



Financials

The Trust would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed in excess of 8,000 volunteer hours to the charitable organisation during this reporting period including:

- Garden and House volunteers 1591 hours
- Ambios Outdoors volunteers 870 hours
- Barn Retreat Volunteer Coordinators 6,240 hours

The donations and grants element was as follows:

£2,500 Ernest Cook Trust grant for The Symposium was received in 15/16 but was help in the balance sheet at year end and carried forward into 2016/17 when the event took place.

£2,005 Gift Aid reclaimed from HMRC

£1,407 various donations received to support both the work of the Trust including bursaries.

HEADLINE FIGURES		
EOY period	Mar-15	Mar-16
Total income	0.726m	0.759m
Total expenditure	0.787m	0.770m
Total funds	5.943m	5.787m
Voluntary income	0.053m	0.003m
Investment income	0.259m	0.216m
Charity activity income	0.414m	0.540m
Investment management costs	0.015m	0.019m
Cost of charitable activities	0.753m	0.734m
Cost of generating funds	0.003m	0.017m
Governance	0.015m	0.019m
Governance as % of total expenditure	1.9%	2.5%

Annual Report 2015-2016



Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to the 2015-2016 Annual Report. The Sharpham Trust connects people to the natural world. We do this in many ways – some of which you can read about here, some of which you may have experienced for yourself over the past year. We do this because it is worth doing. Beauty, stillness, wilderness and understanding are both right in front of us, and need nurturing. These qualities are freely available, and in short supply. It takes effort to live a good life, and it takes connection to give a life meaning.

We connect people to the natural world (which includes themselves and other humans as well as other natural things living and otherwise) because a set of guiding principles and these through connection and learning we build greater appreciation. And a bit like once you've eaten an organic carrot you don't go back to conventional, once we appreciate something it is more likely we will want to support it, share it and celebrate it. In the last 12 months over 1400 people have attended mindfulness courses at Sharpham. We feel more empowered in their lives through these courses, and we aim to continue to be of service by building on this offering in the future. I'd like to have all of the staff, volunteers and trustees who project flourish, and I invite you to make your health and well-being a priority and experience Sharpham for yourself in the coming months and years.

William Lana
Chair of The Sharpham Trust



Our Trustees (left to right): Daniel Stokes, Martin Lana, Claire Rathbone, Daniel Stokes, William Lana, Elizabeth Seward & Tony Kull.

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

Our Principles

- an acknowledgement of the value of stillness and awareness
- The Trust aspires to be a living demonstration of these principles in all its activities.
- To demonstrate sustainable approaches to managing the land and buildings
- To promote greater access to the Sharpham Estate
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Our Vision, Purpose and Principles

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Director's Report



Over the last twelve months at Sharpham we have continued to see a strong demand for the services and experiences that we offer both on and off the Estate. Our courses, programmes and retreats are regularly full (with long waiting lists) as more and more people look for ways to help them cope better with the challenges they face in everyday life. Their responses to Sharpham and the opportunities we give them to pause, reflect and renew continue to be overwhelming positive and life-changing. As one recent retreatant wrote: "I suspect it would be near-impossible to follow a course - any course - at Sharpham and not go away feeling you had spent a series of wonderful moments that cast serenely into your soul. The location is just stunning, the food glorious in its earthy pleasures and the people simply lovely, kind, compassionate beings who want everyone to take away a sense that they can do this in their everyday lives too."

Julian Carnell, Trust Director



Obtaining achieving this takes a lot of hard work and dedication by our staff, volunteers and Trustees. Last year one of our longest serving Trustees Claire Ash Wheeler, whose parents created the Trust, stepped down but fortunately she continues to be involved through volunteering with the Heritage Group and Archive. We welcomed two new Trustees Elizabeth Seward and Charlotte Rathbone who are already proving a great asset to the team. This September is marked by the retirement of Peter Mallard from his role as manager of The Barn Retreat after six years. Peter has steered The Barn brilliantly and wisely and we wish him a long and happy retirement. We also welcome the new manager Tasha Bassingthwaite who comes to us all the way from Canada.

We have a great team at Sharpham who achieve a huge amount - often with relatively few resources - so a big thank-you from me to them.

With kind regards,
William Lana
Chair of The Sharpham Trust

Our Trustees (left to right): Daniel Stokes, Martin Lana, Claire Rathbone, Daniel Stokes, William Lana, Elizabeth Seward & Tony Kull.

Mindfulness Courses and Retreats

The promotion of mindfulness lies at the heart of the Trust's charitable activities and is the foundation on which our approach to caring for the land and each other is based. Sharpham has a long-standing involvement with mindfulness, meditation and creative enquiry stretching back over 30 years with the founders of the charity Maurice and Ruth Ash. We are a leading centre nationally for mindfulness offering a rich, varied and authentic programme of retreats and courses with different 'doorways' to learning about and experiencing mindful awareness. Our programme includes opportunities for those new to mindfulness, as well as those looking to reconnect with or deepen their practice in a welcoming, safe and non-judgmental setting. Last year over 1,400 people benefited from Sharpham mindfulness retreats and courses.

Sharpham House Retreats

Building on the success of the Barn Retreat Centre we have now established a new programme of secular mindfulness-based retreats held in Sharpham House which have become a key feature of our annual programme, with overwhelmingly positive feedback, as well as consistently good levels of take-up.

"The nourishment offered on so many levels [is so strong that] it's impossible not to feel better in some way. I feel more able to cope with the stresses in my life. The scenery, the building, the staff, the food, the group and the friendly atmosphere all contributed...I feel truly nourished - thank you so much."

Retreat participant

The programme includes core retreats such as mindfulness for beginners and yoga as well as 'themed retreats' with a focus on connecting to nature and creative enquiry; including walking retreats, mindfulness through art, taking mindfulness deeper, singing and creative writing.

A total of 31 House retreats have taken place this year with 492 guests staying in the House. In order to ensure that people from the widest socio-economic backgrounds can benefit from our retreats, we have tried to keep prices as affordable as possible. Additionally, we awarded 42 bursary places in this financial year totalling £6,200 to those experiencing financial hardship and who would otherwise not have been able to attend.

New Woodland Retreats



In addition to the programme of House retreats we also successfully trialled 2 new retreats held under canvas in our woodland campsite. The retreats involved a unique synthesis of mindfulness and nature connection activities. The feedback from the first of these retreats has been very positive and we will be looking to develop the woodland campsite for similar courses and retreats in the future.

Mindfulness Courses

Our programme of mindfulness courses has continued to remain popular with good levels of take-up. Over the past year we delivered 18 separate mindfulness courses to 280 participants, (an increase of 90 people from the previous year). Our courses vary in length and style to enable as many people to benefit as possible. Courses for this year have included our popular 8-week Mindfulness for Health and Well-being courses, as well as our Introduction to Mindfulness days and monthly drop-in evenings. This year we have also extended our outreach programme to include courses taking place in Torbay as well as nearby Totnes.

Barn Retreat Centre



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 532 people stayed at the Barn, some for extended periods.

Anyone is welcome at the Barn, including those in financial difficulty: 73 people were offered a 25% reduction supported rate; a further 33 people were offered a 62% bursary funded by donations from other retreatants.



Peter Mallard - who retired in September 2016 - reflects on his six years at The Barn:

"The Barn is a place of transformation and healing. Through its structured weekly programme we offer retreatants the opportunity to fully release themselves from the clutter of daily busy-ness, in which we bounce from one experience to the next, without the time to consider or connect with any deeper meaning."

Over the last six years as manager I've had the privilege of spending time with thousands of people arriving here from many different walks of life, all seeking a quieter, simpler approach. Not so much like-minded as like-hearted, our retreatants know there is much more to life than the culturally supported habits of self-centeredness, worry, and the relentless pursuit of comfort. By submitting to the Barn's daily rhythm - moving through periods of silence and community - they can find a place of peace that encourages reconnection with the natural world. Many find beauty in small moments, perhaps experiencing Blake's 'World in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower...'

Most importantly, the Barn teaches us all a better way to live our lives, and to connect with the gift we all have: this world. As John Ruskin says - "Life is wealth." We just need to slow down; to recognise and release ourselves from that which gets in the way of realising our wealth."



Arts and Heritage

Owing in part to unsuccessful applications to both the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund, the plans for our arts and heritage programme have not developed as far as we had hoped this year. The arts and creative enquiry have however featured in our new creative themed retreats, and our open days and seasonal events have also included arts and crafts activities.

Creative Themed Retreats



We trialled new types of creative retreats: photography, singing, mindfulness through creativity for women and mindfulness through art. Out of those new ideas came two regular additions to the programme: Mindfulness through Singing and Creating Space - mindfulness through creativity.

Higher Level Stewardship

The Trust has recently entered in to a new 10-year Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England and our tenants. This means that the entire Estate is now covered by these agri-environment agreements with the aim of improving conditions for wildlife, enhancing the landscape and protecting the historic environment. As part of our scheme we will be restoring parts of the historic landscape including the Withy Pool created when the stream was dammed and the Bathing House constructed. Inappropriate modern planting of conifers will be removed and the height of the dam raised in response to higher river levels. We will also be rebuilding the South Quay which is collapsing. We have already carried out a survey of the 18th century parkland believed to have been created by Capability Brown at the same time the House was constructed around 1765. As a result we have re-planted 75 parkland trees across the Estate to help maintain the character of the parkland.

Heritage



The Heritage Group has continued to work hard developing and researching the Estate archive. Members of the group are all volunteers and are actively involved in researching many different aspects of Sharpham's history including the different families who have owned the Estate over the

centuries. Recent successes include the tracking down of the Joshua Reynolds portrait of Jane Pownoll allowing the Trust to have a full size replica produced to hang in the Music Room. Members of the group also helped organise and oversee tours of the House by members of the public during our Summer Open Day which proved very popular.

Restoration projects this year have included the reopening of a doorway between the main House and the West Wing connecting three more bedrooms to the main House - increasing the number to 20 rooms. The programme of refurbishment in the House has continued, including the never-ending repainting of windows and rooms.

Sharpham Outdoors

Lower Sharpham Barton Farm

Ambios run the farm in partnership with Robert Owen Communities (now United Response) who provide opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Lower Sharpham Barton Farm is primarily an organic beef and sheep farm, with 60 hens that also provide eggs for sale locally. The farm is under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement that means it is farmed with wildlife and biodiversity firmly in mind.

The farm provides opportunities for residential stays, for UK and EU trainees and volunteers wishing to get a career in nature conservation and for local people with learning disabilities. These activities all have a strong link with nature conservation and are delivered across the farm.

Lower Sharpham Farm over this report period had a vibrant and active time. We welcomed new members to our team including Yohannah Best on nine-month maternity cover assisting with all aspects of farm life; Anna Jakeman on a nine-month LEMUR+ conservation training placement working with Ambios and the South Devon AONB and Hannah Davis on a four-month LEMUR+ training placement having previously been one of our Thursday conservation volunteers.



Thanks to financial support from the Conscience Trust we have completed the new office building with the skills of over 40 level 1-3 students from South Devon College carpentry, painting & decorating and bricklaying courses. We

also continued to graze the Sharpham Orchards with our small flock of Shropshire sheep, with the Share in a Sheep scheme. This proved popular as a way for people to connect with their food, spend time in a beautiful setting learning about animal husbandry and work alongside the adults with learning disabilities animal care team from the farm. We currently have over 30 shareholders.



We have successfully delivered our Wildcams lottery-funded project engaging over 40 people in different ways with wildlife and technology. The bunkhouse hosted three night wildlife events including badger watching, bat detecting, BBQ and campfire and early morning bird walk with 16 of the ROC team; The ROC woodwork team made camera-ready wildlife boxes that were put up across the farm and gathered live wildlife stories that can be seen on the screen in the Linhay building. Our team are still making Kent Bat Boxes for sale at NHBS.

During the year we hosted over 40 students from four EU countries for between two and 12-week placements via Erasmus+ university exchange programmes. You can see the content of these placements on video via our website www.ambios.net. Trainees gained a fascinating insight into Bombus Terrestris - the Buff-Tailed Bumblebee - via our flagship nature research project, in collaboration with Exeter University. We have been looking into the longevity of these vital and wonderful creatures to provide data of survivorship of bees in the wild, not previously researched. Our ongoing habitat improvements to Lower Sharpham Farm for wildlife further assist with conservation efforts.



Spring to Life

Spring to Life is a programme of mental health recovery in the outdoors that encourages young people to engage in a range of outdoor activities aimed at improving confidence, self-esteem, and emotional and physical health and well-being. The programme came to an end in October 2015. In total 147 people young people (aged 16 to 25) from across South Devon used Spring to Life as part of their mental health recovery over a period of 5 years between 2011 and October 2015. The project produced some very positive outcomes and highlights include:

- 100% of participants enjoyed the programme
- 77% of participants reported an increase in self-esteem and confidence
- 95% of participants learned some or more new skills
- 90% of participants had progressed to either employment, volunteering, college and further training on completion of the 12 weeks.

"Before I came to Spring to Life I was going through a hard time but the last 10 weeks have made me a happier person and I'm able to look at life in a happier way. I am so glad I came on this course"

Spring to Life participant

Following a period of evaluation and review we aim to seek further funding to continue this flagship programme, with plans to develop the model to include a clearer link between our work in the area of mindfulness and nature connection/outdoor learning.

Outdoor Learning and Events

As well as Spring to Life, we have continued to deliver a rich and diverse public programme of outdoor learning activities and events this year. Highlights have included our annual All Souls' Day event at Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground, with a sense of community building around this special place, bird watching events with expert Mike Langman and Nature's Bounty, our seasonal family forage and feast events.

In October we piloted a new residential training course which explored the therapeutic benefits of working with young people in the outdoors. The course was attended by 9 outdoor leaders and we are looking to further develop this training next year.

Winter Tree Planting Day

This year, with the help of local volunteers and friends of Sharpham, we planted new parkland trees on the Great Run as part of our restoration plans for the Estate, funded through Natural England.

Spring Garden and Summer Open Days

Our open days were very well attended this year with approximately 300-400 visitors for the Spring Garden Open day. We also put together a more comprehensive programme for our Summer Celebration and Open day including live music, poetry, story-telling and rural arts and crafts. Between 600-700 people attended the event - our largest audience for an open day event to date.

"Thank you for an amazing day of music, poetry and story-telling. Delicious food and good beer too! A beautiful House and lovely gardens. We'll definitely be back soon!"

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 a bountiful 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 a host of apple-themed arts and crafts activities.

Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground

Sharpham Meadow has been open for burials for three years now, and is becoming increasingly appreciated by the local community. The meadow was farmed bio-dynamically for the previous 20 years, so has a flourishing and healthy ecosystem, which has generously accommodated this new but timeless human activity.



As we write this, Sharpham Meadow has undergone a curious seasonal inversion: our grave mounds are lush and wavy with what Walt Whitman called 'the beautiful uncut hair of the graves', while the rest of the field has been thoroughly mown.

We are probably one of the last fields in Devon to cut for hay. This is to allow the animal and insect members of our community every possible chance to breed, flower, raise young and seed according to their needs.

We try to treat the complicated matrix of inhabitants in our community with the same respect.

Human, living and dead, animals such as hares and voles and badgers and bats, birds like owls and skylarks, insects like moths and grasshoppers, grasses, sedges, herbs, even nettles and dandelions are all given the same reverence. Together they strengthen and deepen the environmental resilience, as well as the spiritual tone.

Even micro-organisms are included in our plan. One is of the reasons we bury much shallower than conventional graveyards is to allow the microbes present in the upper levels of the soil a chance to fully return the body back to the earth. Traditional six-foot-deep burial does the opposite, potentially creating environmental problems.

For Sharpham Meadow, an unexpected knock-on effect has been the proliferation of vortices who take advantage of the disturbed rocky soil to nest, which in turn attracts raptors like sparrowhawks, buzzards, barn owls and the once common kestrels who patrol the hill-top. Far from putting off nature, turning the field into a burial ground has done just the opposite.

There is a delicate balance that binds everything together at Sharpham Meadow - an interdependency that relies on what might seem at first glance like sparseness, but is actually ecological authenticity, and one that is flourishing. This is wild and untamed grassland, almost extinct in our over-agricultured landscape, and it is where our dead meet our living.

Rupert and Claire Callender, Site Managers

Our Tenants

Sharpham Wine & 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. This year saw a major change with the Partnership deciding to relocate the dairy herd to Dartington Estate.

The ten-acre vineyard lies from 12 metres to 25 metres above sea-level on south-facing, well drained slopes - perfect for growing a range of carefully-selected cool-climate grape varieties, from which a variety of wines were made last 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 have never failed to win an international award every time their wines have been entered.

