

Richard managed the development of the gardens here at Unstone Grange for six years from 1995 to 2000. During this time the gardens were restored from after 40 years of dereliction thanks to the determination and dedication of a small team of volunteers co-ordinated by Richard.

During 2000, Richard collaborated on a successful bid to the national Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering. He was subsequently selected from a strong group of applicants to a paid post as the Volunteer Co-ordinator in charge of Organic Horticulture.

Soon after his appointment, Richard demonstrated his dedication to the success of the project by representing the views of volunteers who were protesting against the dismissive, abusive and coercive practices of another worker, whose background and ethics were unanimously rejected by the project's clients.

After two years under Richard's leadership, the project was deemed so successful that it deserved a third year's funding. At the end of these 3 years, the project was judged to be in the top 5% of this funder's national programme.

Throughout his ten year tenure as Head Gardener, thanks to Richard's sensitive and compassionate working practices, there was never any problem regarding Health and Safety.

Richard was always thorough and conscientious in fulfilling all the recording requirements of our national funders and equally assiduous in completing the monitoring and moderation systems required to deliver accredited courses.

He had just begun an in-service Post Graduate Certificate in Education at Sheffield Hallam University, which further demonstrated his professional dedication and enduring commitment to his career here at Unstone.

Although he never claimed to be, Richard did actually turn out to be indispensable to the project. When we advertised nationally, none of the candidates had the combination of horticultural wisdom and highly developed people skills which Richard developed and honed here at the Grange. He was literally irreplaceable

All the above should be understood in its organisational context. Throughout his employment, Richard was working with the added handicap of a grossly incompetent and actively hostile, self-appointed manager, who made it difficult or impossible to run the simplest basic systems.

This was illustrated by the circumstances of his unfair dismissal, during which Richard showed superhuman patience and calm. He also showed the utmost honour in keeping trustees well-informed of the truth of events, for which we are now able to thank him profusely. This actually meant that we could retain our status as a Charity, despite the ex-manager's illegalities.

We, the Trustees, have now re-established control over the running of the organisation due to the fact that our erstwhile “manager” is on the run from the law and has activated a long-held ambition to emigrate. (coincidence?) Once again on behalf of all the Trustees, I would like to commend Richard to future employers as a truly compassionate and gifted individual.