



**Petertide 2015**

# NEWS



**the Society of Mary and Martha at Sheldon**  
[www.sheldon.uk.com](http://www.sheldon.uk.com)

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## RIP

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Remembered with love and gratitude for their friendship over many years and generosity towards the Sheldon ministry - Pat Crawshaw, Mary Thoms and David Silk.

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## Solar panels

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Our solar panels have passed the half way mark in paying for their installation after just 3 years. Must be lots of sunshine at Sheldon!

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## Sitting comfortably

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We have replaced sofas and armchairs in 2 of the Linhay Lodges as part of the routine upgrading of furniture to make sure guest accommodation stays fresh and comfortable (£3,700).

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## A mule

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With the small tractor obsolete because parts are no longer available we have traded it in for a "mule" - as the name suggests it is useful for carrying stuff about, but hopefully less obstinate ...

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## Champion Animal

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One of our Manx Loaghtan ewes took the top prize among the primitive breeds at the Devon County Show this year.

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## Summer fruit

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The rhubarb we transplanted last year, all the new fruit bushes we planted, and the apple orchards are all lining up for a great harvest this year. Plenty for table and freezer.

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## Jacuzzi

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After three months languishing with a broken pump the jacuzzi is now bubbling back in action (£1,200) in the therapy suite. Great for some extra relaxation (no Carl, it's not 'boil in the bag'!)

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# Prayer patch

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We would especially value your prayers for the following:

- » Sarah, Carl, Sue, Hillary, Jan, Rhian, Andrew - as we make all the changes relating to new homes, new work and creating Community together
- » Guests at Sheldon, especially those in difficulty or distress
- » Retreat and workshop leaders
- » Local people enjoying open air theatre concerts and volunteers helping to ensure everyone stays safe
- » Working group members of the Doing Health Ministry Together project, and moderators on the Clergy Forum
- » 2016 programme - design, publicity, getting the word out
- » Staff members and Alongsiders heading on to pastures new

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*A member of the Community is in the Chapel of Christ the Servant at around midday Monday to Friday for a period of intercession for all those who have asked for our prayers. Please do let us know if you would like to be included at any time.*

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registered charity number 327394

The charity provides support resources for people in Christian ministry at times of stress, crisis, burnout or breakdown.

This specialist work is set within a broadly based retreat and education setting at Sheldon in the Teign Valley.

Sheldon is run by the Sheldon Community.

Community members:

Sarah Horsman (Warden), Carl Lee (Lay Chaplain), Sue Lee,  
Hillary Hanson (Housekeeper), Jan Kaye (Deputy Housekeeper)



## Stability and change

We had our first week with a “photographer in residence” recently. The other members of the Community commissioned him to get a photograph of the new Warden that wouldn’t embarrass them. I hope this one fits the bill.

I’ve taken the liberty of putting my mugshot on the first page because 8 months into the new role plenty of people haven’t yet noticed I’m now the Warden of Sheldon. Actually, we’re secretly rather pleased about that because the brief was for continuity and a smooth transition.

When people do know, the next thing is they ask Carl how he is

enjoying retirement. The answer is that he has not retired - far from it! Carl has moved roles and is now Lay Chaplain, continuing with 1:1 work and with particular responsibility for chapels and liturgy, plus pastoral care of Community, staff and volunteers, managing the estate team and, of course, the theatre. I’ve also taken the precaution of moving my desk into his office to make sure he keeps busy!

As you’ll see from this edition of the newsletter there is indeed a solid thread of continuity, but also plenty of change going on behind the scenes. As our ministry develops we are always trying to refine and improve what we do and how we do it. Sometimes that involves big construction projects. Sometimes it involves attention to our roles and rhythms. The ways we share tasks and responsibilities among us, welcome and train new members, how we pattern our days, our weeks, our years in sustainable ways. How

to run a life-giving ministry in such a way that we don’t burn ourselves out in the process.

Many people in ministry face these very same challenges, and the subject is surfacing in our new “Doing Healthy Ministry Together” project. We’re delighted that Andrew and Rhian will be joining us in the summer and we hope to add more to our number within the next year. The generosity of Friends who remembered us in their wills, plus some grant funding, are giving us some very welcome extra support as we make this many-stranded journey together.

Thank you for continuing to travel with us, and for your generosity with prayerful and financial support as Friends.



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# Community Chronicle

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One of the things on which returning guests comment favourably is that the faces at Sheldon don't change much over the years (they are being kind and ignoring our greying hair and advancing wrinkles!). I think what they mean is that the continuity is comforting in a world where lots of things change frequently and at a pace.

It hasn't really felt like that from our side of the fence in recent months! Sarah is the only one not to have moved living quarters (so she joined in by moving office). The rest of us have now experienced a taste of what many clergy do at regular intervals, and have moved "house". Some of us not very far - along a corridor or across a landing or down the garden path - but still an upheaval and a learning curve. Which light switch does what, how does the oven work, the noises off from heating and water systems. Everything takes longer while a new routine is built up and honed.

I have moved into the old part of the Farmhouse, underneath the new thatch. I am enjoying having a small kitchen to myself (wonderful at lambing time not to have to worry

about hygiene quite so much as I did in a communal and work kitchen!)

The Farmhouse Parlour, which has an Aga and a very old wooden screen, has become our Community room, with comfortable chairs in which we can meet, relax, and entertain guests and volunteers. It's good to have somewhere to hold our community meetings where we are not distracted by the sound of telephone and doorbell (does that sound familiar?!). We can also host our volunteers and guests in a space which is "ours" and not one person's personal domain.

The re-ordering upstairs has given us three bedrooms and two bathrooms which we have been using for hospitality volunteers. That seems to be working well, as volunteers have said they feel they "belong" with the Community, and in addition it frees up more rooms for guests in the Long Barn or Pound House.

Jan was honoured with an invitation to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. It provided an opportunity for a new outfit and a trip to London with her sister in law Anne.



Carl and Sue's grandson Jackson (belonging to Simon and Hayley) celebrated his first birthday in March. His Grandmother will celebrate a special zero birthday at the end of August.

For a short time in December we had two Margarets on the team. Margaret S who lived in the Ark for 2 years has returned to Oxfordshire and we miss her capable presence in the kitchen and keeping the supplies of preserves in order and stocked up in the shop. Margaret continues in her role as Trustee and hospitality volunteer, so remains in touch. Margaret M has been living with us for five months while Mary and Martha has provided her with a home base at a transitional time in her life. She has helped with laundry, serving in the bar and with some of the hospitality tasks. We wish her well in the next stage of her journey.



*Heliary*

## Doing Healthy Ministry Together - new project

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This is the working title of a brand new project that we're just starting to put together. Pat Crawshaw, a much loved Friend of Mary and Martha, has left us a legacy and her generosity coincided with some ideas that had been fermenting quietly in our minds for a little while.

We hope to be (create? provide?) a catalyst to enable people to find more healthy ways of being in and doing ministry. Significantly this is not something to be "done to" or "done for" clergy, but a collaborative resource to support and encourage care of self and care of colleagues.

We hope to be able to leverage Mary and Martha's independence and reputation to create a grass roots movement. The "output" will include printed materials, perhaps training materials, an online wiki-style site that has capacity for ongoing development. Most of all we hope it will be helpful for developing a preventive care culture and ensuring that people can find help when they need it.

The tone of the project is similar to Affirmation & Accountability - a workbook to help prevent clergy stress, sickness and early retirement" which we published in 2002. Our stance is as "critical friend" of the institution of the church endeavouring to harness the experience and expertise developed in this context to benefit the whole church. Interestingly, many of the applications to take part in this project have referred back to A&A and ways it was used that we knew nothing about.

*"As someone who was pleased and stimulated to be part of the A & A working group I am delighted to hear of this further initiative. My sense, from sitting with several clergy in spiritual direction, is that*



*ministry is becoming increasingly demanding and complex as the shape and size of ordained ministry rapidly changes. All too often the church just expects everyone to 'rise to the challenge' without giving much support. I therefore wish this new Sheldon project every success."*

*"This sounds excellent. Affirmation & Accountability was a really constructive project, not only for casting light on relevant areas and making a case for change, but also as a personal and parish-level checklist rooted in reality and experience. I remember introducing it to colleagues and recommending it."*

*"I think this is a very good idea indeed. What is available at Sheldon is superb, but Sheldon itself can seem a very long way away indeed geographically especially if clergy are at a low ebb ... so a resource/toolkit/development of A&A is a very good thing indeed. I hope it will be*

*easily available and accessible to everyone, either themselves or via helpful friends."*

Our first step is to gather a core working group of about 15 people which includes some invited members and some who applied in response to our initial email circulation. We will be meeting in London on 29th June and again at Sheldon in November. Probably 2 or 3 more meetings during 2016 plus lots of collaboration between times and drawing in additional expertise from a range of sources as needed. Our target is to have material ready to launch/publish in 2017.

We can't tell you much more at this stage because we don't know yet! It is one of those ideas that we floated tentatively and find it has struck a chord (or maybe a large loud gong would be a better metaphor!). Now we have to get to work and try and do it justice.

As we get the practical tools in place there will be plenty of opportunity for contributions from people beyond the core working group. If you're interested, do keep an eye on the website. There will probably be a dedicated project blog on the website soon, so check that out in the first instance.

Of course we would really appreciate your prayers for this project and all who are taking part. We anticipate a project cost in the region of £50,000. Half of this is set aside already, but contributions very welcome.

# Food - glorious food!

Perhaps one of the things you look forward to when you are away from home is food! Good food, different from every day food, delicious tasty treats food. Or perhaps meals away from home are a bit of a heart-sink, because you have specific medical food needs?

Fortunately, the days when retreat house food was uninspired, unappealing and unappetising are (mostly!) long gone. At Sheldon, an important part of the holistic way we care for our guests is by feeding them well. Nourishing the body can help with food for the soul.

These days there are considerable challenges involved in providing good meals to guests, not least legislation. Good food hygiene is essential - we are inspected regularly and proud to display our 5 stars. We have a good reputation with the food hygiene officers of our local environmental health department, who have always been helpful and supportive with advice and suggestions to help us keep up to date with good practice.

All lead kitchen team members have food hygiene certification; we monitor and record fridge and freezer temperatures; we test that food is fully cooked or heated up and properly stored and handled



at every step to avoid cross-contamination.

Recent EU regulations concern the labelling of the 14 most common allergenic food ingredients. This involved a training course for 2 of us; annotation of over 500 of our special Sheldon recipes; hundreds of labels printed ready for the individual meals we provide for larger stocks; and information notices laminated and distributed in all the kitchens. Special dietary requirements can take some interpreting and understanding (pescatarian - coeliac - allergic - intolerant ). And you might be surprised where some allergy items lurk - sulphur dioxide in a chemistry lab, yes? No, it's on dried fruit, in wine, vinegar, tinned goods ....

Our wonderful hospitality volunteers bring their willingness, caring and enthusiasm to the task, and we provide the training they need along the way. Many of our key volunteers have wide experience with other organisations, whether that is school catering, WRVS, WI or those miracle workers clergy spouses, and we love to learn from them and pick their brains too.

We create menus for each of the events we run based on seasonal availability, incorporating special diets, the nature of the event, the team available, etc.

Given free rein, we enjoy providing meals which include fresh (if possible home grown) local vegetables; meat sourced from high welfare systems like our own home produced lamb, or beef and pork from Devon farms, wild seasonal food like pheasant from the local shoot. We love making desserts, it is the largest section in our recipe folder. (Wish we had £5 for every guest who tucks in appreciatively saying "we never have pudding at



home"). And although many of our recipes are low fat and lots have fruit as a major ingredient, there are also plenty of recipes for what Nigella Lawson might refer to as "belly busters"!

We ask all guests to advise us of food allergies and intolerances at least two weeks before they arrive. This gives us time to plan a menu, order ingredients and if appropriate make and freeze specially adapted recipes (soup without onions ...). Living 10 miles from a supermarket or town we can't "just pop out" for goats' milk or rice pasta. We have a number of recipes which meet a lot of common criteria (they are gluten and dairy free for instance). And we are an inventive and creative bunch of cooks!

Budget is obviously a big consideration. Some recipes are more economical than others and as with most things, balance is the key - two low budget dishes allow for splashing out on some more expensive ingredients for the third. Breakfasts at Sheldon include cereals, grapefruit, yoghurt, fruit juices, hot drinks and toast.



Lunch may be home made soup, bread freshly baked in the bread machine and a range of cheese, pate or canned fish. The main meal is usually two courses, main and dessert. Almost all our food is prepared from "real" ingredients to "proper" recipes. Although we buy in bulk you won't find much in the way of caterers' short cuts here.

We are regularly cooking for groups of 10 - 20 people on our own programme. Or it may be a lunch for one guest using the library or 100 for a special occasion. About half of our private retreat guests book

the "stocked larder" option so our freezers are always full of individual meals from batch cooking. 10 years ago all our group bookings were self-catering but we now cater for about 30% of these and the requests are increasing beyond our current capacity.

During the course of this year Jan is moving out of the kitchen to take up her new responsibilities for the preparation and serving of rooms. Meanwhile Hillary becomes the Cellarer with a more hands-on role in the preparation and serving of food, along with training Rhian and supervising staff and volunteers.



As all the changes settle in we look forward to recruiting another member of the Community to join this important part of our ministry. As our weekly Community gathering prayer on Saturday night begins

*"Let us bless God together  
For the mystery  
Of Love made visible  
In food and drink*

***You know our need,  
provide for us"***

# Growing Community

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The last newsletter contained a lot about our hopes and prayers for the growth of our Community. We talked about some of the changes we have been making in our lives and work to make it easier to welcome and integrate new arrivals and help them learn the ropes and establish solid roles more quickly. We committed ourselves to praying this prayer every day during Advent

***God our Provider  
You gather us in this place  
You entrust us with one another  
Hour by hour, day by day  
Build us worthy of that trust.***

***God before us  
Soften and open our hearts  
Towards what we can't yet see  
Ready our future people  
With vocation and skill  
And show us the paths  
to find each other.***

***God our Desire  
Shape our lives  
Fashion our Community  
Order our ministry  
Pattern our future  
Lead us in the way of Christ.  
Amen.***

Things moved unexpectedly quickly when we started conversations with Andrew and Rhian Lane in early December and an exploratory visit at New Year. To all of our surprise we were able to announce at the end of January that they would be moving to join us in the summer. Their current jobs (Librarian at Pangbourne School and Deputy Diocesan Secretary at Southwark) mean that they have fairly long notice periods to honour their

existing commitments. They were able to be with us for a week over Easter when we took the opportunity to squint into the sunshine for a group photo. It was also our opportunity to plan their induction, workspace and initial training and for members of the staff team to get to know them.

Rhian is a natural born organiser who will be learning her trade on the catering front with Hillary in the first instance as well as growing good things to eat in the kitchen garden.

It will be a big change of life and work for Andrew and Rhian as they



They will start as Alongsiders for a year, very much with the hope that this will become a long term commitment as full Community members.

Andrew brings technical and practical skills along with a wealth of administrative experience. He will take responsibility for the communications infrastructure (IT, telephone, wifi etc) and for the liaison with all the trades who keep our guest accommodation in running order. (With dozens of kitchens, toilets, electrical fittings and appliances, boilers, septic tanks, gutters etc there's always something that needs fixing by someone!)

move in, so do please hold them in your prayers as they say their farewells in current jobs and home church and arrive here at the end of July. It will be a busy time for the Community so please pray for the rest of us too as we keep the Sheldon summer show on the road while getting them settled in. We reckon Monday 17th August will be about the day for "Oh, so we're not going 'home' again - this is for real now!"

Those of us already at Sheldon have been practising the whole 'change' thing ourselves over recent months so hopefully we will have plenty of sympathy! Carl, Sue, Hillary and Jan



have all moved house and Sarah has moved office.

It has all been made possible thanks to the successful completion of the Community GreenHouse. When we were starting to raise the money about 18 months ago Carl coined the slogan "GreenHouses make things grow!" This one certainly seems to be doing just that. The GreenHouse itself is a lovely property with lots of natural light and beautiful views. The ground source heat pump kept it very warm and cosy through the winter months. The green roof is just starting to grow.

The only spanner in the works was the construction company going into liquidation soon after completion. We were extremely grateful that it was after they had left the site as it can be a very complicated business with endless delays and costs when contractors go bust with work part completed. The main issue we are left with is loss of warranties, but thankfully these can be bought retrospectively so we are sorting that out.

A big thank you to everyone who has worked and prayed and donated to help make the GreenHouse possible. We were delighted that some of those involved were able



to join us for the blessing on Easter Monday by Bishop Richard Hawkins.

**Dear God  
Builder of our lives  
Companion on our journeys  
Comforter in our sorrows  
Host of our celebrations;  
Your Son Jesus learned  
the skill of the carpenter  
His friends Mary, Martha and  
Lazarus offered the gift of**

**hospitality.  
As we gather here today  
Co-creators with you of this place  
May this water be a sign of  
your blessing on the Sheldon  
Community GreenHouse.  
Blessing for the generosity  
of all who give to it.  
Blessing on the skill  
of those who created it.  
Blessing on the lives  
of those who live in it.  
Blessing on everyone  
who passes across its threshold.  
Let us bless the Lord.  
Let us bless the Lord  
Thanks be to God.**



(Oh, and for those of you who like to know these things there's £42,000 left to raise to complete the appeal on the GreenHouse.)

# News of staff and extended family

Kelvin Goodson was our first “photographer in residence” for a week in April. We’ve included some of his behind-the-scenes photos of meetings and work activities in this edition. More will appear on the website and in brochures. We forgot to take a photo of him, but here’s his own accidental selfie checking light levels for a shot. Thanks Kelvin!



Jane Horton who lived here as an Alongsider for 2 years has now completed her 2 year training for ordination at Cuddesdon. Can’t imagine why we suddenly have an influx of Cuddesdon ordinands visiting Sheldon (no, she isn’t on commission - just spreading the word!) Please pray for Jane especially on 2nd July when she is ordained Deacon in Truro Cathedral where she will serve her curacy.

Tess Lowe lived as an Alongsider for 18 months, during which time she built our “Legend” booking system. She has been living in Exeter and working for a London company



while exploring her vocation to ordained ministry. From time to time we see her for help with tweaks and bolt-ons for Legend. Tess has just recently been accepted for training and is now choosing whether this will be at college or locally with SWMTC.

During the early part of this year several of our staff team members were laid low with one or other of the nasty fluey colds that did the rounds last winter. We know many of our guests had similar infections that were really hard to shift. Others had bereavements, illnesses or traumas to contend with in their families. It has been challenging to find time when all the necessary people were available and had



their brains in place for planning and training for the changes and developments we are going through.

Kerry has celebrated one year in post and one year of married life - both significant landmarks in their different ways. She has been slowly doubling her hours from 8 to 16 hours/week divided between working to Carl on admin for the open air theatre, and helping Hillary with the gardening.

Paul Bray left a full time farming job a year ago to come to Sheldon



as a gardener for 20 hours a week and start his own business using similar skills near his home in mid Devon. Good for him but sad for Sheldon - his own local business has really taken off this year so Paul has reduced his hours and will leave Sheldon at the end of the summer. We’ll probably see him back for occasional sheep work as he’s a dab hand with the shearing tackle.

Deborah has been working her way through a list of general maintenance and upgrade tasks, applying polyfilla, varnish, paint, mastic, vaseline (the housekeeper’s secret weapon!) and general tender loving care to the guest accommodation through the winter months. We were delighted that she too was invited to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party which she enjoyed with husband Mervyn.

An army of volunteers continue to quietly assist with many aspects of life here. Whether it’s the care of the library or the labyrinth, the stuffing of envelopes or roast chickens, the welcome of guests in reception or the theatre, mending a bed or a heart, you’re likely to find volunteers playing their parts at Sheldon.

# Woofs from the Dog House

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My name is Joe, and I see from the rest of the newsletter that I'm not the only one to have moved into a new home recently. My early life is a mystery to Dog Lady, as all she knows is that the dog warden found me wandering around East Devon. I think I've fallen on my feet here, with a comfortable pad in the Farmhouse, countryside to run about in and plenty of company. I'm still on probation as although bits of me are quite well educated, I'm having to learn to be more restrained when greeting humans. It's a bit of a struggle but I'll get there. We go to school one evening a week which I find a doddle but the Boss says it helps her learn how to teach me how to behave!



I may look like a sheepdog but am not (yet) trained to work sheep. Twice a day I accompany Dog Lady while she walks round and checks up on the Sheldon flock of over 50, that's not counting all the lambs. Most of them were born during a very busy three weeks in March, including triplets and lots of twins. Dog Lady was very upset - and cross - when on two occasions the fox stole a new born lamb. Lambs seem to be very time consuming, especially the ones that need help being born, learning how to feed



from the ewe or, in the case of the triplets, being bottle fed four times a day. I am fascinated by them and will happily watch their antics for hours.

Other arrivals this Spring have been the swallows, back at their usual time of mid April. The early purple orchids and the blackthorn (from which we harvest sloes) on the other hand were very late this year.

As you perhaps know, dogs like trees, and there are certainly lots of them at Sheldon. Unusually, a spell of very blowy weather brought down three big ones, including a very tall poplar in the area named

Compostela. The maintenance team got busy with the chainsaw and soon had the paths cleared and the timber logged. The chainsaw expert has carved a smiley face on one of the stumps!

Easter workparty volunteers cleared the brash and stored the logs in the Barn where they can mature until it's time to chop them for firewood. They also repainted all the external timber on the Long Barn, trimmed back a lot of overhanging brambles, made new cushion covers and cakes,

sowed dozens of bean seeds in pots and swept the rabbits off the labyrinth.

I would be more than happy to help with the rabbits and squirrels, but Dog Lady takes a dim view of me chasing anything except a toy. Very boring!



# GreenHouse Gas

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Over the years there have been many people who have played a part in our formation as a Society. Some have given many hours of voluntary time, whilst others have given vast amounts of money. It goes without saying that many have done both.

We are very grateful to each one. One such person was David Silk - regular visitors to Sheldon will have met him. David died early this year. He had played a key part in being a pump primer. Whenever there was a new project David wanted to be in at the ground floor to get the idea off the ground. He did this time and time again. He was a great encouragement to us. He was a great giver both of himself and his worldly resources. We thank God for his company on our journey.

Folk in ministry are often seen as "Big Givers" of themselves. Some will have given beyond their means and they will end up with us. It can be so hard when you are a giver to be a receiver. In day to day ministry life it can be hard to know who to receive from. None of us want to create a "clique" or to be seen to

have "favourites". But somehow we need to take in as well as give out.

To form a stable and healthy way of life we need to form those points of nourishment. It's easier said than done. We want to be self-giving and not selfish. But sometimes we can end up behaving like God rather than working for God.

Over these past few months I have been on the receiving end. The generosity of so many folk has meant that the Community Greenhouse has become our new home. After 38 years in the farmhouse it has been a big wrench for me. On the plus side we have a warm and bright home. As I write we are still finishing off the landscaping. Fifty folk came to the blessing on Easter Monday by Bishop Richard Hawkins. Thank you.

While we are in this unusual territory of not having a building project in mind (for those doubters, I do mean it!) we do have many other areas of growth. You will read elsewhere of new Alongsiders. Then there is the great privilege of being able to welcome the Bishop of London to Celebrate and Preach and Bless the Farmhouse. He has been a huge support over many years, since his days at Stepney. Please do come to that Celebration.

The July Workweek will be decorating the outside of the Farmhouse. Can you come and help? Or see us £30 towards a pot of paint or £2.50 for a paintbrush. Or maybe 50p for a doughnut for a worker.

Oh, yes, and just because we have two new Alongsiders in the pipeline there may still be room for you! A few months to a couple of years. You are not too old or stuck in your ways. Remember 60 is the new 40 something. Be brave, it could change your life, whatever age you are.

We have been working on our liturgy. We have a new Morning Prayer. Its success is being gauged by the number of copies going missing. We had changed Night Prayers and have various orders for Holy Communion. Those who join us have such different needs. It's a fine balance for us.

Thinking of balance, I'm very sorry not to be running the Simply Sheldon retreat this autumn, but we needed to make room for the Doing Healthy Ministry Together project without overloading ourselves. It's generally good to at least try and practice what you preach!

Enough. Thank you for all your prayers as we grow and change. Do please come on the 1st August if you can.

May your greenhouse bear much fruit.



## Linhay Lodges, Hen Runs and Pig Pens

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These are the accommodations available for private retreats at Sheldon. People use them in so many different ways we couldn't possibly list them all!

It's always worth trying us at short notice if you need an emergency bolt-hole and we also love the

advance bookings that we can include in our routine changeover planning. Self-catering or stocked larder. DIY space or with 1:1 time (for people in ministry). Either way you have your own front door, your own little kitchen, en-suite facilities and access to the Sheldon grounds and chapels. Perfect if you just need

time on your own and in your own space.

We do special no frills **Budget Weekend Discounts** as most of the demand is midweek. This can work out as cheaply as **£64 for a weekend** break! (That's one person self-catering in a Pig Pen or Hen Run Friday to Sunday with ministry discount).



Why not treat yourself to a Sheldon weekend? We'd love to see you. We always say that people spending their regular retreat pound at Sheldon helps to make the more specialist end of our ministry possible. The people who need an emergency bolt-hole - can I come tomorrow please?

## Open Air Theatre

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[www.sheldontheatre.co.uk](http://www.sheldontheatre.co.uk)

Publicity and preparations are well under way for another 6 concerts at Sheldon in July. It's quite a logistics exercise to make sure several



thousand people enjoy fun and safe nights out. It's certainly a change of gear from our normal, er, quieter approach to things at Sheldon! It's a great opportunity to throw open our doors to local people who don't normally get a chance to come here. Great publicity for Sheldon as a whole and spreads a whole lot of feel-good factor around. New acts this year include tributes to Dolly Parton and Rod Stewart.

## Have you booked your retreat this year ...?

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### » Being Good Enough

Emma Percy helps explore how we might find “virtuous balance” in our calling to serve. Self-giving that is not self-denying. Metaphors for service that lead us into life.

13th - 17th July

### » Something Understood

Erica Longfellow introduces us to George Herbert and John Donne - glimpsing the divine among human sin and mortality.

20th - 21st July

### » Unfurling

Jointly led by Ian and Gail Adams including optional outdoor activities as participants seek to “live out from our peace for a better world”. Harmony, care and celebration.

24th - 28th August



### » Going Deeper with the Trinity

Founder of the Moot Community, Ian Mobsby, leads a retreat packed with different prayer practices to try. Let’s catch up with what God is doing and join in!

12th - 16th October

### » Intrigued by Icons?

A practical and prayerful introduction to these enigmatic spiritual resources, led by Sister Mary OSB

21st - 22nd October

### » Tapestry of Life

Crafty ways to slow down and nourish your prayer life led by Anne Charlton using crafts you already do and maybe learning some new ones.

2nd - 6th November

### » My Holy Places

Graeme Knowles identifies stone, water and air as ingredients in a sense of place as 21st century disciples map out our pilgrim routes.

30th November - 4th December

## ... and/or next year?

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More fantastic events planned for our 2016 programme which will be released soon. The earliest place to find them will be on the website, probably in August. Then you will receive your copy of the printed brochure in September. Retreat leaders next year include Carl Lee (Simply Sheldon), John Pritchard (Let Him Easter in us), Malcolm Guite (Mariner! A Journey with Coleridge through loss to recovery and

renewal), Dave Tomlinson (Spiritual Intelligence), Simon Parke, Margaret Sif, Photography, Pilgrimage, Mindfulness and more!

We look forward to welcoming you to Sheldon whether for a led retreat or workshop, R5 space or a private retreat. And don’t forget Sheldon is also good for groups. This is the time to be thinking about plans for 2016, and even 2017.

**[www.sheldon.uk.com](http://www.sheldon.uk.com)**

Have you checked out our new website yet?

Blog section with regular news updates - you can subscribe to an RSS feed and leave comments.

Full details of all our current resources for private retreats, groups, programme events, etc.

Online shop back in action.

And coming soon ...

The long-awaited clergy forum is almost ready for launch. Thanks to the forum moderating team who have been helping to test and improve it. Watch this space!

# The Volunteer interview

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I'm 67 (or is it 66 - I forget!) and live in Christow - just across the valley. I have a husband, 2 step daughters and a sister. Before I retired I was a solicitor, specialising in planning. I belong to the local Anglican group of churches here in the Teign Valley. If there's one thing I know about God it's that He's always there.

I think my first visit to Sheldon was for a David Kossoff performance, probably in the early 1980s. There were lots of people and it was out of doors and after dark. I'd heard about it through church and it was certainly better than I expected - and I'd expected it to be good. Very well organised.

I started volunteering here in 2013. Obviously I'd known the place for a long time by then and feel strongly in sympathy with the work. I knew I would be looking for a local volunteering opportunity when I retired. My favourite task is doing the filing. It's satisfying to do something methodical and to know it's actually useful to someone. My pet hate is when you [Sarah] make any statement that includes "... on the computer ..." I am doing my very best to resist becoming computer literate.

What keeps bringing me back to Sheldon? I just think what goes on here is so worthwhile and it has a very good atmosphere. There is a realistic and effective caring concern for people as individuals and there's a pursuit of excellence threaded through everything that goes on. Everyone here likes to do things well - to a high standard - and that rubs off.

My best memory of Sheldon is being here as part of a church weekend and playing table tennis with some of the teenagers and managing not to make a complete fool of myself. (They might have been letting me score a few points I suppose ...)

My worst experience is when the till hangs up on me. It's not exactly drastic but I feel such a fool. Most of the time when I'm volunteering I'm on the reception counter and we use the till for people buying things in the shop, putting a deposit on a key, settling their bill at the end of their stay etc.

One of the major crises in my life was being seriously ill without a diagnosis for 4 years when I was in my early thirties. I was living alone and working full time and a habitually fit and active person. But increasingly frequent episodes of pain and debility were slowly shutting life down. I'd been round so many doctors and it felt as if every rare gynaecological and gastrointestinal avenue had been investigated. In the end it turned out to be a chronic appendicitis. As I don't eat grass I didn't really need that tiresome little appendage and I got better very quickly once I was rid of it. What really kept me going through those years were people who believed me - friends, colleagues, folk at church. And I remember one doctor who sat me down and said kindly "You've clearly got a lot of problem here and I think there is something I can do about it." The other thing was I discovered I couldn't cry and sing at the same time, so I did a lot of singing!



I'm probably not the right person to ask about my own secret or amazing talents. I know. I secretly enjoy playing the Wicked Witch or the Evil Fairy in pantomime. I guess my colleagues at work were sometimes surprised to discover that this rather private, staid academic person actually enjoyed being part of the leadership team on youth camps and spending the week under canvas.

If I had a magic wand to reduce clergy stress I suppose it would be to increase their numbers. I just see clergy becoming more and more thinly spread with every re-organisation but expectations from the pew stay just the same.

And my Fairy Godmother gift to Sheldon? Well I understand the endowment fund is always mentioned so I have to be more creative. I know - a pair of Alpacas to protect the Sheldon flock from foxes!

*Sarah Horsman was talking to Isabel Garty*

# Recruiting for Community

See the “belong” section of our website for further details of how to apply.

We currently have single person accommodation and are interested in exploring

with people looking to make a medium to long term commitment to living and working in Community.

All roles at Sheldon are varied and interesting. Applicants need a good grounding of skill and aptitude in their field but we also expect to give lots of support and training in the specifics and peculiarities in this context.

## Gardener/handyperson

The well-kept gardens and grounds are a vital part of the safe and caring environment we offer our guests at Sheldon. We are looking for a new colleague to take a pride in helping to make the Sheldon environment welcoming, beautiful and productive.

Tasks and responsibilities to include

- » Cultivation of flowers, shrubs and vegetables
- » Maintenance of grass and outdoor amenity areas
- » Running repairs of gutters, drains, decorations, etc
- » Composting, recycling, waste disposal
- » Handling and care of sheep

## New website

Did you know you can now log in to the website and do any of the following ...

- » update contact details
- » make a donation
- » look up previous gifts
- » set up a standing order
- » amend a standing order
- » change mailing preferences
- » check your booking details

If you are in ministry, check that your ministry details are validated in our system. This is what will give you access to the online clergy forum when it is launched.

Lots of photos of Sheldon to enjoy.

If you use Twitter, please follow us [@smmretreat](#) and use retweets to help spread the word about SMM.

[www.sheldon.uk.com](http://www.sheldon.uk.com)

