



GAIA HOUSE

INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

2016  
NEWS



## WELCOME

Welcome to our 2016 newsletter.

Stepping out of Gaia House through the front entrance there is a lovely, subtle fragrance in the air after a brief rain shower. The blooming of poppies in the garden, such a familiar sight here at this time of year, marks the arrival of midsummer, and serves as a reminder of life's perpetual cycle of change and transition.

I have recently returned from being on retreat and feel nourished by connecting with both silence and presence. I feel very touched by the experience of practising together with others – being aware of the inner process of unfolding, exploring our practice and shared existence, and enquiring into what can support us in an ongoing way.

Reflecting on the teachings, with regard to what supports practice, I am reminded of the importance of having good friends and a sense of community. The strength of shared intention across our wider sangha has been very palpable at Gaia House over the last year, particularly

in the support offered to our dear Resident Teacher, Rob Burbea, during his ongoing cancer treatment. We are very grateful for the generous and dedicated support offered by Kirsten Kratz to our coordinator team and personal and work retreatants in Rob's absence, as well as Yanai Postelnik, Suvaco, Jenny Wilks, Jaya Rudgard and Paul Burrows, who have also stepped in to help cover some of the work.

To celebrate the inspiring sense of community that exists across our sangha we are delighted to be launching a Friends of Gaia House scheme, which you can read about in full on page 9. We have also started working more closely with sitting groups, and are continuing to address diversity – find out more on page 14.

Our building development plans are coming along – we have been working closely with a local architect to create some initial plans for providing more shower and toilet facilities and moving the offices out of the main house to enable us to create more single rooms. The next step is for us to meet with the local

planning office to see what is possible, and we will continue to keep you informed via our e-news as things progress.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to say how much I have enjoyed and valued working alongside our Co-Director, Diana Parratt, who is due to retire in September. Diana has been involved with Gaia House for many years and we are very sad to see her go.

Diana's retirement has given us the opportunity to review our senior management structure, and, keen to build on the success of having two people at Director level, the Trust has created two distinct Director roles to better suit the needs and development of Gaia House. I will continue overseeing the programme and the house, in the role of Operations Director, and the recruitment of a Finance and Development Director is now underway. We look forward to updating you once our new Director has been appointed.

With warm wishes, Siggie Streat, Co-Director

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## A TRUSTEE'S VIEWPOINT

**Michael Jeffries**

Gaia House is supported by many people working in varied capacities to maintain the unique retreat environment that makes it such a special place.

I have been a trustee at Gaia House since the Trust was formally created in 1996. Serving as Chair until last year, I know how hard so many individuals have worked, and how much dedication to Gaia House there is and has been.

The Trust has a complex role in holding and being responsible for Gaia House, and is legally answerable to the Charity Commission for the way it is run as a charity. At the same time, the role of the Trust is to nurture what Gaia House offers, supporting the directors and staff, and working with the Teacher Council so that the organisation runs effectively, is sustainable, and is able to evolve and meet changing circumstances such as new laws and legislation.

In the position of Chair I have endeavoured to hold the role lightly, hopefully allowing everyone to have their say, express their view, and contribute their ideas and energy. Gaia House is special in being 'non-denominational' in the teachings offered, and tries to be as 'broad a church' as possible within the ethos of being a silent Buddhist meditation centre. This inclusivity often requires discussion, debate, time and patience, and a commitment to keeping open communication at the fore.

As a trustee and as Chair I have found it challenging at times. The complexity of

supporting a retreat centre that involves people in many roles inevitably results in conflict from time to time. Additionally, ensuring we conform to changing legislation often incurs increased or new expenses, as does maintaining the fabric of the building and developing the infrastructure, such as the installation of the biomass boiler, all of which require budgeting and careful financial management. These are considerable responsibilities. But overall, without a doubt, the experience of being involved with Gaia House over the years has been rewarding and positive. The people who support the house, those who come on retreat, and the wider community make it a very uplifting and joyful organisation to be part of. I will be continuing to serve as a trustee but have handed on the role of Chair to Kate Malleson, as of last year.

As well as expressing my appreciation for all our current trustees, I would like to acknowledge and thank all the ex-trustees that I have worked with during my time as Chair: Ken Streat, Barry Letts, Kim Clancy, Rick Lawrence, Jean Wilkins, Chris Flannery, Chris "Kippy" Ball, Simon Thompson, Stephen Reid, Sean Williams, Clare Gordon, Justin Andrews, Rob Sully, Douglas Stoddart and Kamini Gupta.

If you are interested in becoming a trustee, please email Sarah Abdy on [admin@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:admin@gaiahouse.co.uk) for more information.



## TEACHER COUNCIL NEWS

**Yanai Postelnik**

We are happy to let you know that the Community Dharma Leaders programme is up and running with 26 current participants – twenty from the UK and six from continental Europe, with twelve Gaia House teachers offering mentoring. We are inspired by the participants' practice experience, maturity and commitment to serve the Dharma, and are enthusiastic about what they will be able to offer in coming years.

Following his diagnosis of cancer last year, our dear friend and colleague Rob Burbea is very much in our thoughts. After ten years resident at Gaia House, Rob is for now living in a cottage on Dartmoor and is currently undergoing an extended period of chemotherapy, following a successful operation last September. We are glad that he is sustaining his wellbeing despite the challenges of his treatment. The ongoing support offered to Rob by local friends, as well as from the sangha across the UK and around the world, is wonderful to see.

We are very grateful that Kirsten Kratz, who joined the Teacher Council last year, has been able to pick up a substantial amount of the work covering resident teacher functions in Rob's absence: supporting hermitage wing retreatants on personal and work retreat, as well as the coordinator group, and coordinating other local teachers to come in when they are available.

In an expression of our shared concern for the welfare of the biosphere and all beings, we, the Gaia House Teacher Council, have added our name to the Interfaith Statement on Climate

Change, calling for international action on urgent emissions reductions and a rapid transition to renewable and sustainable energy sources.

John Peacock and Jake Dartington have stepped down from the Teacher Council in recent months, and we thank them deeply for their service. Caroline Jones is now based in Massachusetts as Resident Teacher of the IMS Forest Refuge. She continues to serve on the Teacher Council, even from across the Atlantic, and we wish her very well in her new role.

We also extend our appreciation to all the good-hearted beings, staff and volunteers, who give so much to ensure that Gaia House continues to be a wonderful place to practise meditation and explore the Buddha's teachings of wisdom and compassion, peace and freedom.

May our practice serve the welfare of all beings, and the Dharma of life.





# INSIGHT MEDITATION PRACTICE

## Different people

Paul Burrows

One of the great privileges of teaching at a place like Gaia House is getting to hear from people about what they are exploring, how they are practising, what they are coming up against and what they are learning.

Meeting people in small groups or one-to-one is a window into the many ways we make sense of practice and the many ways we honour our particular interests and summon creative efforts to respond to life's challenges. It's striking to see the variety of ways that people approach and understand practice, and as someone who runs groups made up of many different people this variety is something of great interest to me.

For some of us a retreat environment is like a temple where we seek to connect with something sacred. For others it may be like a hospital where they go for healing or a laboratory where they experiment and test the teachings. For others and at other times a retreat is like a garden where they seek to grow qualities like patience and kindness. Or perhaps we see it as a school where we go for education and learning, a desert where we embrace the wilderness, a mountain range whose summits we strive to reach, or a hospice where redundant parts of ourselves are allowed to fade and die. Making room for the variety of perspectives, temperaments, aspirations, practice backgrounds, strengths, challenges and areas of wounding within a group is important for its happy functioning, but I believe this is also a topic which goes right to the heart of practice and awakening.

As we descend further into practice over time, each of us is asked to meet the diversity that unfolds from within our own hearts and minds – our changing moods, mind states, perceptions and views. As we evolve, our opinions about what is important can change hugely. Our ideas about practice and what it should look like can become very different to how they used to be. Our needs and interests can change as radically as our bodies and life situations do. Old habits and tendencies can become replaced by different ones, and the inner resources we have access to develop in ways that we may have never imagined. You could say that as a life of practice brings ever-deepening resolution of our heart's material, we become a different person.

Reflecting in this way is a bit like settling back and looking at things with the eyes of someone who has seen it all before. Someone who knows that whatever today's problems are they will resolve at a pace that is somewhat beyond our control, so there's no need to panic or get busy. Someone who knows that whatever today's excitements are, tomorrow will bring something different, so to hold it all lightly. Someone who knows that the quality of care and attention we bring to life at this moment is what matters most, and whether it's a period of chaos or calm, joy or sadness, contraction or openness – this too will change. When we can settle back like



this, it means we take ourselves and our own process less seriously. It means we can make room to deeply accommodate the stream of life's situations with wisdom, kindness and balance. It means we have equanimity.

Just as our own healing is supported by an ability to welcome and work with the diversity of our own hearts and minds as they unfold over time, equanimity is key in how we work with difficulties as they appear in the social and communal dimensions of life. When we are in a retreat environment, the person next to us might have some very different ideas about how things should be done. When we are sincere in spiritual practice, we invest a lot in our ideas about how to live and how to practise, and we can get quite attached to these ideas. When we have some equanimity, then we are able to allow differences to be there between ourselves and another. We know that any position or view we find ourselves in will change and evolve, and we don't need to take ourselves so seriously. This is no trivial topic to reflect on. Human history is scarred by countless atrocities committed in the name of one belief or another, where different groups and cultures become so polarised that they lose sight of the common humanity they share.

The heartbreaking amount of suffering caused by racism, sexism and prejudice against one

group or another can be worked with through our exploration of equanimity. When we can hold our own views and opinions lightly, we can be less stuck in our assumptions about others. We can own our prejudices without needing to be defensive. And we can connect with another, no matter how different they may be from us, recognising that in a fundamental way we are the same: we each want to be happy and do not want to suffer. This is our common ground. If we remember this simple day-to-day fact, that just as I want happiness and don't want suffering, the same is true for this person and this person and this person, then we may find that instead of our differences being a cause for suspicion, mistrust, conflict and hatred, they become a cause for interest, dialogue, learning, respect, celebration and love.

Equanimity allows us to give our attention in a way that is uncluttered by assumptions, where we are curious and available to learn. Whether we are giving our attention to another person or to our own mind states, it supports us to do the work of dis-entangling, settling deeply and living from kindness. If we want our practice to extend into areas that it hasn't yet reached, equanimity may be an important factor in how we can connect with those in communities that we aren't yet familiar with, on this planet that we all share.



## COORDINATOR REFLECTION

**Jarda Cermak**

I first came across Gaia House via [dharmafeed.org](http://dharmafeed.org) whilst living in Holland.

Having reached a crossroads in my life, I was questioning the purpose and meaning of my existence and started following the teachings of Yuttadhammo Bhikkhu. I began experimenting with meditation and had a very deep experience early on.

I decided I needed to find a place where I could develop my formal sitting practice and felt that the coordinator opportunity would be a good fit. However, I hadn't been to Gaia House before and didn't have much experience of practice yet, so there were some steps I needed to take before I could be considered for the role.

I decided to move to Coventry where I knew a few people and could get a job whilst developing my practice at the Forest Hermitage. It happened that the Hermitage was looking for a lay helper so I ended up living and working there for five months.

In May 2015 I managed to get a short-notice work retreat place at Gaia House thanks to a cancellation. I left the monastery and spent seven weeks as a work yogi in the household and kitchen departments. I couldn't stop smiling during those seven weeks; I felt so relaxed and supported, and couldn't quite believe that such a place existed. Gaia House felt like the best place in the world!

I finally started as a coordinator in October, and my practice has evolved so much since then. Although I still get up at 4am each morning to sit, my reasons for wanting to practise have completely changed.

I'm learning that I can practise in any situation, and actually sitting for two hours before dawn is easy in comparison to the challenges that can come up when living within a working community. The key focus of my practice now is being with everything that presents itself within our coordinator group. Through this experience I'm learning not to react automatically and instead find the space to respond appropriately.

The challenges that arise present me with an amazing learning opportunity which I'm truly grateful for. And through the challenges there is great joy in working together as a team, hanging out and laughing, and seeing what we create for our yogis, which is so wonderful and much needed, I feel.

Although I now know that I can practise in any situation that life presents, it's very important to me to maintain my formal sitting practice alongside the service I'm offering through my work tasks. While there's no doubt that my dedication to my daily sitting practice is of great benefit to me personally, I also see it as a gift to everybody connected to Gaia House – my fellow coordinators, our retreatants, teachers, non-residential staff and trustees. I have a deep sense that its benefits reach beyond me, contributing to the whole.

The intricate mix I'm experiencing at Gaia House of practice, service and living and working in community is unbelievably rich, and each day I'm trying to get as much out of it as I can.



## FRIENDS OF GAIA HOUSE

A new way to help shape our work and future

**Diana Parratt, Co-Director**



A 'Friends of Gaia House' scheme has been on our wish list for some time now, and we are really pleased to be bringing it forth at last.

My own journey with Gaia House began in 2005, when I first attended a weekend retreat. Since then I have been a regular retreatant and have also had the pleasure of serving as a trustee for three years. Most recently, I have been devoting my energies to planning and implementing Gaia House's development activities, in conjunction with our Co-Director, Siggie Streat.

My connection with Gaia House has been an experience shared with many different people and groups, and I have witnessed significant changes to the organisation over the years. Yet the beautiful, silent heart of Gaia House beats on, and it is wonderful to see both new and familiar faces returning – whether to come on

retreat, teach, volunteer with us or join our team of coordinators, non-residential staff and trustees.

The fact that the ebb and flow of impermanence is as much part of life here at Gaia House as elsewhere highlights the fact that the future of this precious and greatly-valued resource for connection, self-development and Dharma learning cannot be taken for granted.

The aim of the 'Friends of Gaia House' is to celebrate the palpable and inspiring sense of community that exists across our sangha. It is another way for us all to feel part of this community, offering a chance to reaffirm the value that Gaia House continues to have for us, as a place we would like to see go on and thrive so that others may benefit from its opportunities as we have done.

It also offers the possibility of getting involved in Gaia House's work in a variety of ways that all contribute to shaping its offerings and future plans.

Part of supporting a sustainable future for Gaia House is about recognising that as a charity we need to become more skilful with regard to fundraising. We are very fortunate that the practice of Dana is already well established amongst our sangha members. Yet, interestingly, using the term 'fundraising' feels like a new departure for us as an organisation, and so it is natural that we feel tentative about it.

One aspect of our fundraising process which we would like to make more efficient is reducing the amount of admin time involved in processing donations, and this is why we have included making a regular financial contribution to Gaia House as an option when joining as a Friend.

Most of the donations we receive to date towards our General Fund and Financial Assistance and Bursaries Fund (FAB Fund) are given by retreatants at the end of their retreat. In 2015 donations towards our FAB Fund enabled us to make grants totalling £40,429 supporting 369 people to come on retreat at Gaia House who may otherwise not have had the financial means to do so. Similarly, donations of £23,414 towards our General Fund helped us pay for a new polytunnel, extending our growing season and increasing the range of home-grown food we are able to provide for our retreatants, as well as a makeover to the front of the house, including structural repairs to prevent deterioration of the building.

The generosity of our sangha members makes such an important difference to Gaia House's work, not least in enabling us to keep retreat costs as low as possible. Our wish is to build on this support and encourage more people to shift from making one-off donations after retreat (to our FAB and General Funds) to committing to a more regular donation, via internet banking or standing order. This will significantly reduce the amount of time we spend processing donations, enabling the money we receive to go further, as well as helping with our cash flow and planning. We understand this may

not suit all of you, so the usual channels for making donations after retreat will continue to be available.

The gift of service offered by our volunteers is another vital pillar in ensuring the sustainability of Gaia House's work. We are very blessed in already having a committed group of local volunteers who give of their time so generously to help keep our doors open all year round. There are always plenty of tasks that need attending to in the house, so if you live locally and contributing some of your precious time is something you feel you could offer, you can register your interest in volunteering when joining as a Friend.

Facilitating greater involvement of our sangha members in determining the future of Gaia House will be a further cornerstone in ensuring our organisation's longevity, and we really look forward to working with those of you that would like to get involved in consultation exercises around the key strategic issues and challenges we are facing.

If you are interested in making a long-term commitment to our strategic management, you can opt to receive information about future opportunities to join our Board of Trustees.

It is truly amazing to consider what Gaia House has become since it first opened its doors at the former site in Denbury in 1983. It is one of the longest established and most highly respected Insight Meditation retreat centres in the world, and the exciting part is, it is still growing and becoming, and you are all part of this.

The sense of belonging that comes with being part of an evolving and nurturing sangha serves not only our own personal development but also the ongoing growth of Gaia House. So in celebration of our wonderful community and the unique gift of the Dharma, I warmly encourage you to join the Friends of Gaia House – whether that means diving in with sleeves rolled up to offer service as a volunteer in our kitchen, or staying at the edge to watch what's going on and maybe dipping into Friends activities at a later date. Please feel welcome however you wish to contribute your support. Without you dear Friends, we could not be the Gaia House we are today.

## About the Friends of Gaia House

### What are the aims of the scheme?

The aims of the scheme are to:

- Celebrate our sangha and sense of connectedness
- Support a sustainable future for Gaia House
- Facilitate greater involvement of our sangha members in determining Gaia House's future plans
- Facilitate greater Trust accountability

### How can I join?

You can sign-up:

- Via our website
- During after-retreat information in the library
- By post – either visit the website and print a form or phone us and we will send you one

### What's involved?

As a Friend you will receive our twice-yearly Friends e-newsletter, keeping you up-to-date with news of our development plans, fundraising activities, consultation exercises and volunteering opportunities.

On joining you will also have the opportunity to:

- Set up a regular financial contribution to Gaia House and help keep our prices affordable
- Register your interest in volunteering or becoming a trustee
- Sign up to participate in consultation exercises (for example via online surveys or face-to-face focus groups)

*– none of which are requirements for becoming a Friend, we'd like to add!*

Once you have joined you can easily vary (or cancel) your participation at any time according to your particular wishes and circumstances.

### Our fundraising promise

We promise to:

- Use your donations in the best way possible and provide information through our website, annual review and financial statements about our work and finances.
- Keep you informed and inspired via our website, newsletters and social networks, so you can see how your money is being spent and what impact it is having.
- Make it easy for you to contact us about any questions, concerns or wishes you may have regarding the Friends scheme. Simply email Hannah on [comms@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:comms@gaiahouse.co.uk) or call 01626 323887.
- Adhere to the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice, which represent the highest standards of good practice in fundraising.

**To sign up or find out more, please visit [www.gaiahouse.co.uk/friends/](http://www.gaiahouse.co.uk/friends/)**

**Email or phone Hannah: [comms@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:comms@gaiahouse.co.uk) / 01626 323887**

**May the Friends of Gaia House be of service to the sangha and benefit all beings.**



## RETREAT IN FOCUS

### Cultivating a Fearless Heart and the Courage to Care

**26-29 August 2016**

**With Suvaco**



This retreat will explore how Dharma-based perspectives and practices can inform and resource life-affirming action in these times of great ecological destruction.

Bridging the worlds of the inner and outer, we will use a range of creative reflective practices, primarily honing our meditative skills, writing from a place of depth, and creating space for meaningful ritual and reflective discussion, in order to explore how personal and social transformation are intimately bound together, and begin healing the divide between the separate self and our greater body, the Earth.

In addition to reflecting on deeper motivations and concerns around social and ecological injustice, this event will also offer an opportunity to develop deeper resources of courage, insight, clarity and emotional resilience, drawing on the fearless presence of the heart to respond to systems of power, both internal and external that are limiting and damaging.

**To book visit the Gaia House website or call 01626 333613.**



## RETREAT IN FOCUS

### Compassion and Action in a Changing World

**13-18 September 2016**

**With Jenny Wilks (pictured) and Zohar Lavie**

The Buddha's teachings aim to inform and transform all areas of our lives, calling us to include speech, action and livelihood, in addition to mindfulness and meditation, in the framework of spirituality.

Although the world we live in today is very different from the Buddha's ancient India, and arguably faces more complex and urgent challenges, the Dharma remains equally valuable and relevant. As we turn towards our lives with the intention to live more fully and skilfully, Dharma teachings of wisdom, compassion and understanding create a firm foundation of calmness and a clarifying light of insight.

It can be difficult to know how best to bring the inner work of meditation and spiritual transformation into the outer work of compassionate engagement with the world. This is true in our personal and professional relationships, and also in the wider fields of social change and political activism.

All these areas of life can be supported by contemplative practice, aiding us to be clearer and more confident in ourselves, and less prone to overwhelm and burn-out. Equally, the inner changes brought about by Dharma practice may strengthen our wish to respond well to the suffering we see in the world around us.

Within the usual retreat schedule of silent sitting and walking meditation practice we will explore these themes in talks, inquiry, dialogue, and guided reflections. We hope that the retreat will facilitate a more integrated understanding of the Buddhist path and of the inseparability

of personal and social transformation. We welcome anyone with an interest in deeper exploration of these issues, whether or not you consider yourself to be an 'activist'.

**To book visit the Gaia House website or call 01626 333613.**





# OUTREACH

## An update

Rachel Davies

This time last year, the wheels were set in motion to develop what we are calling 'outreach' activity, and I'm pleased to report that we have had a very heartening year. Here are a few figures:

- We have reached 30 local people through a five-week evening class in Newton Abbot, and have offered continued, regular practice opportunities through the establishment of a Newton Abbot sitting group for the local sangha. This has also proved to be a resource for staff at Gaia House, with five members of staff attending at different times.
- We have offered 26 people the opportunity to practise in Oxford, exploring the theme of climate change within the context of Dharma practice.
- We have reached 17 families through our ever-popular Family Retreat.
- We have supported 20 people who are involved with sitting groups through two 'South West Sangha' days.
- We have offered an introduction morning to 25 students from Exeter.
- We have reached many people through our new Online Courses web page, with over 500 unique page views per month.
- We have set up the 10-month Living Fearlessly with Change course, which will support 14 participants to deepen in practice, and offer service within their community.

Nourishing and supporting our wider sangha is an important part of Outreach and there will be a strong focus this year on maintaining

more regular dialogue with sitting groups, and exploring ways we can offer greater support. If you are part of a sitting group, please do reflect on any ideas you may have around this – we are keen to hear your views. We are also very interested in supporting sitting group initiatives that encourage diversity and inclusivity, and especially welcome inquiries around this. If you'd like to share any ideas, please be in touch via [outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk)

Exploring and developing inclusivity at Gaia House will be a key focus for Outreach this year and beyond. This is an important remit for Gaia House as a whole, as creating true inclusivity involves reflecting and inquiring into all aspects of an organisation's work and how it communicates.

A Diversity Working Party has been set up, underpinned by our deeply-held conviction that all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, age, sexual identity, gender, gender identity, class or religion, should feel welcome to participate at Gaia House. We are currently in the process of finding a consultant experienced in the field of inclusivity to assist us in moving forward with this work, and all that it implies for the organisation and the people who practise, work and teach here.

We don't know yet how this might unfold in terms of the Outreach endeavour, and this is sensitive work which will take time to do carefully. However, our intention to work towards the goal of true inclusivity is strong, and over the coming months we hope to develop an action plan for beginning the process of identifying and dismantling barriers to participation.



## SITTING GROUPS NEWS IN BRIEF

### Opportunities with Jake Dartington

If you live in the Midlands/Birmingham area and would like to have practice opportunities closer to home, teacher Jake Dartington is very interested in offering some teaching in this region. If you would like to take a lead on organising a one-day retreat, or other event, please contact Rachel on [outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk) to find out how Gaia House could support you in this.

### Venues in the Sheffield area

Sheffield Insight offers one-day (and occasionally residential) retreats, and is keeping an eye out for suitable venues. If you live in the region and know of a good place, please contact: Sheila (Shad) on [shadwoolgrove@btinternet.com](mailto:shadwoolgrove@btinternet.com)

### Organise a short retreat in your area

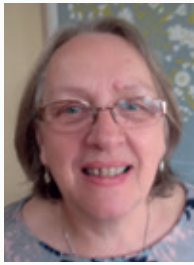
Gaia House is here to support any sitting groups that would like to organise one-day or short residential retreats in their local area. There are various ways that we can help with this – please contact Rachel on [outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk) if you would like to explore this further.

### Interested in setting up a sitting group?

If you like the idea of setting up a sitting group but don't know where to start, please don't hesitate to get in touch – we can offer advice and point people in the direction of helpful resources. Email Rachel on [outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:outreach@gaiahouse.co.uk)

Please see pages 31-37 for sangha event listings and sitting group contact details.





## A SENSE OF SANGHA

**Sue Cross, Newton Abbot sitting group**

The sitting group is a way to regularly meet with others who want to come together to share some time meditating, listening to and discussing Dharma teachings.

At the Newton Abbot group there are usually between four and eight people in any given week.

The group consists of people with varying levels of meditation experience, from many different routes, and new members are always welcome.

Each week the meeting is facilitated by a different member of the group, who leads a sitting meditation, either guided or silent, and brings a Dharma talk on a particular aspect of practice. Sometimes we listen to Dharma talks via a laptop or MP3 player, and at other times the facilitator reads an extract from a book. We have a facilitating rota for roughly four weeks in advance, which enables each person to have plenty of time to select the Dharma teaching and/or guided meditation that they would like to bring. Facilitating is not compulsory of course, but it is open to all.

Having a different facilitator each week means that I sometimes find myself listening to a teacher that I haven't heard of before, or an aspect of the teachings that I wouldn't have thought was of particular relevance to me. Sometimes the chosen talk or reading might not really appeal to me initially. But during the group discussion afterwards there's the opportunity to share our

different responses to the talk, and learn from other members' thoughts and feelings about what they've heard. It is really surprising how often the talk or reading speaks to what has come up for each of us in our practice or experience during the preceding week.

During the evening we also do a period of walking meditation, either in the room where we meet (which is in the library building) or in the corridors. For me this feels quite different as I mostly practise walking meditation outside. It can also provoke a few puzzled and amused looks from people in the neighbouring rooms if they see you in the corridors. I keep hoping someone will be brave enough to ask why I appear to be pacing up and down the corridor very slowly!

For me the most enjoyable aspect of the sitting group is the sense of sangha. Although we only come together for a brief time each week, we are able to support each other in being able to meditate, and learn from the teachings that which can help us live our lives in a more peaceful and fulfilled way.

We meet in Newton Abbot Library from 7pm to 8:30pm on Tuesday evenings. Please feel welcome to come along.



## A CONTINUING CONNECTION TO GAIA HOUSE

**Peter Saint-Davis**

It's ten to five in the morning and although I know I'm not asleep, I am not yet awake. I convince myself it's ok to stay still for a little longer...don't move, a few more minutes...wait for a sign, a bell rung gently.

Realisation. I am staying in the Hermitage Wing, there will be no bell! I hear a distant digital alarm...hah, acceptance, non-judgment. Intention to move kicks in. I am awake and out of bed. The new day is trying to get in, creeping round my curtains with its soft glow. I am empowered. I am free and where I should be at this precise moment. Fully engaged in the present, ready to sit, determined to make the most of this day.

Drawing the curtains back to look out, the room glows dimly and at that precise moment the first bird sings and heralds the arising of a new dawn chorus. How fortunate I am to be here at Gaia House watching my breath to find the simplicity in the heart of it all. I am ready, it's a beautiful day and the cushion awaits.

Gaia House has with the passing years become a place of peace and refuge for me, and I love and respect the space it occupies in my life.

It wasn't always so. Twenty years ago I needed help and this led me to a life-changing experience – a week of retreat at the old vicarage, Denbury, doing something I hadn't known folks did, and with no previous knowledge of the Buddha. During the following days and nights I experienced emotional and physical pain (and lots of it). It was a very steep

learning curve. Those raw experiences led me to feelings of great joy and some confusion. It was the start of a path I will always follow.

Fast forward to the present and, having replied to a volunteer request, I now find myself accepted into the heart of Gaia House as a helper in the kitchen. The engine room. It is said that an army marches on its stomach and Gaia House is much the same. The organising of this mammoth task is something to behold. The food has to be prepared and arrive in the dining area three times a day for three hundred and sixty five days a year (366 this year). Enough to feed thirty to ninety people, with varying diets, continuously – no excuses, no days off. To carry this off requires the love and service of a great group of people that live and think on their feet whilst freely giving service, day in and day out, even on off days, with good heart. No-one said it would be easy. For my part I have a simple task and try to support whoever is cook for the day. Through volunteering I now have a continuing connection to Gaia House and its offshoots, and the necessary service that they are providing on a daily basis. I love the fact that I can return something to Gaia in heartfelt gratitude for helping me change my life for the better. And the best part is I get to stay for lunch!

# GAIA HOUSE IN 2015



40  
group retreats attended  
by 1,553 people



1,980  
retreatant veggie  
chopping hours

411  
  
personal retreatants for  
a total of 4,126 nights



3,180  
bedding sets laundered



£8,082  
from the FAB Fund enabled  
204 people  
to pay our supported rates



£16  
spent on mains water per day

650kg  
  
of oats consumed in porridge,  
flapjacks, crumbles  
and nut roasts



£40,429  
made in FAB Fund grants  
to 369 retreatants,  
including £6,500  
to 34 young people



400 jars  
of jam  
and chutney made with fruit  
and vegetables from the  
Gaia House garden



50%  
reduction  
in our hot water and heating bill  
to £30 per day, since moving  
from oil to sustainable woodchip



£23,414  
received in  
General Fund donations



99,977  
PEOPLE  
visited the Gaia House website



# A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

October 2015 saw the long-awaited launch of The Gaia House Cookbook.



Having received much favourable feedback from retreatants on the quality of our food over the years, it is a great pleasure to finally be able to offer a collection of our regular recipes in printed form. We are very grateful indeed to

the many people who helped bring the book forth – it represents a truly collaborative effort.

To date we have sold more than 850 copies of the book, both within the UK and abroad. We are heartened to think of the book inspiring cooks far and wide, and providing retreatants with an ongoing connection to their experiences at Gaia House.

We are delighted to be able to update you that cookbook sales have so far raised over £4,500 for our Financial Assistance and Bursaries Fund, helping to ensure that Dharma teachings are available to all who wish to participate in our programme, irrespective of financial circumstances.

The book is available to order during after-retreat-information in the library or via our website: <http://gaiahouse.co.uk/gaia-house-cookbook/>

## Financial support to come on retreat

If you would like to come on retreat but cannot afford our rates at this time, we invite you to fill in a short, confidential application form for support from our Financial Assistance and Bursaries Fund (FAB Fund).

The FAB Fund currently offers support for:

- Group retreats
- Personal retreats, including subsidised 90-day retreats

The fund exists with the aim of ensuring that the Dharma teachings offered at Gaia House are available to all who wish to participate in our programme, irrespective of financial circumstances. We welcome applications from all sections of the community.

**To request a FAB Fund application form please phone our Reception team on 01626 333613.**



## FINDING PEACE AND HAPPINESS WITH THE HELP OF THE FAB FUND

Jo Kennedy

I've been coming to Gaia House since 1997 and in the early years I didn't need the FAB fund and was also able to make a good contribution to it when I had a bit of a windfall. Now, in harder times, I couldn't afford to visit Gaia House without help from the fund.

My particular challenge in life is that I have a long-term debilitating health condition which has been very tough, and having access to the teachings, the support of the teachers and the beautiful practice space has been very transformative and has truly helped me to live a happy, worthwhile life. For a long time I was quite overwhelmed by the difficulties that came along with the illness, and coming to Gaia House was a welcome reprieve from the demands and stresses of daily life. It was also challenging to be with my uncomfortable body, and my often distressed and overwhelmed mind, without the usual comforts and distractions. But the teachers offered me extra support when I needed it and the coordinators supported and allowed me to work within my physical limitations, and over time I have come to be at ease with all of it. Although Buddhism is sometimes seen as a bit dry and dour, in fact the teachings do lead to a deep joy and ease of being that I'd once never have thought possible for myself. And the eclectic ethos at Gaia House which draws on all the Buddhist traditions, as well as its willingness to challenge some of the more patriarchal and 'religious' aspects of the traditional teachings, has allowed me to always feel empowered to find my own way. The ecologically sound

ways of running the house have also supported me to be my 'best me' when I'm there, and I've brought those ways of living back into my daily life. I'll always be incredibly grateful for discovering Gaia House when I did. It's been a vital support, and some days I can even feel grateful to my illness for allowing me the time to practise and explore this beautiful path.

If you're able to make a contribution to the fund, I encourage you to do so in the knowledge that you're helping to spread these crucial teachings and practices into a world that really needs them; and you may be helping individual people to find a transformative happiness and peace. In the tradition, the gift of the Dharma is the highest form of generosity. Likewise, if the only way you can come on retreat is with a bit of financial assistance, don't be shy in asking. The purpose of the place is to serve the Dharma, increase happiness and peace, and counteract hatred, greed and confusion in this world. Just be wholehearted in your practice and everyone will be delighted.

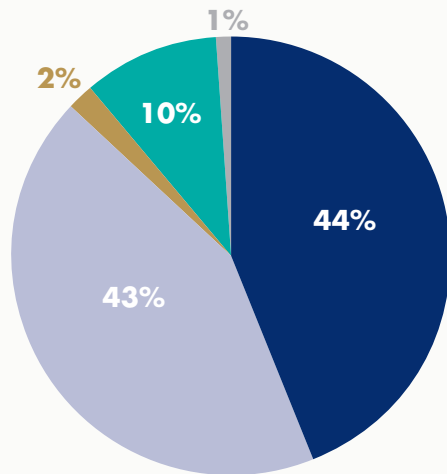


# JOURNEY MATTERS

Thank you to all those who took part in our recent retreatant travel survey, which has enabled us to gain a better understanding of Gaia House's overall carbon footprint. Between 15 August and 29 December 2015 we collected a total of 546 completed forms, and the analysis highlighted some interesting findings.

## How did people travel to Gaia House?

- Car 44%
- Train 43%
- Bus/coach 2%
- Plane\* 10%
- Walk/cycle 1%



\*As is to be expected, plane users also used a variety of other means of travel, some making lengthy, complex journeys.

Of the 55% who travelled by train, bus/coach or plane, only 3.2% reported experiencing problems on their journey, which is encouraging.

## Travelling by car

- 65% of car users travelled alone, while 35% shared
- 65% of car travellers said they might return with additional passengers
- 220 miles was the average round trip mileage for those that travelled by car

## Taxi sharing

- 48% of taxi users shared with others

## Lift share message board

- 25% of respondents reported having used the lift share message board at some point

Feedback on the lift share message board was generally positive with a number of people having used it successfully for sharing lifts for car journeys and taxis. However, the survey results highlight the facility as a key area for development, and it is our intention to explore what we can do to support increased uptake of this carbon footprint-saving opportunity.



## BODHI COLLEGE

### An update

Stephen Batchelor

After more than two years of planning and preparation, Bodhi College has now started running its courses.

February saw the launch of the first module of the Mindfulness Teachers' Development Programme in Beatenberg, Switzerland, and the first Secular Dharma module at St Cuthmans in Sussex. Then in March, the first module of the Committed Practitioners' Programme was held at Sharpham House in Devon, followed a few days later by a week-long course on the Satipathāna Sutta with Bhikkhu Anālayo. At the same time, our first Italian course was held in Tossignano near Bologna: Introduzione al Buddhismo delle Origini.

Most of these courses ran at capacity, with students attending from all over Europe and some coming from as far as the United States. The response to these programmes has been largely enthusiastic, which confirms the college's founding vision that the time is ripe for providing practitioners with an in-depth and ongoing exploration of the ideas and values of Early Buddhism as a framework for their meditation and Dharma practice.

The College is also pleased to announce that it has formally appointed a board of trustees, who will oversee the governance and development of the organisation, thereby allowing the core faculty to focus on their teaching responsibilities. We are most grateful to Richard Fernyhough, Brigitte Huber-Jordi, Gerit Stoeklmair and Gary Born for accepting to serve as trustees.

We are currently working on our programme for 2017, which will be published this summer. In addition to our on-going two-year courses, we plan to offer further week-long programmes in Germany and Italy, non-residential weekends in London, an introductory Pali course, as well as a month-long distance learning programme in conjunction with *Tricycle: the Buddhist Review*. Since the Committed Practitioners' and Secular Dharma programmes run on a two-year cycle, those wishing to join them will need to wait until 2017 to apply for the courses that will start in the Spring of 2018.

The college is most grateful to its administrator, Gavin Milne, and bookings manager, Aline Petit, for their tireless work in enabling us to get off the ground.

**For more information visit [www.bodhi-college.org](http://www.bodhi-college.org)**





# DHARMA IN THE WORLD

**Bergljot Gjelsvik**

Bergljot Gjelsvik works as a researcher and clinical psychologist at Oxford, where she teaches mindfulness to people suffering from depression and explores how people who are recurrently suicidal can stay well. Bergljot is part of the theatre troupe 'BP or not BP?' and a member of Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement (DANCE).

It is getting increasingly difficult to ignore that the situation is, for the most part, going from bad to worse as far as the health of our habitat is concerned. In March this year, Earth's global temperature set another striking record. We are literally feeling the heat. The results of the accelerating increase in surface temperature – increased incidence of severe weather events (e.g. flood, droughts), global food insecurity, respiratory infection, drastic reduction in the number of wild animals, forced migration and war – all form part of the formidable threat to human health and the wellbeing of all living things posed by climate change. The links between this dire situation and our accelerating use of fossil fuels is incontrovertibly and uncomfortably clear. A clear message from the data provided by climate scientists is that globally we see the signs, not only of our own transience and death, but an accelerating extinction of the natural world.

How does this land with us? What range of responses to the environmental crisis might come forth as possible? And what does it have to do with the Dharma? One striking aspect of the crisis is, of course, the paradoxical lack of response. At a time where it is imperative that we change tack, we appear committed to the very way of life that feeds and accelerates the crisis. When asked, around two thirds of the UK population accept the

reality that climate change is man-made, but are disconnected from – perhaps in denial about – the responsibilities and actions that are necessary to deal with it.

On a corporate level, oil companies show no sign of curbing their eagerness for continued drilling, despite consensus that to stay below the generally agreed threshold for runaway climate change, 80% of listed fossil fuel reserves will have to stay in the ground. Our habitual compliance with accelerated fossil fuel use echoes philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen's claim that as a culture, we have moved towards cultivating a 'denial of nature' – characterised by a sense of entitlement in relationship to the natural world – in which Earth is a commodity to be traded, and we are consumers, 'because we deserve it'.

There is a wide range of possible creative and peaceful responses to the crisis. I'd like to point to one in particular – that of taking direct action. For some, the word direct action might come across as unfamiliar or alienating. However, as practitioners I think we have something powerful to offer here. Practice gives us ample opportunity to reconnect not just with our own suffering, but the suffering of all living beings. Feeling into and appreciating the web of the living can bring about what Vetlesen calls a re-enchanting of our relationship with the natural world. From a place of compassion

and wisdom, we can sense the living world as valuable, morally significant, beautiful, worthy of our respect and awe. The scientists Dacher Keltner and Paul Piff argue that experience of awe is an important collective emotion that promotes social cohesion by diminishing a sense of self and increasing pro-social behaviour.

In their recent work, they found that people who experienced awe in response to nature were more likely to act pro-socially, and to report less sense of entitlement. Connecting with the natural world, then, can become an ethical practice. We can open, through appreciation, to the pain of the destruction unfolding (and our part in it), which, in turn, may give rise to an urgency to act. What might happen if a sense of connection, a sense of urgency, guided our actions? What might happen if we, as the Quakers so beautifully put it, attend to what love requires of us?

For some yogis, one response to this question has been to take direct action against oil sponsorship of our arts institutions. The campaign to end oil sponsorship, led by the Art Not Oil coalition (including, among others, Liberate Tate, BP or not BP? and Platform) is based on the tenet that accepting funding from oil companies whose business plans, bluntly put, are incompatible with a sustainable future, is a deeply moral issue. As I write this, it is six years to the day since British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 workers and leaving devastating damage to the wildlife in the region. Last year, it was discovered that a huge oil spill 'footprint' remains on the sea floor, raising concerns about the potential for ecological recovery in the region. In April this year, BP was fined \$20 billion in a final settlement, thereby making them officially the biggest corporate criminal in the world. In our actions, we ask – why do our museums accept funding from such deeply problematic sources?

Rather counter-intuitively, it is not primarily about the money. The funding is negligible. For instance, Tate was forced to reveal that BP accounted for under 0.5% of Tate's budget between 1990-2006. Campaign work shows that oil companies perceive being associated with prestigious cultural institutions such as the British Museum and the

National Gallery as invaluable PR – it gives them a 'social licence' to operate. More worryingly yet is that oil companies have been shown to exert curatorial influence in the museums. Last year, Shell managed to strong-arm the Science Museum into downplaying the effects of climate change in their exhibition on the topic, a revelation so embarrassing for the museum that they dropped Shell as a sponsor.

'Social licence' is not trivial. Seeing Shell's logo on the poster for the Rembrandt exhibition at the National Gallery does something to us. It has a bearing on our perception of companies committed to accelerating the very conditions that drive climate change. A historical, albeit significantly less sinister, equivalent is tobacco – a business that has gone into unequivocal disrepute. How will we look back on the oil industry? Activists involved in these actions feel that this time around we cannot wait to see the damaging consequences – we cannot afford the benefit of hindsight.

In 2015, Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement (DANCE) joined the Art Not Oil Coalition. Actions span from meditating in the Great Court of the British Museum, to theatrical intervention, musical protests and 'disobedient exhibitions' (<http://bp-or-not-bp.org/news/we-occupy-the-british-museum-with-a-disobedient-exhibition/>). Rather than vilifying individuals, the actions involve an embodiment of the intention to care for the planet; an offering of a firm "no" to practices that exacerbate climate change. The campaign has gained increasing momentum, with wide coverage in national media. Recently, BP dropped Tate and the Edinburgh Festival. The next crucial step is whether the remaining museums choose to divest – and break ties with oil companies for good.

Protest matters. However, it is not only a matter of outcome. Direct action is also about having the courage of our convictions and (re-)aligning our actions with what we deeply care about – an opportunity to express deep care. How would you like to bring your care into the world?

**To find out more about DANCE, please visit: [www.thedancewebsite.org](http://www.thedancewebsite.org)**



## LIVING FEARLESSLY WITH CHANGE:

Exploring Ageing, Illness and Death through Buddhist Practice and Service

With Jean Wilkins and Zohar Lavie (pictured)

“He who takes care of the sick takes care of me,” declared the Buddha. This statement of interconnectivity was made after discovering a monk, desperately ill, lying in soiled robes. Ananda and the Buddha nursed the sick monk, and used their action as a reminder to the sangha that it is the responsibility of the whole community to care for the sick. (Vin.i,301ff.).

This message of the Buddha is as true today as it was then. Our society is mostly meeting the realities of life: ageing, sickness, separation, and death, through a veil of fear and denial. As Dharma practitioners we can use our practice to turn towards these divine messengers instead of away from them. As we do so we open to a path that nourishes and cultivates our wisdom and compassion and acknowledges our connection with each other and all of life.

In the last decade of SanghaSeva’s work retreats I have had the opportunity to bring mindfulness, inquiry, and kindness into my life and others’ lives. Whether I’m sitting with an outcast leprosy patient in Anandwan (India) or on retreat on my meditation cushion, what is required of me is the same: to stay present, open and compassionate towards everyone involved, including myself, to intimately meet my experience, and use that which is unfolding in this very moment as fuel for my practice, as the very essence of freedom and awakening.

Sadly we normally shrink away from these experiences, defining them as problems to be removed rather than opportunities to grow. There are deep benefits in meeting our edge;

I may still retreat from pain at times, but I know that staying steady on the boundary of what I can bear has always helped me extend beyond my ‘limits’. As Daphne Rae said, “I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.” In meeting my own limitations I meet that which is limitless, a true strength which we all share and which unites us when we act from it.

It is in this spirit that we are looking forward to the opening of the *Living Fearlessly with Change: Exploring Ageing, Illness and Death through Buddhist Practice and Service* programme in July. It promises to be a rich and nourishing endeavour for one and all.



## BOOK REVIEW

After Buddhism by Stephen Batchelor

Winton Higgins

Winton Higgins is a senior social-science academic and writer. He has taught meditation and Dharma in the western Insight tradition for over twenty years, mainly in and around his home town of Sydney. He helped found Sydney Insight Meditators (SIM) in 2005, and in recent years has also taught and run workshops in New Zealand.

Exegeses of the Pali canon are legion, all written from the perspective of an institutionalised school of Buddhism. Stephen Batchelor has written one with no such institutional perspective. Rather, he’s seeking coherent themes, emphases and practices that arose in Siddhattha Gotama’s de-institutionalised heat-and-dust world of ancient India, ones that resonate in our own modern Western culture.

After his long career as a scholar, monastic and lay Dharma practitioner and teacher, he draws on the profusion of Buddhist developments since the founder’s death without letting any of them skew his own project. While retrieval of the early teachings remains centre-stage, he also captures affinities between the Dharma and strands of modern Western thought – not least between the Buddha’s own refusal of metaphysical speculation and today’s post-metaphysical schools of phenomenology, existentialism and pragmatism.

The book’s title indicates an intention to break free of the Dharma’s settled, conventional iterations (‘Buddhism’), and to allow its existential immediacy to shine forth. ‘How should I live?’ – that eternal question – thus attracts stimulating responses from the early teachings.

Amid the more general themes Stephen presents, he extrapolates the lives of individuals who enjoyed close contact with the Buddha, but whom posterity has neglected, mostly because they didn’t further the institutional narrative in question – for instance, because they were mere ‘householders’. Brought back to life, they have stories to tell that can inform our own self-reflection, as well as our understanding that Dharma practice can’t be reduced to meditative proficiency. Rather, it’s a whole-of-life ethical path – one too often obscured by later accretions of metaphysical belief, and in the West, by meditative reductionism.

The true aim of Dharmic meditation isn’t an individual solution – ‘attainment’, transcendence, and escape from the human condition (dukkha) – but rather the cultivation of a profound sensibility that underpins a ‘culture of awakening’. This makes meditation a communal practice, which points the way to a new civilisation, one that develops the human potential to its highest pitch.

This isn’t a buddhologist’s book. Dharma practitioners and the informed public will find it a relevant and compelling text, one written with erudition, fluency and grace. Don’t miss it.

# SOCIAL SANGHA

Connecting with us on social media offers an additional way to stay up-to-date with what's happening both at Gaia House and across the wider sangha.

Our facebook page and Twitter account also provide a forum for connection beyond the retreat environment, as well as supporting our efforts to be as accessible as possible to all sectors of our diverse community. We really enjoy receiving your feedback via these platforms, and always endeavour to be as responsive as possible. It's great to be able to share some of the feedback we've received over the last year here in our newsletter. Thank you!



**@GaiaHouseUK** Loved the 4 immeasurables with Zohar & Caroline – Thanks! I'm missing Gaia House :-)



Happy New Year! Emerging blinking into 2016 after a week's silence **@GaiaHouseUK** w. the great @pauilyburrows @jakedartington & Kirsten Kratz



Very excited to embark on 10 month process of "living fearlessly with change" **@GaiaHouseUK** exploring themes like #ageing #death and #illness



ThankU 4a fascinating +restful 3 days. Such a warm welcome +a lovely house +food :) Cud have spent a week in the library alone!



**@GaiaHouseUK** I love Gaia House. By day 2 I always sit there and think, 'It's madness not to do this more often.'



After years of trying so many different retreats **@GaiaHouseUK** remains the one place that has transformed me utterly.



Just returned from a week's silent retreat at Gaia...lost for words!



Thank you for a wonderful time. I can't wait to return x



A wonderful weekend. Thank you to all for making it very special.



Watering my Gaia House spider plant gifted by Susanne in 2012 when it was tiny and I didn't know if, like my meditation practice, it would make it home. It did and so did my practice. With thanks.



Thank you Gaia House for a peaceful and restorative week!



Just received my cookbook. Thank you! Can't wait to cook now.

## Connect with us:



[www.facebook.com/Gaia.House.UK](http://www.facebook.com/Gaia.House.UK)



[twitter.com/GaiaHouseUK](http://twitter.com/GaiaHouseUK)

# COMING SOON...

## All-night vigil 2016

Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement (DANCE) is pleased to be organising an all-night vigil on Saturday 10 September 2016 at Gaia House, raising funds in conjunction with the Mandala Trust, which will go to refugee projects in Greece for mothers, their children and unaccompanied children run by the volunteer-based organisation Lighthouse Relief.

This is an opportunity to practise in a very special way – through the exquisite stillness of the night, in a heartfelt community, and with a skilful intention to look inwards, and also to participate in compassionate action. If you can't make it to Gaia House, you are very much invited to organise your own vigil. Please don't be put off by the notion of staying up all night – participants have reported each year just how beautiful it is to practise in this

way, with the intention to connect with and support other people providing fuel for our fires when tiredness comes (and goes).

The proceedings at Gaia House will be facilitated, and there will be a schedule to support us through the night, although participants need to have some experience of meditation as this will not be a 'taught' event.

Please contact Jane on [organicbotanic@gmail.com](mailto:organicbotanic@gmail.com) to register, or to let us know if you would like to organise a vigil.

If you would like to sponsor those who are participating, please visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/Sangha-Fundraising>

This is a 'group sponsorship' page, which participants can also ask their sponsors to visit in order to donate money.

## 2017 retreat programme

We have a rich and varied group retreat programme lined up for next year which we look forward to sharing with you soon.

Our 2017 retreats will go live on our website during the first week of November. If you have been on retreat at Gaia House within the last three years you will automatically receive a copy of the programme in the post (unless you have asked us not to send you paper mailings).

We look forward to welcoming many of you back to Gaia House next year.



# SANGHA NEWS

## Insight North East: Day Retreats with Yanai Postelnik

**17 Sep 2016, 9.30am-5pm**

### Mindful Presence, Wisdom and Compassion

An opportunity to engage in sustained meditation practice in an atmosphere of silence.

There will be sitting, walking and standing meditations, Dharma teachings, meetings with the teacher and instructions on bringing awareness to every part of our experience. The retreat is suitable for beginners and experienced meditators.

Newton and Bywell Village Hall

Newton, near Stocksfield NE43 7UL

Cost: £20 plus teacher dana

**18 Sep 2016, 9.30am-5pm**

### Insight Meditation and Walking: An Opportunity to Cultivate Mindfulness in the Beauty of Rural Northumberland

A special opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and practise meditation, while exploring the beauty and wilderness of Blanchland Moor.

Following in the tradition of the Buddha, we will support our hearts to deepen in wisdom and compassion while walking together, sitting in meditation, and spending time in nature. We will be walking in a range of landscapes in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Blanchland Village Hall provides an ideal base, with a spacious heated hall for meditation, and toilets. Much of our time together will be spent in silence, and there will also be meditation instructions, Dharma teachings and opportunities to discuss meditation with the teacher.

Starting from: Blanchland Village Hall, Derwent View, Blanchland DH8 9UA

Cost: £20 plus teacher dana

For more information or to book a place, please email [walter@whitleybay.plus.com](mailto:walter@whitleybay.plus.com) or call 07508 055643

<http://insightnortheast.com>

## Ajahn Brahm's Dharma Tour: Buddhism in the 21st Century

**25 Oct - 2 Nov**

A programme of talks and meditation retreats in and around London, in support of establishing a Bhikkhuni presence in the UK.

For details and booking visit [www.anukampaproject.org](http://www.anukampaproject.org)



## Regional retreats

### BRIGHTON

**2 Oct / Jill Shepherd & Rosalie Dores: Insight Dialogue**

**26 Nov / Sister (Ajahn) Metta**

**15 Apr 2017 / Ajahn Amaro**

**27 May 2017 / Martin Aylward**

**Contact:** bodhitreebrighton.org.uk /  
btbsecretary@gmail.com

Please check the website for additions to the 2016/17 programme.

### MID-WALES

**11 Sep / Jaya Rudgard**

**Embracing Life: A Day of Mindful and Heartfelt Presence**

£15 plus teacher dana

**14 Aug / 9 Oct / 13 Nov / 11 Dec**

**Self-managed Day-retreats**

At The Pales, a secluded Quaker meeting house, with wonderful walking paths.

Up to three people can camp at The Pales overnight, and there are B&B's within a short driving distance. Self-managed days are suitable for meditators who are able to guide their own practice, as there is no teacher on-site. Cost: Voluntary contribution towards room-hire (guideline: £5-£10).

**Contact:** Ella Titman Tamari

info@ellatamari.com / 07745905618

<http://meditationmidwales.org/index.html>

### CAMBRIDGE

**17 Sep / Catherine McGee**

**Venue:** Friends Meeting House,  
12 Jesus Lane, Cambridge CB5 8BA

**Contact:** cambridgeinsight@gmail.com

<https://cambridgedayretreats.wordpress.com>

### BRISTOL

**17 Sep / Martin Aylward**

**The Dharma and the Drama: Mindfulness Amidst a Messy Life**

**25 Sep - 19 Oct / Catherine McGee**

**Passion and Dispassion – A Path of Equanimity and Aliveness**

One day (25 Sep) and four evenings

(28 Sep, 5 Oct, 12 Oct, 19 Oct)

To be held at two venues in central Bristol.

Suitable for experienced practitioners and newer practitioners who already have a grounding in the basics of Insight Meditation.

£65 plus teacher dana

**26 Nov / Bhante Bodhidharma Mindfulness, Ethics and Daily Life**

**17 June 2017 / Chris Cullen**

**Venue:** St Michaels on the Mount Parish Hall, St Michaels on the Mount School, Old Park Hill, off Perry Road, Bristol BS2 8BE

**Contact:** <http://www.bristolmeditation.org.uk/day-retreats>

juliawallond@yahoo.com

### OXFORD

**24 Sep / Jaya Rudgard**

**22 Oct / Bhante Bodhidharma**

**26 Nov / Chris Cullen**

**4 Feb 2017 / Chris Cullen**

**4 Mar 2017 / Kirsten Kratz**

**1 Apr 2017 / Jaya Rudgard**

**6 May 2017 / Jake Dartington**

**10 Jun 2017 / Chris Cullen**

**Venue:** Headington Parish Hall

**Time:** 10am-5pm, registration from 9.15am

**Cost:** £10 (£5 concession) plus teacher dana

**Contact:** [www.oxfordgaiahouse.com](http://www.oxfordgaiahouse.com) (for booking, what to bring and other information)

**General enquiries:** Brigid or David / 01608 811 940

### SHEFFIELD

**10-14 August / Catherine McGee**  
**Passion and Dispassion – A Path of Equanimity and Aliveness**

Five-day residential retreat

Duke's Barn, Beeley, Derbyshire

Open to people with prior experience of meditation who have attended at least a two-day (consecutive) non-residential silent meditation or mindfulness retreat.

£190 (£150 supported rate, £230 sponsor rate, £95 young person's rate) plus teacher dana

**24-25 Sep/ Zohar Lavie**

**Unconditional Friendliness: Deepening into Tenderness and Joy**

A non-residential retreat weekend

Whirlow Spirituality Centre, Sheffield S11 9RX

**29-31 Dec / Sister Metta**

New Year (non-residential) retreat

Sheffield Quaker Meeting House, St James Street, S1 2EW

**Contact:** River Wolton / 07748 271 470

sghsg2009@gmail.com

[www.sheffieldinsightmeditation.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldinsightmeditation.org.uk)

# London Insight Meditation – 2016 schedule

## 10 Jul

Meditation day – £17  
Chris Cullen  
Equanimity – the Practice of Peace  
King Alfred School

## 23 Jul

Weekend – £55  
Anne Michel & Bhante Sukhacitto  
Insight Dialogue  
St Luke's Community Centre

## 21 Aug

Meditation day – £17  
Thanissara & Kittisara  
From Separation to Seamless Reality  
King Alfred School

## 3 Sep

Six-week course – £85  
Paul Burrows  
An Introduction to Insight Meditation  
St Luke's Community Centre

## 10 Sep

Meditation day – £17  
Ajahn Sucitto  
Rewilding the Mind (Saturday)  
King Alfred School

## 11 Sep

Meditation day – £17  
Ajahn Sucitto  
Rewilding the Mind (Sunday)  
King Alfred School

## 25 Sep

Meditation day – £17  
Rob Burbea  
King Alfred School

## 23 Oct

Meditation day – £17  
Bhante Bodhidhamma  
Right 'Speech', Especially in View of  
the Sacred  
King Alfred School

## 12 Nov

Workshop – £27  
John Peacock & Chris Cullen  
Mindfulness of Dhammas (mental phenomena)  
Friends House (Euston)

## 19 Nov

Meditation day – £17  
Christina Feldman  
Embodiment  
King Alfred School

## 20 Nov

Meditation day – £17  
Christina Feldman  
Awakening and Forgetting (for experienced  
students)  
King Alfred School

## 4 Dec

Meditation day – £17  
Catherine McGee  
Love is Stronger than Death  
King Alfred School

Please register on the London Insight Meditation website to receive email updates about these and all other events. New events are added regularly.

There is a network of sitting groups in and around London informally linked with London Insight Meditation, including study groups with particular themes. See the website for details.

Teachers offer personal interviews in London throughout the year. Join the mailing list to receive email notifications of forthcoming interview opportunities.

## Contact details:

enquiries@londoninsight.org  
07954 472 771  
www.londoninsight.org  
facebook/londoninsight  
Twitter: @londoninsight

## SanghaSeva

Meditation in action retreats led by  
Zohar Lavie and Nathan Glyde

## Retreat to Gayles

Eastbourne, East Sussex

### Being Peace Work Retreat, Israel and Palestine

16-27 Oct

A unique opportunity to bring our practice  
into the world.

### Anandwan Retreats, India

30 Dec – 28 Jan 2017

Living and working in a vibrant community  
of the leprosy-affected.

For more information visit  
www.sanghaseva.org

### Dharmalaya Institute for Compassionate Living, Himalayan Foothills, India

23 March – 11 April 2017

Exploring inner and outer sustainability.

### The Path of Insight Meditation with Yanai Postelnik

2-4 Dec

This retreat will emphasise simply being  
present and opening to the way things are,  
as the ground of wellbeing and spiritual  
awakening. Amidst the pressures of modern  
living, meditation offers a direct pathway  
to discover inner peace and cultivate a  
boundless open-hearted relationship to life.

### A Retreat with Kirsten Kratz 17-19 Mar 2017

Contact: <http://www.retreattogayles.co.uk>

info@retreattogayles.co.uk  
07721 023 845





# LIVING MAP

Harula Ladd

Kitchen Coordinator, February 2015 – May 2016

Like a mandala made of sand  
You painstakingly shaped my  
pieces into a whole  
I'd never before seen

But just as the picture  
Begins to make sense  
You cast me into the sea  
With light ceremony

Uncountable coloured grains  
Tossed on wild waves  
Already sinking  
But somewhere

In a mind  
A memory  
A moment  
An image existed

Though it is not the goal  
Rather a map that lives  
A land both formed and referenced  
With each new breath

Time's patience alone  
Permits cartographers to believe  
In the fairytale of their own accuracy

In truth  
The river they plotted  
Has already changed course



## FRIENDS OF GAIA HOUSE

Join us in celebrating our community

The Friends of Gaia House scheme is a new, flexible way to support our work and help shape our future plans.

You can join online, by post or during after-retreat-information in the library and will receive our twice-yearly Friends e-newsletter, keeping you up-to-date with news of our development plans, fundraising activities, consultation exercises, and volunteering opportunities.



To sign up or find out more, please visit [www.gaiahouse.co.uk/gaia-house-friends](http://www.gaiahouse.co.uk/gaia-house-friends)  
Email or phone Hannah:  
[comms@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:comms@gaiahouse.co.uk) / 01626 323887



**GAIA HOUSE**  
INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

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