

THE GRANGE ANNUAL REVIEW 2015



Our vision

A world where everyone has the opportunity to fulfill their potential, in fair and resilient communities whilst living within nature's limits.

Our mission

To offer a safe and welcoming environment to people who have fled persecution, and to explore with others ways to build the resilience of soil, soul and society

Welcome from Ben and Sophie

The past year has been at times extraordinary, at times wonderful and at times extremely challenging.

We have welcomed 10 groups of people who have fled torture and persecution with a total of 104 people visiting The Grange. In addition we have hosted a variety of other groups including the New Economics Foundation, Active Hope and Tai Chi with a total of 122 visitors across 10 different events.

Interest in The Grange has grown significantly, boosted by the launch of our web site and Facebook page in September and a lot of Outreach work including teaching sessions at the University of East Anglia, workshops at the International Permaculture Gathering and Norfolk and Waveney Quaker gathering and various other talks and sessions. We are starting to look at media coverage should have an article in the Guardian Family magazine and the Permaculture Magazine by the end of the year.

Sophie and Ben have decided that it is not sustainable for them to continue to live in the main house and to run the project. We have therefore applied for planning permission to build a house on the land at The Grange where we hope to live with Orianna. This will inevitably create some changes to the project but we are hopeful that it will open up some new opportunities and will enable the project to grow and thrive. There have been times over the last few years that we have been pushed to our limits and this feels like a really positive and necessary step for everyone.

We have once again been very fortunate to receive funding from Seedbed and from a number of individual donors. We have received funding this year from the Sutasoma Trust and are hopeful they will become a long-term supporter.

Through our work at The Grange, we have started to receive and identify opportunities to develop some broader educational and practical work on resilience for soil, soul and society. Ben is working with the Permaculture Association of Britain to develop some resources around permaculture and refugees which will be shared with thousands of permaculture practitioners in the UK and abroad. Sophie is working three days a week at the University of East Anglia and part of her role is to develop and deliver teaching sessions to health care students and medical students about working with people from different cultures and with refugees in particular.

As ever we are thankful to a huge number of people for supporting what happens at The Grange. Thanks in particular to The Elders for their ongoing support, to our families for supporting us in so many ways and to all the volunteers, craftspeople, musicians and friends who have given their time and energy to make it another amazing year.

With love and in peace,

Sophie North and Ben Margolis
November 2015

Our work in numbers

Visitors

104 people who have fled persecution
122 other course participants
At least **400** other visitors including friends, family and duck race attendees

Web site

1 new web site at www.thegrangenorfolk.org.uk
534 visitors to the web site including
2 new regular donors through the web site
Nearly **200** likes on Facebook

Visit types

3 therapeutic retreats
5 skills retreats
2 John Muir Award retreats
3 permaculture weekends
4 hosted retreats
1 duck race!

Governance

2 Elders meetings
2 advise sessions on governance issues
1 new strategic plan!

Outreach

Talks given to at least **600** people
At least **15** talks and workshops
An estimated **20** follow-on enquiries from talks

Volunteers

2 work weekends
At least **30** volunteers
More than **500** hours of volunteer time given

Communication

258 subscribers to our updates
2 updates sent out this year

Meeting our aims

In writing up this report it has become clear that The Grange does not have a clear or explicit enough set of aims. In this report we use the aims identified in the strategic planning process but it should be noted that these might be changed in the coming months.

The Grange aims to provide practical and educational opportunities for individuals and groups interested in building the resilience of soil, soul and society.

Soil: We provide opportunities to experience learn about permaculture at our smallholding and elsewhere and aim to inspire people to integrate permaculture into their own lives.

Soul: We focus on providing opportunities to people who have fled persecution to help them heal from their experiences, find renewed meaning in life and to integrate into the UK.

We also offer opportunities to any other individual or group of people who are seeking to build their own resilience.

Society: We work with partners to provide opportunities to develop ideas around resilience for our society in a world of uncertainty and change. This includes courses, writing and activities at The Grange and elsewhere.

Aim 1: Provide therapeutic and learning opportunities for people seeking to build their own resilience including people who have fled persecution

This aim is loosely built around the idea of the resilience of the soul, or in permaculture terms around People Care. However, all the aims necessarily overlap with each other and the integration of them is a vital part of what we hope to achieve at The Grange.

Case study

Michael fled Burundi to come to the UK in 2002 and is still seeking asylum 13 years later. Michael has been a regular member of our partner organization Room to Heal for several years and has visited The Grange more than 10 times since 2012.

This year Michael came to The Grange on a skills retreat to help turn one of the outbuildings into an office, on a therapeutic retreat and as part of the Ice and Fire theatre retreat during which we turned his story of wanting to attend a funeral into a song. On one of his visits, Michael asked to record his thoughts about The Grange and he said the following:



Figure 1: Michael cooking in The Grange kitchen

'To me, The Grange is more like a rehabilitation centre. I have been thinking about how much I can call

this but it has rehabilitated me in a way. Like last nights dinner it reminded me so much of my family time. We had a joke, I mean I was able to be the real me. It was amazing to see different people from different nationalities, different ethnic backgrounds being together, being peaceful, that even when we live together we can cross ideas and respect each other. It is still possible that despite your background you can still live as a family despite our differences, despite colour, religion. I mean it is no landmark as we think. To me The Grange has really helped me in a way that I am being trusted, because I come from an ethic background where people are fighting each other, Hutu and Tutsi. There is a lot of hatred. I feel not trusted, not loved so any sense where you feel you are loved. It is like a payback in my time.'

Feedback from visitors:

At the end of every visit we have a closing circle and ask people to share their thoughts about the trip if they wish to. Some of the most common things we here are about being trusted, being part of a family, feeling safe and learning new skills. We are fortunate to work with some amazing partners who are able to offer ongoing support to their members. One psychotherapist has described The Grange as offering a 'turbo-charge' to the therapeutic work he can do with his clients.

“The Grange is a mother, she cares, comforts, lots of love and happiness. When I'm struggling, the Grange hugs me makes me cosy and I'm not judged. She understands my pains and battles, when I cry, she wipes my tears and soothes my mind. I feel so

free to scream and shout let go all the frustration. The Grange accepts me as I am and welcomes me home.” R from Mauritius

“The Grange is like a family. It overturns my emotions of sadness into having energy and feeling trusted.” T from Sri Lanka

“Here you feel respected. The love they have is immense. They value us and restore our dignity.” S from Eritrea

“Here I can remember what it is like to live in a home again rather than in a shelter. It gives me hope and reminds me of what is possible.” M from Burundi

Some of the main things we have achieved this year are:

- Welcomed 10 groups of people who have fled persecution involving more than 100 people
- Offered the John Muir Award to 15 people who all received a certificate showing they had actively learned about and practiced conservation at The Grange
- Offered a range of skills and other opportunities including weaving, bookmaking, yoga, qi gong, music, theatre, baking, gardening and many more
- Hosted several groups using The Grange to explore individual resilience including a Tai Chi group, Active Hope course and a Writing as a Wisdom Project retreat
- Started work with a new partner – New Routes from Norwich
- Importantly we have also had to say no to a small number of groups as we learned last year that we had to have longer spaces between groups whilst Ben and Sophie are still living in The Grange

Aim 2: Address the need for society to understand and develop resilience to economic, social and environmental shocks

This aim is loosely based around the idea of resilience for the soil as the foundation for our ability to live in harmony with the Earth that sustains and nourishes us. In permaculture terms this is the Earth Care ethic.

We have focused more attention on Aim 1 and we have only really started to explore what The Grange can do to meet Aim 2 in the last several months. One of the key things we have realized is that we will need more capacity at The Grange than we currently have to be able to meet this aim and it will involve other partners as well. This is explored more in the new strategic plan.

Course case study

This year Ben has established the Soil and Soul teaching collective with fellow permaculture teacher and designer Lee Jenkins. Their web site is at www.soilandsoul.org.uk.



Figure 2: Some participants from this years Soil and Soul PDC

Through Soil and Soul we are able to offer full permaculture design courses, introduction courses and other courses in specific areas of permaculture design with our intention being to support the development of a permaculture community in the East of England.

This year the Permaculture Design Course went ahead although there were only 10 participants which is below the number we were hoping for and the participants were drawn from all over the country with only a small number being local. The course was successful with participants producing excellent designs and giving excellent feedback. The course was held at The Grange and at Walnut Farm which is Lee's smallholding about 20 minutes away near Hingham.

For The Grange it is vital to find ways to integrate all our work and one outcome currently in development is a permaculture course provisionally called 'Growing Resilience' which we hope to run next year specifically for people who have fled persecution.

Some of the main things we have achieved this year are:

- Accredited as a permaculture demonstration site by the Permaculture Association of Britain
- Run a full Permaculture Design Course and co-hosted the 2015 East of England permaculture gathering
- Given talks at several permaculture and other events
- Welcomed a large number of visitors to The Grange ranging from day trips to week-long opportunities
- Planted 300 willow trees at The Grange with our partners, ESCAPE, for them to harvest and use for making garden products
- Hosted the New Economics Foundation for a 4 day retreat helping to develop a network for a new and fairer economy

Aim 3: Develop a thriving community of people exploring new and innovative ways of thinking, interacting and living

This aim is loosely built around the idea of the resilience of society or in permaculture terms the Fair Shares or Future Care ethic.

There are four key ways in which we have developed this aim in the past 12 months.

Developing relationships with an increasing number of partners

There is not yet a definition for what we mean by a partner at The Grange but loosely it is any organization or group that shares our ethos and vision and with whom we have a working relationship. We have increased the number of partners we are working with this year through new relationships with New Routes in Norwich and the New Economics Foundation in London. We are in discussion with some other groups who we may start working with soon.

Ensuring The Grange is accessible to all

We integrate into all of our activities opportunities for people to take part who might not be able to due to financial or other considerations. To this end we have free and concessionary places available on the Soil and Soul permaculture design course and we have developed a partners fund which are raising money for to enable groups to bring members even if their finances are very tight. We are piloting a relationship with New Routes to offer regular weekend visits to The Grange for their members which are very cheap to run and allow their members to come here regularly.

Connecting with the local community and integrating groups

This is an area which we want to develop a lot more in the coming years. We have made some steps with the duck race being as popular as ever. This year at the third annual Great Cressingham village duck race which we hosted nearly 200 people turned out and more than 500 ducks raced down the River Wissey.



Figure 3: Some of the ducks in this years duck race

The ponies continue to be very popular with the local children which has led to a lot of interactions between them, their parents and some of our visitors. This has really helped people to feel comfortable with what we do at The Grange and helps our visitors feel a true part of the community.

In August as part of the Ice and Fire retreat with Room to Heal we invited some local family and friends to witness a performance on the last evening which turned out to be an amazing evening with singing, acting and some unexpected and brilliant Indian classical dancing from a Sri Lankan visitor. We want to facilitate events like this to happen more regularly and are exploring the potential for an international day next year.

We also had a very successful weekend where some members of New Routes came together with a group of people from Leicester and some community growers from Norwich for a work weekend.

Communicating with our supporters and visitors

We have improved our communications this year by setting up a MailChimp mailing list to streamline our communications. This currently goes to 258 people and we can see through the statistics that the newsletter lead to a lot of clicks on our web site and a lot of follow-up actions.

We have also set up a Facebook page mainly in response to asylum seekers who told us that is the best way for them to stay in contact and to keep in touch with what is happening at The Grange. The Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/thegrangenorfolk and currently has 179 likes and some lovely comments from visitors.

The new web site has also been an important way for us to communicate with people interested in The Grange and have we have incorporated a blog which receives a lot of views to offer some insight into life at The Grange.

Some of the main things we have achieved this year are:

- Set up the web site, Facebook page and blog
- Streamlined our communication channels
- Integrated groups using The Grange for the first time
- Started a partnership fund
- Held a very successful duck race
- Offered free and concessionary places on the Soil and Soul permaculture course and on all other courses at The Grange

Financial information

Income: £28,137

Most of this income came from a very generous grant of £15,000 from Seedbed. We generated over £6,500 from running courses with the remainder coming from individual donations.

Expenses: £26,427

The major expenses this year were nearly £10,000 paid as a salary to Ben and Sophie as agreed within the Seedbed donation. There were very few other significant expenses but things like washing, routine maintenance and bills have all added up.

Notes on the finances

We try to keep a very accurate breakdown of our income and expenditure but we don't currently have any professional help for it. As we start to bring in more income, and have more expenses, we recognize that we will need help with keeping the accounts in order.

This year we are showing a 'profit' of £1,710 which will go towards expenses for next year.

We have recently received £3000 from the Sutasoma Trust but this will show on next year's accounts.

Conclusion

We have shown that we can run The Grange on a shoestring, but in order to be resilient we need to start increasing the amount of money we are bringing in, and the range of sources for that income. This will be part of the focus for next year.

Looking ahead

We can feel proud of what we have achieved at The Grange in the three years since we welcomed our first visitors. We have learned a lot about what we can offer and also about where our boundaries need to be and the next year is going to be a lot of about achieving both of these things together.



Some of the key priorities for the next 12 months are:

1. For Sophie and Ben to move out of the main house and into a new house on site (pending planning permission)
2. To establish a well-run volunteer and internship programme to increase the capacity we have at The Grange
3. To develop a permaculture course for asylum seekers and other thinking and writing about permaculture and refugees
4. To develop a permaculture design for the land at The Grange including the capacity to maintain the final design
5. To develop a number of new partnership with groups and organisations who can help as achieve our aims
6. To look again at the governance of The Grange and potentially to establish a charity to carry out our main activities

Over the next 3 years we want to:

Education

Increase the range of certified and accredited courses we can run at The Grange

Support more disadvantaged groups to access our courses and to learn about permaculture

Outreach

Increase the numbers of talks and courses being run at other venues

Become a go-to centre for information on integrating resilience of soil, soul and society

Land

Develop a well-run and financially self-reliant permaculture demonstration site

Increase the amount of food grown on-site available for groups

Supporters

Increase the number of people using The Grange and communicating with us through the web site, Facebook, newsletters and other means

Increase the number of volunteers supporting The Grange

Buildings

Develop the barn to make it a useful space for visitors

Improve the accommodation, cooking and bathroom spaces in the main house

How to contribute

Get in touch with us

There are plenty of ways to get in touch including through the web site and our Facebook page

Bring a group to The Grange

The Grange is a great venue for all kinds of groups. If you think you might want to bring a group we would love to hear from you

Join one of our courses

We will keep our web site updated with upcoming courses. We hope to see you on some of them!

Donate your time, money, clothes, skills

We are able to accept donations through our web site now. If you would like to donate your time or anything else do get in touch.



Thank you to everyone who has made it another special year at The Grange.

