This has been a year of transition at Sharpham with the retirement of our long standing Director, Chris Nicholls, after 18 years of living and working on the estate. The Trust owes a huge debt of gratitude both to Chris and to his wife, Susie, who has also stepped down from her post as Programme Coordinator. Together they have helped grow the Trust to what it is today, a vibrant, multi-faceted charity, looking to reach out and embrace new ideas and promote change in the pursuit of its vision of a world where people are realising their potential through connecting to the natural world. We wish Chris, Susie and their family all the best as they embark on a new stage in their life.

Having just started in the role of Director, I have been struck by the variety of activities going on at Sharpham and the enthusiasm to take on new challenges that will make a difference. A good example this year is the creation of a new Natural Burial Site on the estate, fulfilling the Trust's objective of pursuing an alternative, ecologically sensitive approach, while also providing a valuable asset to the local community. As the world is faced with ever more serious social and environmental threats, there is an even greater need for organisations like Sharpham that strive to offer a space to reflect and explore alternative approaches and solutions. We are able to do this is only because of the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers, Trustees and partners. This support is vital and we offer a heartfelt thank you to those who are helping make Sharpham such a special place.

Julian Carnell
Director

As well as caring for the land and the heritage of the estate the Trust continues to provide a successful Programme of activities and events designed to connect people to the natural world, foster personal development and sustainable lifestyles. The Programme's interconnecting strands include:

- Mindfulness and Retreats
- The Arts and Heritage
- Environmental Education and Outdoor Learning

Events and Open Days

Seasonal Programme

Our day-to-day programme of learning follows the four seasons and this year we have continued to deliver a rich and diverse programme of activities. Some of the highlights from the year have included:

- Winter tree planting and wassail
- Badger Watch and Talk
- Stargazing
- Summer Explorers – nature based activities for children and young people
- Dawn Chorus - birds and breakfast
- Nature's Bounty – seasonal forage and feast

Spring Garden and Summer Open Days

Our open days were well attended this year with approximately 300-400 visitors per day. Activities for the Summer Open Weekend included workshops in traditional arts and crafts, as well as a range of nature-based and conservation activities.

Sharpham Apple Pressing and Autumn Festival

Our Apple Pressing and Autumn Festival continues to be a popular feature of our annual calendar of events. Following an excellent apple harvest this year, the press was put into good use with the community bringing their own apples to turn into delicious fresh juice. Other activities on the day included storytelling workshops and apple themed arts and crafts activities.



Wassailing, the tradition of blessing the ground and trees and promoting a good harvest.

Transition Schools

In October, 200 young people from the local secondary school KEVICCS, in partnership with the Transition Network spent a day on the estate discovering and learning about the river Dart catchment, through a programme of creative engagement activities. This very successful day involved a wide range of expert teachers and partners who have links to the river and it provided a blue print for future educational schools visits.

Mindfulness

The promotion of Mindfulness and providing opportunities to experience the benefits of Mindfulness techniques lies at the heart of the Trust's charitable activities. It is the foundation on which our approach to caring for the land and each other is based.

Our mindfulness programme has continued to grow in response to a groundswell of interest locally and nationally in the benefits of mindfulness practice. Over the past year we have delivered 18 separate mindfulness courses to 152 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 overall 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 Professionals
- Comprehensive Mindfulness Teacher Training (new)
- Mindfulness Practice drop-in sessions
- Living well with Physical Pain (new)
- Taking Mindfulness Deeper (new)
- Sustaining Ourselves Through Mindfulness (Residential)



Volunteers, Dave Potter and Dave Cooke, operate the Orchard Link Apple Press at Sharpham's Apple Pressing Day and Autumn Festival

Case Study

After a week at the Barn, retreatant Amity Roach writes:

Every time I talk about this experience, I tell people it was truly one of the best decisions I've made in my life. The weekly schedule was more structured than I had imagined it would be, but I surprised myself by loving it. Several hours of "mindful work" is only as strenuous as you choose, and the idea is to be as fully present with whatever you're engaged in as possible. As I learnt, it can be as deep and revelatory an experience as the meditation sessions themselves. I chose to tend the organic garden, digging up Jerusalem Artichokes and picking the last of the season's apples.

The deeper I got into the six days, the clearer my own guidance became. In addition to the meditation, observing periods of silence every day really seemed to facilitate the process of connecting with my soul, which is what I'd gone there for in the first place. Mission accomplished.

I'm also still meditating for 40 minutes daily (if not more), which is pretty phenomenal. I usually have a hard time adhering to any specific daily spiritual practice, but this one's got me hooked, line and sinker.

Abridged from
TheAlternativeReview.com

The Barn's key purpose is to teach and support the development of mindfulness practice in everyday life, supported by Buddhist meditation methods. It is also a place where people reconnect with themselves and nature in a tranquil, supportive environment.

Ten retreatants stay at the Barn each week, supported by three residential volunteer

coordinators and a non-residential part time manager. This year 523 people stayed at the Barn, some for extended periods.

Anyone is welcome at the Barn, including those in financial difficulty: 33 people were offered a 25% reduction supported rate; a further 37 people were offered a 62% bursary funded by donations from other retreatants.



One of the retreatants practicing Mindfulness work in the garden



Retreatants bring vegetables back from the large productive garden area at the rear of the Barn Retreat



This gravelled area at the back of the Retreat is a sun trap on hot days

Poetry Conversations

The monthly Poetry Conversations hosted by nationally acclaimed and 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 have been as diverse as poetry and civil war, Shakespeare, myth, Ted Hughes and urban poetry.

Artists in Residence

We were delighted to appoint playwright Peter Oswald and mythologist and story teller Martin Shaw as joint writers in residence at Sharpham. From September, they worked together to write a promenade performance piece that explored the myth of Parzival through the environment and context of Sharpham. Following a successful application to Arts Council England, the play was developed into a highly successful performance piece based at Sharpham.



Terrific storms at the beginning of the year saw a number of mature trees fall

Residential Programme

The house continues to be used as a venue for an interesting and diverse programme 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 on-going programme of breaks for individuals living with cancer and their carers; a new creative writing residential weekend led by Alice Oswald; Next Generation Leaders, a group of educationalists and change agents working to support the next generation of young leaders, and a new programme of themed retreat activities based at Sharpham House.

Heritage



The Heritage Group continues to meet and helped organise the Estate Archive, which now has a permanent home. Members of the group are all volunteers and are actively involved in researching various aspects of the estate's fascinating history.

Restoration projects this year have included:

re-decoration of the Entrance Hall in the main house, restoration of the ceiling decorations in the Taylor designed Bathing House and conversion of an office in the main house in to a bar where visitors can enjoy sampling Sharpham Wine. On a less positive note, we lost a number of mature trees in the winter gales in the ornamental gardens, some of which damaged buildings when they came down. The Trust has now submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to help fund a major restoration and volunteering project on the estate.



Internationally acclaimed writer and story-teller Martin Shaw

The Sharpham Outdoors Project is a joint partnership project between The Sharpham Trust, Ambios and Robert Owen Communities, based at Lower Sharpham Barton Farm.

Lower Sharpham Barton Farm

Here adults with learning disabilities carry out the day-to-day work relating to the farms operation, moving cattle and checking their health, managing the hens and collecting, grading and selling their eggs, helping with lambing and caring for the flock of Zwartble sheep, and of course grooming and caring for Matty and Rusty (the farm's ponies). A new herd of local, organic South Devon cows and calves arrived in early March 2014 and have begun to settle in.

The wood and metal workshops have had a full year of activity, producing, among other things, bat boxes for sale at the Natural History Bookshop in Totnes, making gates and farm furniture, ornamental planters and shelves, and picnic tables for the new buildings on the farm. The team have worked across the farm, helping prepare sites for open days and clearing overgrown areas for improved access. The garden has also had a fruitful, if slug affected time. In all, over 50 adults with learning disabilities attend for between one and four days a week each on the farm making up over 6500 man-days of activity.

The new bunkhouse has seen occupancy from two cohorts of Hungarian trainees on 12-week placements, learning about nature conservation in the UK, as well as the Sharpham approach to life

through mindfulness practice and outdoor work. It has also played host to two English trainees, Louis Duddridge and Sarah Whitts, both as part of the LEMUR scheme.

The estate larch-clad teabreak room on the site of the old linhay was completed by students from South Devon College. The frame was erected by T&S Framing. Over 20 days of work by up to 12 first year carpentry students wrapped up the work on this well-used building, a lunch hall for all visitors to the farm. Five days work by ten plastering apprentices from South Devon College finished off the main body of work, and the painting and final preparations were completed by our Thursday volunteer group, many of whom were ex-*Spring to Life* participants. Funds for the final works (£14,000) were committed by a local, anonymous donor.

On the farming side, Lower Sharpham Barton Farm successfully achieved the Higher Level Stewardship standard committing funds from Natural England to improving the biodiversity of the farm. Over the winter months the capital works program began, with a new 120-metre hedge being built and replanted, reinstating an iconic heritage feature and connecting up patches of woodland. Volunteers, trainees, programme participants and contractors took part in the farm's hedge laying programme, laying, casting up, re-fencing and improving the habitat for wildlife of over 1,100 metres of hedges. The old farm orchard was replanted with 30 fruit trees, with works carried out as part of the estate's winter open day, where over 20 local people helped plant up the trees.



The Lower Sharpham Barton Farm land is grazed with organic cattle, an Aberdeen Angus cross Friesian or Jersey animal, which produces wonderful beef

Youth Mental Health

The Ecominds-funded *Spring to Life* programme was a huge success. During the life of the project (three years), over 120 young people suffering mental health distress joined and experienced improvements from our eco-therapy project. In this reporting period, three cohorts of ten participants finished their involvement, reporting improved mental health, and achieving the bronze John Muir award.

Five 5-week group eco-therapy sessions were delivered at Lower Sharpham Barton Farm during Spring. Groups involved included Rise Recovery, Devon Young Carers, St Loys, and the Specialist Team for Early Psychosis as well as a referral *Spring to Life* group.

Ex-participants from *Spring to Life* were invited to engage with our volunteer drop-in days run on Thursdays. In all over 19 individuals took up this offer, five of whom attended weekly, with many of the others attending at least five times, committing over 2000 volunteer hours to Sharpham.

The *Spring to Life* project required the commitment of four long term volunteers (who came for nine months, two days/week) to support and nurture the participants attending the project. Charlie Waye, Stuart Murdoch, Jon Howell and Hannah Frances, acting as volunteer mentors to the young participants passed on the wisdom learned from their own experiences of managing mental health distress, as well as sharing their skills in working in the outdoors. Their input made a massive impact on the lives of the participants. In all, they committed over 2,200 volunteer hours.

Outreach

Six schools, three university groups and over 20 community organisations took up our educational offer, with over 500 additional individuals passing through the farm. The Sharpham Outdoors Project offered a range of public events this year which saw large numbers of people accessing Sharpham. The annual birds and breakfast event and willow weaving were ever popular and the new, seasonal wild food foraging events were fully booked. The Lower Sharpham Barton Farm barn dance and singing Christmas carols to the animals were incredibly popular with over 150 people enjoying the farm over these two events alone.



Many of the learning activities offered by The Sharpham Outdoors Project tie into current national curriculum criteria, binding compulsory learning outcomes with the inspirational Sharpham Landscape

The badger vaccination programme, initiated to manage the reservoir of TB in the estate's population of badgers, and carried out in part by the conservation trainees, has had a successful launch, trapping and vaccinating 16 animals over 50 trap nights (25 traps each night) = 32% overall trapping success. This is precisely in line with many other badger trapping projects (33%+).



The new teabreak room incorporates a summer bat roost for our resident lesser horseshoe bats



Listening and recording nature for the Sharpham Sounds Project



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

Since our Volunteer Coordinator, Harriet Tipping, started we have seen a steady increase of garden volunteers. The Wednesday sessions have been attended by a regular group of between four and eight volunteers who have generously given their time and energy to help make the gardens beautiful and productive. Our volunteers have found the gardening sessions supportive and informative, and the atmosphere at Sharpham a friendly, welcoming one.

Although the sessions are run on a drop-in basis, they are attended mainly by our regular volunteers. A future development is to offer a garden volunteer day on Saturdays for those volunteers who are interested but would find it difficult to attend during the week.

Some of the activities the volunteers have helped with are: food production in the walled garden with the sowing, potting on and transplanting into beds of various vegetables and salad crops, maintaining the various ornamental borders with weeding and tidying up, clearing an area to build new compost terraces and sowing grass seed around the area, building a structure in the walled garden for the squash plants to climb up which we called the Squash House and planting trees in the woodland garden.

We would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who are invaluable to us here at Sharpham. Without their dedicated and committed help, we couldn't get so much of this work done.



Two of our regular volunteers Helen Sands and Luke Eveleigh help our gardener clear an area



Regular volunteers clear an area to build new compost terraces

After much effort, we were delighted, in 2013, to be able to create our new natural burial ground called Sharpham Meadow. The site is located at the top of the estate and has amazing views across the River Dart and South Hams. The feedback about the site has been overwhelmingly positive with people particularly praising the location and the feeling of being close to nature that the meadow encourages.

Journalist Lucy Siegle, Patron of the Natural Death Centre and presenter on BBC's *The One Show*, opened the newly constructed cob ceremonial building at the natural burial ground. Despite the weather, visitors turned out to help celebrate the opening and internationally acclaimed poet, Alice Oswald, gave a poetry reading. From the ground's landscaped entrance, on the back road from Totnes to Ashprington, visitors can now walk through a natural willow sculpture archway, created by Ben Piper, towards the new cob building. Through its open timber front, the shelter frames the magnificent view over the wildflower meadow and down towards the river Dart. The building was designed to mirror the elliptical stairwell of Sharpham House and has the same dimensions and shape. It was constructed by local specialists with a local stone base, cob walls, timber frame and sedum roof and will be used to hold a ceremony, to shelter from inclement weather or just be a place to be able to sit in contemplation.

Our aim is to create a community around this special location and we have developed an annual 'All Souls Day' event, which will take place every November. The first of these attracted approximately 55 people, including family and relatives who have a loved one buried at the new site. Those who attended took part in an evening of creative, reflective and ceremonial activities.



Visitors to the natural burial ground walk through a natural willow sculpture archway, created by Ben Piper, towards the new cob building



Journalist Lucy Siegle, from BBC's *The One Show*, who is Patron of the Natural Death Centre, opening the new ceremonial building



The new ceremonial building

Sharpham Wine and Cheese

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 their wines have been entered. So far, in 2014, the wines have won a tally of 10 National awards and five International awards, including the highest placed English Sparkling Wine with a Silver medal at the Effervescents du Monde Awards, held in France and the highest placed Still English Wine with a Gold Medal at the Sommelier Wine awards, held in London.

Upper Sharpham Barton

This holding of approximately 100 acres is being farmed by David Camp, who keeps cattle and sheep and is certified organic.

Lower Sharpham Barton

This farm is tenanted by Ambios, a not-for-profit company, that works in partnership with Robert Owen Communities and The Sharpham Trust. The Sharpham Outdoors Project is run from the farm together with *Spring to Life*, which focuses on youth mental health.



The Sharpham Partnership Jersey cows



One of the Robert Owen Community adults plants replacement trees in an area close to Lower Sharpham Barton Farm



Headline Figures

| EOY Period | Mar-13 | Mar-14 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Total Income | 0.543m | 0.512m |
| Total Expenditure | 0.800m | 0.843m |
| Total Funds | 5.872m | 5.816m |
| Voluntary Income | 0.088m | 0.022m |
| Investment Income | 0.209m | 0.186m |
| Charity Activity Income | 0.245m | 0.304m |
| Investment Management Costs | 0.016m | 0.016m |
| Cost of Charitable Activities | 0.757m | 0.781m |
| Cost of generating funds | 0.0m | 0.028m |
| Governance | 0.027m | 0.018m |
| Governance as % of total expenditure | 3.5% | 2.2% |

Volunteer hours and Financials

The Trustees would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed in excess of 15,726 volunteer hours to the charitable organisation during this reporting period.

The donations and grants element was as follows

£2,826 grant from SERCO for Energy consumption monitoring

£7,903 grant from the Forestry Commission was for forestry works

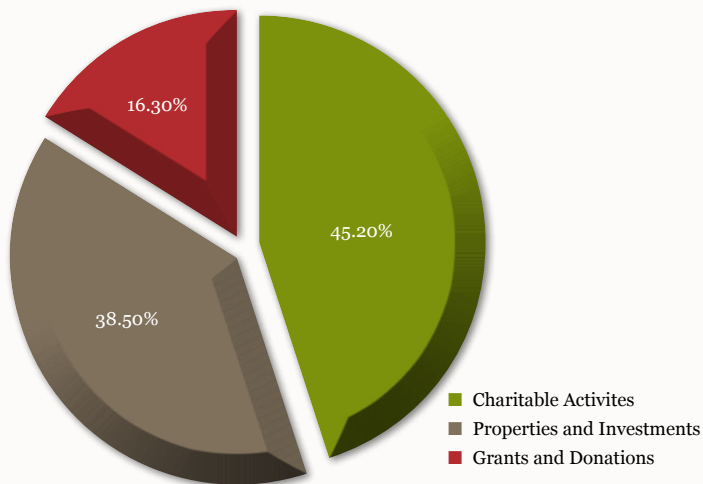
£19,065 grant from The Arts Council for the Parzival promenade performances

£500 grant from the The Elmgrant Trust for the Parzival promenade performances

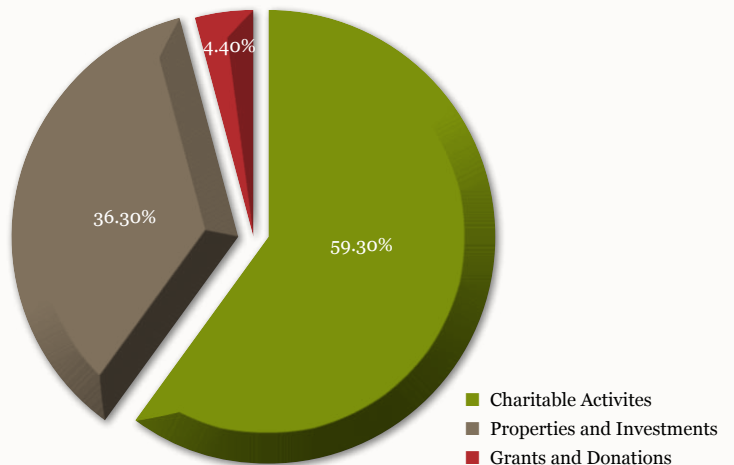
The Parzival money was carried into 2014/15 when the performance took place and is therefore shown on the balance sheet

£566 donation from an anonymous donor for Poetry

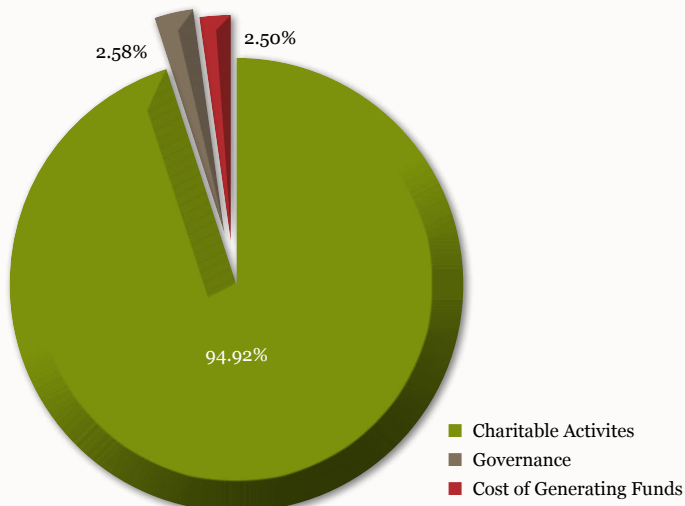
Incoming resources 2012/2013



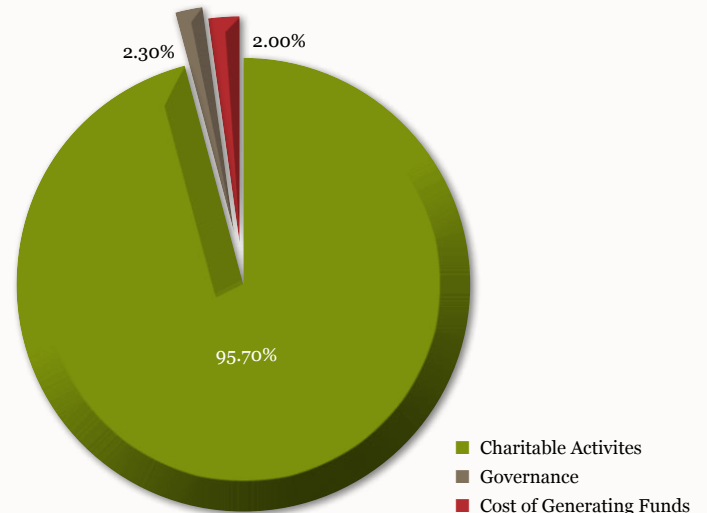
Incoming resources 2013/2014



Expended resources 2012/2013



Expended resources 2013/2014





The Sharpham Trustees and Director

Carrie Morgan, Claire Ash Wheeler, Julian Carnell
(new Trust Director taking over from Chris Nicholls from
2014), William Lana - Chair, Martin Wright (Secretary),
Daniel Stokes, Tony Kuhl

Registered office

Sharpham House
Ashprington
Totnes
Devon
TQ9 7UT

01803 732055

admin@sharphamtrust.org



www.sharphamtrust.org

