



1
Ashprington
Parish
Church

2
Sharpham
Meadow
Natural Burial
Ground

3
The Barn
Retreat
Centre

9
Lower
Sharpham
Barton
Farm

The Carriage Drive
- cycling/walking
route from
Totnes to Sharpham

6
Sharpham
House

7
Sharpham
Wine &
Cheese

8
Sharpham
Café

5
North
Quay

4
Bathing
House

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Financials

The Trust would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed 8681 volunteer hours to the charitable organisation during this reporting period, including:

■ Garden volunteers	730 hours
■ Archive volunteers	1,000 hours
■ Conservation volunteers	348 hours
■ Open Day volunteers	363 hours
■ Barn Retreat volunteer coordinators	9,240 hours

Donations and grants

£29,617 From The Clare Milne Trust for the installation of the disabled bathroom.

£28,700 Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

£66,531 Higher Level Stewardship grant.

£5,047 various donations received, including bursaries, to support the work of The Trust

Headline Figures		
EOY period	Mar-16	Mar-17
Total income	0.759m	0.907m
Total expenditure	0.770m	0.916m
Total funds	5.787m	6.260m
Voluntary income	0.003m	0.129m
Investment income	0.131m	0.131m
Charity activity income	0.648m	0.770m
Investment management costs	0.019m	0.020m
Cost of charitable activities	0.734m	0.993m
Governance	0.015m	0.017m
Governance as % total expenditure	1.6%	1.6%

Our Vision, Purpose and Principles

Our Vision

To create a more mindful, compassionate and environmentally-sustainable world.

Our Mission

To connect people with nature and foster mindfulness and wellbeing.

Our Principles

The Trust works to a strong set of guiding principles and these act as a moral and creative compass in the planning of activities and projects.

Our Principles

The Trust's activities are guided by an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life

Our Principles

■ an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life

Our Principles

■ a deep respect for the natural world

Our Principles

■ an acknowledgement of the value of stillness and awareness

Our Principles

■ belief in learning through experience, creative engagement and enquiry

Our Principles

4. To operate a balanced budget with a secure income base

Chairman's Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Sharpham Estate and what happens on it. This year has been a full one as you will see from the various reports, highlights, and stories herein. Partially we are egged on by the pressing challenges of our time and compassionately and environmentally-sustainable world.

During the year we were voted the best place to go on retreat in the UK by the Daily Telegraph. It is lovely, of course, to have such recognition, but even more wonderful is the generous and positive feedback we receive from people who experience "Sharpham ... 'life changing', 'amazing food', 'meaningful moments', and 'important work' all get regularly mentioned.

Our mission is to connect people to the natural world. We have this objective not only because it is worthwhile but because through connection with ourselves, each other, and the planet we are more able to create positive ripples of change around us - and to do so with greater understanding.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to Sharpham during the year, from the wonderful staff, volunteers and Trustees to the curious and generous participants, partners, and members of the public. As our Director Julian reflects on here, we lost a thoughtful and dynamic Trustee, Carrie Morgan during the year

Trustee, Carrie Morgan during the year who is missed and remembered. But I am confident her voice for inclusion and warmth will always be with us and that the Trust is stronger for it.

The Sharpham Estate today is a vibrant and meaningful place. You are invited to jump on board and get involved!

With kind regards,

William Lana

Chair of the Trust

William Lana

Chair of the Trust

William Lana

Chair of the Trust



Mindfulness Courses and Retreats

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 an involvement with mindfulness, meditation and creative enquiry stretching back over 30 years from the founding of the charity by 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 a record 1,477 people benefited from Sharpham mindfulness retreats and courses.

Sharpham House Retreats



Our programme of retreats in Sharpham House has become well established and in this reporting year we have held a total of 44 retreats attended by 594 participants. Our programme of Sharpham House retreats includes 3-night Mindfulness for Beginners retreats, 5-night Taking Mindfulness Deeper retreats and themed retreats such as yoga, walking and creative enquiry.

“One of the most beautiful, nurturing and life-affirming opportunities that I have given myself and shared with others”

Participant on our Sustaining Ourselves retreat

This year we were delighted to re-launch our Sustaining Ourselves Through Mindfulness retreats, targeted towards people experiencing stress and burn-out. Thanks to the generous support of a donor we were able to apply 8 bursary spaces on each retreat.

In addition, in this financial year we awarded 40 bursary places totalling £6,499 to those experiencing financial hardship and who otherwise would not have been able to attend.

Good reviews for Sharpham retreats

We were nominated in the Retreats & Healing section of a contest staged by national magazine Kindred Spirit.

We also featured as Number 1 in The Daily Telegraph's list of '10 Holidays that will make you a better person' and on a list of some of the world's best places for a 'digital detox' on worldwide travel blog **The Daily Telegraph** TravelSuper.

The Barn was published in a 'readers recommend' column in The Guardian, described as 'warm, comfortable and fulfilling'.

Woodland Retreats

Now in their second full year, our seasonal Woodland Retreats offer a chance to focus on mindfulness and nature connection whilst staying under canvas in our woodland campsite. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, and these retreats tend to attract a younger and more diverse crowd. This year 80 people took part in our Woodland Retreats and the site has great potential for further development.

“I arrived frazzled and stressed by modern day life and I left soothed and calmed by nature and reconnected to my body and heart”

Participant on a Woodland Retreat

Mindfulness Courses



Our programme of mindfulness courses remains popular with good take-up. Over the past year we delivered 23 separate mindfulness courses to 304 participants - an increase on 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 Wellbeing, as well as our Introduction to Mindfulness days and taster sessions. Courses are run across three locations including Sharpham, Totnes and Torbay and are delivered by trained and experienced mindfulness teachers.

The 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 participants stay at The Barn each week, supported by three residential volunteer coordinators and a non-residential part-time manager. This year 542 people stayed at The Barn, some for extended periods.

We ran 51 retreats during the year, including five retreats with residential teachers and a work retreat. All 51 retreats had a waiting list ranging in number from one to 48. In order to increase our accessibility to those unable to pay our full cost, we gave a reduction of fees to 47 people during the year, totalling £4705 in financial assistance.

The Barn provides teaching about and experience in meditation, the opportunity to live in community and to connect with the land through gardening each day. Many people have restful and transformational experiences while on retreat at The Barn.

“As life's pace increases, I feel it is more important than ever to afford ourselves times in which we can step into a much more mindful, reflective, and nurturing space to reconnect. I can't think of a better place in which to do just that than The Barn Retreat. My week here was very profound.”

Participant at The Barn

The past fiscal year at The Barn saw long term non-residential manager Peter Mallard retire, and Tasha Bassingthwaite take over in his place. The transition was a smooth one, thanks to Dino Costa stepping in, and Tasha has been enjoying the experience of being at The Barn.

There are also three residential coordinators who live at The Barn for a year and guide the participants. Jess, Milton, Natasha, Caroline, Nina, Craig and Lynette were all coordinators during this past year.



Arts and Heritage

Discovering Sharpham Project



We were delighted to be awarded £57,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the Discovering Sharpham project, which aims to boost volunteering opportunities across the Estate. The funding has been supporting volunteers in carrying out vital conservation tasks and the restoration of our parkland and gardens, as well as 5 school visits to the Estate from local schools and a number of other heritage-based events.

As part of this project we commissioned artist Peter Lanyon to design and build a large green oak bench with the help of volunteers. Volunteers worked outdoors with traditional wood-working tools under the expert tuition of Peter. There was an end-of project celebration and the group helped install the bench at a beautiful spot for all to enjoy: along the Carriage Drive between Sharpham House and Totnes.

Heritage Group



The Heritage Group has continued to work hard developing, researching and cataloguing the Estate archive. The archive volunteer group is continuing to grow, with an extra volunteer day on Thursday to accommodate the increased numbers to a record of 12.

The group is actively involved in researching many different aspects of Sharpham's history including the different families who have owned the Estate: one volunteer working in the Devon Heritage Centre found himself sitting at a table with a descendant of the Lyde family (previously omitted from our chronology). Successes include hosting House tours on our Summer Open Day, sharing our rich history with the public via talks and displays.



created at the same time as the House was built. If you stand on the dam you can now see the House reflected in the lake. Thanks to Natural England for funding these capital works together with a grant of £20,000 from the Trust's own funds.

Fundraising

After years of effort we were finally successful in being awarded a £57,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the two-year Discovering Sharpham project. This aims to raise awareness of our magnificent heritage through volunteering, events and heritage activities.

This year saw the next step in our House renovations with the reconnection of the South Wing to the main House which has added three refurbished bedrooms and two new bathrooms to our offer.

Thanks to a £29,000 grant from the Clare Milne Trust, we were able to create an accessible bedroom and bathroom on the ground floor of the House, enabling us to offer the best possible accessible facilities in a listed 18th century building.

We also benefited from some £90,000 of funding through Natural England towards the restoration of the Withy Pool, Dam and South Quay.

Our Gardens



The Trust benefits from two productive kitchen gardens: one in the walled garden behind Sharpham House and one at The Barn Retreat Centre. Both gardens benefit hugely from volunteers and all the produce goes to supply the kitchens catering for our participants. At The Barn, working in the gardens is an integral part of the weekly retreat structure and participants also prepare their own meals using the produce.

As well as the walled kitchen garden, Sharpham House has ornamental and woodland gardens and volunteers help our gardeners Jesse and Luca care for these every Tuesday throughout the year. They also help look after our orchards from which the apples are collected and pressed on Apple Day in October.

In the last year we have enlisted the help of Penny Hammond - an ex-National Trust Head Gardener - to help us review our management of the gardens and make a plan for their ongoing care. Penny has been working with our gardener Jesse and our apprentices to implement these plans. As well as the ornamental and woodland gardens we are focused on producing more vegetables and fruit from our walled kitchen garden for use in the House kitchens.

We continue to have a committed group of people who volunteer in our gardens who make a real difference and enjoy the physical and social benefits of working together outdoors in a beautiful environment.

Higher Level Stewardship

All three farms at Sharpham are part of the Higher Level Stewardship scheme with the aim of improving conditions for wildlife, enhancing the landscape and protecting the historic environment. Efforts this year have included the rebuilding of the dam that was constructed at the same time as the Bathing House which - like the main House - was designed by Robert Taylor around 1765.

Local stone-waller Gary Grover dismantled and rebuilt about 100m of the dam. At the same time large excavators cleared out the Withy Pool behind the dam which had become silted up over many years. As a result the pool is now recognisable as a small lake which is one of the features of the 18th century parkland landscape

Events & The Estate

Events, Outdoor Learning and Open Days

We have continued to deliver a diverse public programme of outdoor learning activities and events this year. Highlights have included family forage days, birdwatching events and our annual All Souls' Day event at Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground (with a growing sense of community building around this special place).



Our foraging for wild medicine and food courses continue to be well attended. Visitors can reconnect to nature by learning to identify, safely pick and prepare seasonal wild foods and herbal medicine.

In June we hosted the second day of 'Landscape, Language and the Sublime' in partnership with Schumacher College - a multidisciplinary symposium exploring the aesthetics, philosophy and poetics of landscape. This two-day symposium drew together artists and thinkers from a wide range of disciplines to explore ways in which landscape - and the ways we represent it - connects deeply to our lives and underpins our relationship to the world.

Sharpham also worked in partnership with Play Torbay to run 'The Quest for Capability Brown - haha!' last summer. Visitors were able to interact with artists and young people in the form of an adventurous promenade quest-performance based on the rich history of Sharpham Estate. The playful performances were devised and produced by children and young people from Torbay to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, the famous landscape designer thought to have designed Sharpham's parkland.

The Summer Celebration Open Day included live music, workshops, storytelling, talks, tours and crafts and the House was open for the public to enjoy.



Day volunteers and 348 hours from our new conservation volunteer group that started in September and is run by our partners at Ambios.



Sharpham on primetime

We featured on national television when BBC show Countryfile filmed at Sharpham in July.

The show, which pulls in around 8.6million viewers, focused on meadows and featured pieces about Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground, about the wild flowers sown around Sharpham and foraging with our resident wild-food finder Brigit-Anna McNeill.



Between 700-800 people attended the event on a glorious summer day - our largest audience for an open day event to date.

Our Apple Day 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 Apple Olympics, storytelling, a treasure hunt and themed arts and crafts activities.

In February we ran our annual Tree Care Day for local volunteers and friends of Sharpham. This year the focus was on pruning the trees in the orchard and clearing weeds and brambles from the base of each fruit tree with help from our partners Ambios. New faces turned up to learn tree-care knowledge from our gardeners.



Volunteers

We continue to run weekly volunteer days that offer volunteers the chance to meet new people, learn a new skill, connect with nature and get active in beautiful and inspiring surroundings. Overall Sharpham volunteers contributed 8681 hours to the Trust this year. 730 of those hours came from our Tuesday garden volunteer group who work alongside gardener Jesse in our 18th century walled garden, formal or woodland gardens. Over 1,000 hours came from our archive volunteer group led by Lynette Gribble, 363 hours from Open



Sharpham Meadow

Sharpham Meadow has been open for burials for four years now, and is appreciated by the local community - especially at our annual All Souls' Day ceremony around the Ancestors' Fire.

The meadow was farmed bio-dynamically for the previous 20 years, so has a well-established flourishing and healthy ecosystem, which has generously accommodated this timeless human activity.



As I write this looking from Sharpham Meadow, the hilltops of the South Hams are covered with tractors, corkscrewing the stubbled fields back into rich topsoil.

Here in our corner of Devon the earth is usually a deep, rich burnt Auburn, staining the sheep a comic punk orange, yet on the hill that Sharpham Meadow burial ground lies, it is unusually stony and uncoloured. Possibly because it has remained untilled for generations; perhaps just a geological oddity.

Whatever the reason, it fits particularly well with the purpose it has been turned to. It looks like the earth of graves.

There is a misconception, largely created at the beginning of the Natural Death movement, that planting a tree over a grave is a generous act of ecological fertilisation, a nutritious boost that both recycles the body and feeds the tree. It is a fancy.

In fact, most trees like to fight for their nutrition, roots seeking out traces of minerals like blind worms, reaching out for the elements they need, never gorging, but acknowledging their frugality, and in doing so, sharpening their durability for the lean times.

So when we leave graves at Sharpham Meadow without a tree or a shrub planted over them, we are not only saving the view for future generations, we are giving the grassland what it needs, while allowing the bodies to quickly return to bone, to rest with the stones they so closely resemble that lie just under the turf. It is a hillside, slowly becoming what the Americans from the Deep South call a Bone Orchard.

Visitors often ask about the granite post that stands at the top of the burial field. It marks the spot where the ashes of Richard Smith lie. Richard was the farmer who farmed the hill for many years. His ashes were interred many, many years before the idea of the burial ground was even mooted. I often wonder at his amazement at what has sprung around him. His first companion was Ant Peters, the hermit of Sharpham whom Richard generously allowed to live in a caravan in his yard. A fitting pair of outsiders to begin the hill watch.

Ashes are really bones, a euphemism that does us all a disservice, for there is integrity in their impermanence. Stones and bones, ash and fire, granite and grass. All is becoming the hillside, as through the grassy mounds dart the voles and the hares, and down from the eaves of the shelter swoops the resident barn owl.

We rest, sinking into the ground, forgotten in a few generations, but for the stones that settle beside our bones.

By The Green Funeral Company's
Rupert Callender

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.

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 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 also never failed to win an international award every time their wines have been entered.

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 Farm

Lower Sharpham Barton Farm is the smallest Sharpham tenancy and is run as an organic beef and sheep farm. Here Ambios and partners United Response (formerly Robert Owen Communities) provide training, volunteering and work experiences for different audiences: Ambios offer residential and non-residential opportunities for people interested in nature conservation while United Response offer wellbeing services for adults with learning disabilities. Together we endeavour to manage the farm for wildlife, and people, under the banner Lower Sharpham Farm: Living, Learning and Working for Wildlife.

This reporting period saw a huge improvement to our working facilities with new hen house and polytunnel allowing us to improve our food production and provide activity areas year round. The hen house was again built in partnership with level 1 carpentry students from South Devon College, and is now home to our organic flock of 160 hens. The poly tunnel has provided much welcome dry winter work space allowing a winter of stone sifting and soil building in preparation for spring 2017 growing.

Improvements to our growing area by one of our long term volunteers will also increase our productivity, and we have ambition to grow or rear 50% of the food eaten at the farm.

We also delivered the first Lower Sharpham Bioblitz, a 24-hour wildlife survey aiming to record as many species as possible found on the farm. A hugely successful event saw over 60 people, and more than 450 species found.

We welcomed Andrew Ansty, taking over as United Response team leader from Andy Robinson, as well as 2 new Ambios LEMUR trainees Ellie Parker and Bryony James, both on 4 month traineeship placements. We also saw the arrival of Sam Skuse, Jack and Kate's second son, born at the farm in early April.

Finally we were pleased to reflect on our work, and crafted a new vision of the farm with the help of the many stakeholders. The main outcome of this is the priority of biodiversity in our management practice as well as the regularity, consistency and coordination of the different work programmes happening. 2017-18 will see higher occupancy and more regular residential placements, as well as a more comprehensive management plan that achieves more of our aims.