

Annual Report 2017-2018



www.sharphamtrust.org



Financials

Donations and grants

£15,000 from the Pilgrim Trust to renovate the glass Lantern Skylight in the main House

£30,495 from the Higher Level Stewardship grant

£34,729 from the Heritage Lottery Fund

£25,390 donations received, including bursary donations.

Headline Figures		
EOY period	March 2017	March 2018
Total income	1.031m	1.094m
Total expenditure	1.046m	0.995m
Total funds	6.26m	6.353m
Voluntary income	0.129m	0.106m
Investment income	0.131m	0.108m
Charity activity income	0.770m	0.880m
Investment management costs	0.020m	0.023m
Cost of charitable activities	1.009m	0.950m
Governance	0.017m	0.018m
Governance as % total expenditure	1.6%	1.8%

Trust Salaries

The Trust believes in equal pay and a living wage. It pays all staff more than the current governmental national minimum wage and more than the Living Wage as defined by The Living Wage Foundation.

Pay ratio

The ratio between the highest paid member of staff and the median or average pay for all staff at the Trust is 1.95.

The ratio between the highest paid and lowest paid is 2.75.



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Charity No. 285767 Company No. 1659601

Chairman's Introduction



Welcome to the Sharpham Trust's Annual report – a taste of some of the actions and activities that have taken place over the year.

Internationally the effects of big data and biotech, globalisation and nationalism, and climate change and resource depletion continue to test the fabric of human wisdom and the appropriateness of our institutions. Do we have the capacity and willpower to evolve society as quickly as corporations develop new products? Is the ego stronger than ethics? Do we know ourselves?

At Sharpham our mission is to connect people to the natural world. We have this objective not only because it is worthwhile in itself but because through connection with ourselves, each other, and the planet we are more able to think and act clearly. The life tools developed and practised in our mindfulness courses give people a stable base to think and act from. As the historian Y.N. Harari said in a recent interview when talking about meditation: "it is a way to understand reality ... without any stories or fictions or mythologies. Just to observe what is really happening."

We do many things here at Sharpham, and you'll see from this report that it has been another full year. We're very pleased that so much has been achieved and for the first time in many years, financially, we made a small surplus. This could not have been accomplished without the huge effort from the staff and volunteers. All of the Trustees are grateful, and appreciate the work Julian and his team do, often in the background with little fanfare. The result is a special and unique experience which many people comment on in their feedback forms and through emails, conversations, poems and drawings. So, thank you to all who made these experiences possible, and thank you to all who have participated.

I hope you enjoy the report, share the positive things you do in your life with others, and nourish and develop the tools we need to build a positive future.

With kind regards

William Lana
Chair of the Trust

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 well-being.

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
- 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 aspires to be a living demonstration of these principles in all its activities.

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

Director's Report



Once again the past year has been a busy one across the Estate with some 3983 people attending retreats, courses and public events. The feedback from these activities continues to be amazingly positive and we try to remind ourselves

that we shouldn't take this for granted, as each individual who has a transformative experience at Sharpham is something to be celebrated.

At the same time, we encourage our staff and volunteers to practice what we teach by caring for their own mental health and enjoying the benefits of getting out in the natural world. Many have attended one of our 8-week mindfulness courses or retreats and staff are encouraged to come together and start the day with a short meditation.

A number of exciting projects were progressed in the last year including the finishing of our restoration of the Withy Pool, dam and South Quay, all aspects of the 18th century parkland landscape designed (we believe) by Capability Brown. We were also able, with some trepidation, to remove the skylight lantern, which sits on the dome above the main house staircase for much needed restoration. The sight of a large crane lifting this off and then putting it back was quite something.

Our programme goes from strength to strength as we attempt to meet the challenge of helping as many people as possible whilst preserving Sharpham as a special and peaceful environment.

Our seasonal open days saw as many as 800 people visiting in one day whilst at the other end of the scale up to eleven people every week benefit from staying at The Barn Retreat Centre.

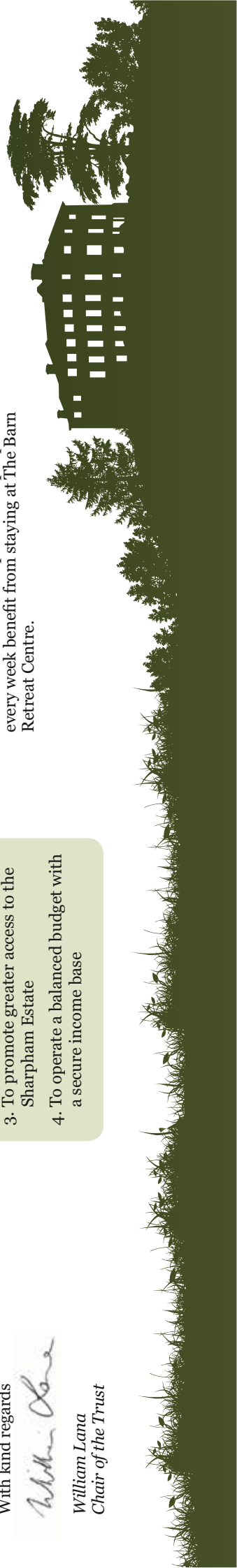
Most of our courses and retreats have long waiting lists so Trustees are looking forward, considering how we can find ways to enable more people to benefit from experiences on the Sharpham Estate.

It is an unfortunate reality of our current times that more and more people feel in need of the insights and experiences that we offer at Sharpham that help them with the stresses and challenges of their busy lives. Thank you to all the staff, Trustees, volunteers and donors who have helped us in our mission this year.

Julian Carnell, Trust Director



Our Trustees (left to right): William Lana, Tony Kuhl, Charlotte Rathbone, Daniel Stokes, Elizabeth Seward, Martin Wright





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

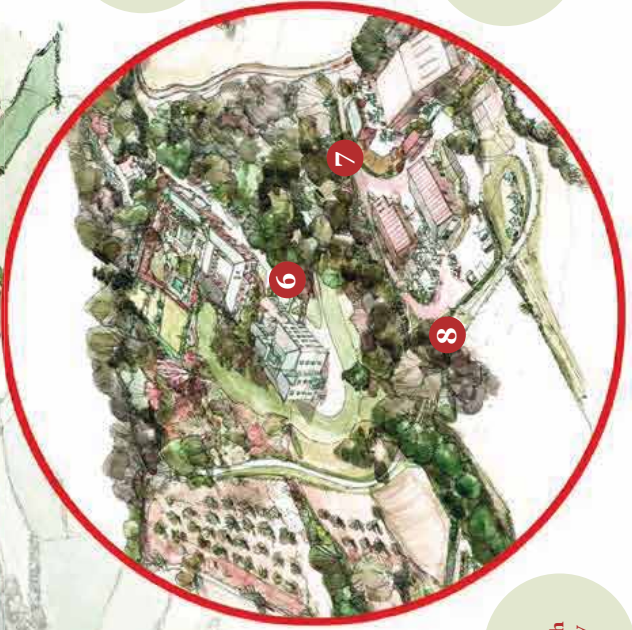
4
Bathing
House

5
North
Quay

6
Sharpham
House

7
Sharpham
Wine &
Cheese

8
Sharpham
Café



Mindfulness Retreats & Courses

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 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 re-connect with or deepen their practice in a welcoming, safe and non-judgmental setting. Last year a record 1455 benefited from Sharpham mindfulness retreats and courses.

Sharpham House Retreats



Over the last twelve months we held 40 of our own retreats in the main House with 677 participants exploring mindfulness practice whilst staying in a historic 18th century mansion with wonderful vegetarian food in beautiful surroundings. Our programme is designed to offer a range of doorways that are accessible for people whether they are completely new to mindfulness or meditation or have been practising for years. Our core programme in the House includes 3-night Mindfulness for Beginners retreats, 5-night Taking Mindfulness Deeper retreats and Sustaining Ourselves Through Mindfulness - for people experiencing burn-out. Almost all our retreats were at capacity. Approaching mindfulness through singing and walking, through yoga and through the preparation and eating of vegetarian food proved to be popular retreats as well during this year.

In addition during the last year we awarded 37 bursary places for Sharpham House Retreats totalling £6447 for those experiencing financial hardship and who otherwise would not have been able to attend a retreat.

Woodland Retreats



Our woodland retreat programme continues to go from strength to strength and we are particularly pleased that it is attracting a new audience to Sharpham who may be new to mindfulness and want to take the opportunity to connect with the natural world around them. This year 144 people came on Woodland Retreat with us, staying in our furnished bell-tents with views across the River Dart. We continued our programme of improvements with the construction of a new toilet and shower block for the woodland campsite. This new building was built by carpentry and construction students from South Devon College. They worked to real goals and deadlines to build the timber-framed block, enabling our retreatants to enjoy the luxury of hot showers and flushing loos. The building continued to demonstrate the Trust's commitment to sustainable practices using larch and cedar wood, grown and milled on the Sharpham Estate

Mindfulness Courses



The 8 week mindfulness course consists of 8 two hour sessions facilitated by our trained mindfulness teachers and offers a proven introduction to the benefits of mindfulness in everyday life. Over the past year we delivered 20 separate mindfulness courses to 207 participants. We also offer one day introduction courses and an outreach programme for organisations, companies or schools.

Partners who hire Sharpham House

As well as running our own popular retreat programme we also work with a network of partners who share our ethos and principles and who hire Sharpham House each year to host their own retreat programme. Some of the leading mindfulness organisations in the UK bring people to stay at Sharpham House, telling us that our incredible setting is perfect for their own retreats and study. Our external partners including The Centre for Mindfulness Practice at Bangor University, Exeter University, Youth Mindfulness, Mindfulness Training Institute and The Bodhi College. The Bodhi College partnership means that we maintain a connection with Stephen Batchelor, John Peacock and Christina Feldman who have a long time association with Sharpham.

The Barn Retreat Centre



Barn - by Gary Fielder - Aug 2017

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 re-connect with themselves and nature, in a tranquil, supportive environment. Up to 11 participants stay at The Barn Retreat Centre each week, supported by three residential volunteer coordinators and a non-residential manager. This year 496 people stayed at The Barn, some for extended periods. We ran 51 retreats this year, including 8 teacher-led retreats, a work retreat, a men's retreat, and a women's retreat. All retreats had a waiting list. To increase our accessibility we offer bursaries. We gave a reduction in fees to 30 people during the year, totalling £4080.

Some teachers who have come to the Barn represent a variety of Buddhist lineages. Teachers visiting us this year included Suvaco Hansen, Kyira Korrigan, Ajahn Jutindharo, Gemma Polo, Laura Bridgman, and Vajradevi. During this period we had some major upgrades on our plumbing system in order to increase the size of holding tank for our spring water. The previous year we struggled with running out of water, and these renovations fixed that issue. Another change this year was to enable departing residential coordinators to stay on site for an extra four months to support the retreats behind the scenes, including being back up cover for anyone who is ill or away. This has been a wonderful support to the team working at The Barn.

I found the space to reconnect with parts of myself I thought were lost. All thanks to the amazing coordinators, other retreatants, beautiful surroundings. If we all did this once a year, the world would be all the brighter for it...

Participant at The Barn

On being a coordinator

Lynette Robinson joined The Trust as a volunteer coordinator during this year. Here she reflects on her time with us

"Barn life has so richly invited me to partake in a wealth of inner (and outer) work of each moment..."

I feel gratitude for the insights, challenges and growth that living in community has offered me. It truly was an honour and delight to give service at The Barn and to have shared such a beautiful space with so many fellow travellers. Thank you all. It felt like as each retreat began, we set sail together across uncharted seas into the unknown. Casting off as strangers I loved 'meeting so many of you' through our daily heart sharings together, and in stillness. So beautiful!"

Heritage, Gardens & Fundraising

Discovering Sharpham Project



In early 2017 we were awarded £57,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the Discovering Sharpham project. 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.



We developed a new Heritage Trail along the original Carriage Drive between Sharpham House and Totnes, with improved signage and information to help visitor experience. The final section of the original Carriage Drive has also been improved with new fencing to isolate cattle from the path, and a re-surfaced path.



We installed a new Green Oak Bench on the Carriage Drive to create a wonderful sit-spot with views down the River Dart Valley. This was the culmination of a Discovering Sharpham volunteering project working with wood-artist Peter Lanyon.

As part of this project we commissioned wood worker Martin Beat to design and build a circular oak bench in Sharpham Marshes with the help of our Conservation Volunteers. Over four months our volunteers helped to restore and clear the path into the marshes that leads from the Carriage Drive between Sharpham House and Totnes, which is now open for all to enjoy.

Our gardens

The gardens that surround Sharpham House and The Barn don't just look beautiful - they produce food beautifully too for the people who stay with us.

The 18th century Walled Garden behind Sharpham House is a big focus for the garden team, producing fresh, organic food all-year-round for the kitchens.

Meanwhile, in the hillside organic garden at The Barn retreatants work daily on mindful food-growing, going on to prepare shared meals using vegetables tended by previous participants.

We cleared the herbaceous planting in the sunny border last Autumn to reduce the perennial weed problems, and then we replenished the soil with compost and sand to improve its fertility and structure. It was replanted in the Spring.

The base of one of the old glasshouses was cleared to use for a cold frame to make additional growing space in the Walled Garden. There was more planting, including in the Woodland Garden - with thanks to Richard Soans who donated many interesting hydrangeas and other shrubs.

The banana tree flowered! Tiny fruits were spotted, thanks to some hot days

Heritage Group

The publication of the book Sharpham: A History was a highlight of the year. Written by the Director, Julian Carnell, the archive was able to supply information and advice. The book is being sold in Sharpham House to raise funds for the charity.

Another landmark was the Discovering Sharpham Heritage Day 2017 when Peter Lord, Welsh art historian, was able to reveal much about the elusive artist John Lewis whose iconic landscapes of Sharpham in the 1760s have informed much of our knowledge of the transformed Sharpham House and romantic landscape.

Research in several areas, particularly on owners and heiresses has progressed well. The archive has welcomed 16 volunteers with different interests and expertise to put to good use over this reporting period. They have worked on sorting, filing and cataloguing 21 distinct series. Good progress is being made on the historical documents held in the Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter and at Sharpham House with documents on the history of the Estate, owners, arts, estate management, Ashington village, images and recordings.

Fundraising

A major renovation of Sharpham House happened this year, when the House's lantern skylight was repaired.

This is the glass 'lantern' that covers the dome inside the famous stairwell at the centre of the House. It had been leaking, threatening the fabric of the House, and required careful removal before it could be restored off-site and returned.

A crane was needed to lift the skylight off and the dome was covered with a Perspex lid for a few weeks until the restored glass and metal skylight could be put back.

This vital repair was supported by £15,000 funding from The Pilgrim Trust and £500 from The Elmgrant Trust, with the rest of the cost being covered by The Sharpham Trust.



this year, but they never matured - nor were they likely too. Gardener Jesse said he'd never seen bananas on the plant in his time at Sharpham.

During Winter 2017, the fruit cage in the Walled Garden was re-built, only for it to collapse beneath the weight of snow in 2018's Spring blizzards.

We have just one Head Gardener and an apprentice to look after the gardens and grounds here, assisted by our garden mentor Penny Hammond.

During this financial year, our Head Gardener Jesse Hammond (no relation!) went to pastures new after seven years' Sharpham service. Thank you for your time with us Jesse.

Apprentice Luca Middleton gave us another nine months of service to help when we were recruiting for a new Head Gardener.

The gardens and our orchards benefit hugely from input by our Sharpham volunteers, who give their time weekly to support our garden staff, get fit in the outdoors, be sociable and share in our wonderful setting.

Events & The Estate

Events, Outdoor Learning and Open Days

Our programme of events this year was boosted by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund through our Discovering Sharpham project. Highlights included family forage days, a bat, moth and stargazing event and our annual All Souls' Day event at Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground. 2528 people attended our events in this year.

The Summer Celebration Open Day brought around 600 people to Sharpham's grounds for mindfulness, music, workshops, storytelling, talks, tours and crafts and the House was open for the public to explore.

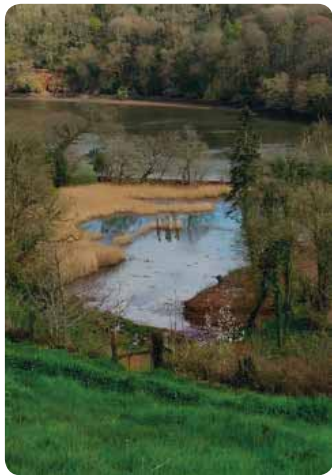


Our Apple Day was our busiest yet, with more than 800 people participating and more than 700 litres of delicious juice pressed. Other activities on the day included apple stories & harvest crafts, The Apple Olympics and workshops composing apple songs and writings.

In February we ran our annual Tree Care Day where volunteers gave their time and effort to help us plant more organic trees in our orchard overlooking the River Dart. This followed our restoration of the Wither Pool and removal of some conifers to open up the views of the 18th century landscape. New faces turned up to learn tree-care knowledge from our gardeners and to plant saplings including plums, cherries, apples and a quince.



The South Quay & Wither Pool



Significant conservation work on The South Quay was completed in this year. The works have been funded through the Trust's 10-year Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment agreement with Natural England. The scheme enabled the repair of the Wither Pool dam and South Quay by a local drystone stone walling expert Gary Grover, the planting of trees in Sharpham's parkland and orchards, and restoration of hedgerows.

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 11,894 hours to the Trust this year. 1593 of those hours came from our Tuesday garden volunteer group who worked alongside our gardener Jesse in our 18th century walled garden, formal or woodland gardens. Nearly 2000 hours came from our archive volunteer group led by Lynette Gribble, 588 hours from Open Day volunteers and 1473 hours from our new conservation volunteer group that runs every Thursday with leader Martin Beat. The conservation volunteers have worked on clearing and fencing a new section in the orchard, mending steps in the woodland garden, improving access to the Wither Pool and making new chestnut pale fencing.



Snowy Sharpham

The snowfall at the beginning of 2018 was a challenge for the Trust, with retreatants snowed in at the House and Barn during this time. Many staff and visitors couldn't get in or out – but luckily everyone pulled together during this cold snap. Our fruit cage was destroyed with the weight of the drifts in the Sharpham House Walled Garden, but otherwise there was little damage. The Estate looked like a Christmas card though...



Sharpham Meadow



Sharpham Meadow has been open for burials and ashes interments for five years now, and is hugely appreciated by the local community whose loved ones are buried at this special place. 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. Each November we hold our annual All Souls' Day ceremony around the Ancestors' Fire which allows relatives and friends to gather and remember those who have passed. In June 2017, we cleared an area near the Willow Arch entrance in order to remove the topsoil and create an area filled with wildflowers – adding to the rich eco-system at the meadow.

Weddings at Sharpham



On a few limited occasions each year, the Trust welcomes couples to use Sharpham House and its wonderful gardens exclusively for their weddings, with all proceeds going to help support the work of the charity and upkeep of the estate. We held 6 weddings in 2017-18

Sharpham in 2017-18

The Trust would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed 11,894 volunteer hours to the charitable organisation during this reporting period, including:

Garden volunteers	1593 hours
Archive volunteers	2000 hours
Conservation volunteers	1473 hours
Open Day volunteers	588 hours
Barn Retreat volunteer coordinators	6456 hours

OUR AUDIENCE

125 retreats attended by
1878 participants



DONATIONS

£25,390
in donations given



BURSARIES

82 bursaries given
£12,245



2528
people attended our events



99,136
website visitors



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 have 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 well-being 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 more regular flow of UK and EU trainees and volunteers staying on Erasmus+ placements at the farm. The training model provides 12-week placements, run over 4 cohorts throughout the year, and for this reporting period each of the cohorts had a high percentage of students attending (around 80% occupancy).

Trainees engage with the ongoing farm programme of organic beef and sheep farming as well as organic egg production. They each took on a research project which included badger TB vaccination, bumble bee monitoring, cattle grazing preference and land management planning. The programme introduces students to the UK nature conservation sector, as many of those coming on placement are looking for a career in the sector and use the traineeship as a launch to their desired career.

For some it was their first time in the UK, and alongside learning about the Sharpham habitats and species and developing practical conservation and applied language skills, they also gained insight into the mindfulness work of the Trust, practising meditation alongside retreat coordinators at The Barn Retreat Centre nearby.

Our new herd of striking organic Belted Galloway cows help in our biodiversity management and they can be seen grazing the species-rich slopes at Lower Sharpham – fulfilling their careers in conservation. We will be breeding from them over the coming months, so keep an eye out for beautiful Belted Galloway calves soon.

The work of United Response continues, whereby the farm supports around 40 adults with learning difficulties with practical rural work experience on a weekly basis. Here they work on growing vegetables in the garden, collecting eggs and checking livestock welfare, as well as enhancing the biodiversity of the farm with a dedicated conservation and woodland group.

Finally we launched our market stall at Totnes market and you will see some of the team promoting our work and selling our produce on Fridays in town. This is a great platform for our international students to practice their English as well as allowing the adults with learning difficulties opportunities to engage with the local community.