

Triratna Southampton Chairman's Report 2021

In last year's Chairman's report began by recalling the importance for the Southampton Buddhist Centre of the inspiration offered by the Buddha Amitabha and his red rite of fascination and attraction in bringing more and more people to the Buddha's teaching, and in particular to the Ideal of spiritual community.

The Period from May 2020 to May 2021 has of course been exceptional and extraordinary for the world as a whole. It also has been exceptional and extraordinary in the smaller world of the Southampton Buddhist Centre, with much good news to report with regards the meeting of our charity's aims and objectives.

Growth of the Sangha

Recent weeks have seen the growth of the committed order community at the heart of our activities with the ordinations of Amalasraddha and Utpaladhi. Whilst the first of these was delayed from last year due to the pandemic, the two ordinations represent the flowering now of individual and collective commitment over many years. They bring the order presence in Southampton now to 7 (4 Dharmacharinis and 3 Dharmacaris). With such talented individuals joining the order, our resources to communicate the Dharma are inevitably strengthened for the coming years.

This year though has been more than simply a flowering of seeds previously sown. It has also seen new commitments being made for future flowering. Three new ordination requests has been made, whilst 6 people became mitras in a memorable and groundbreaking online ceremony in June 2020. With around half a dozen people are likely to have their mitra ceremonies on Dharma Day in July, our Sangha is certainly a widening circle of friends in the Dharma life.

Together our current community of explicitly practising Triratna Buddhists comprises 25: 7 order members (4 women 3 men), 18 mitras (11 women - 8 active, 7 men - 6 active). Of the mitras, 6 are training for ordination, with another known to be seriously considering it. All of this indicates a sangha that is healthy and growing in its essentials, with people clearly becoming attracted to the Three Jewels.

Lockdown Growth

The Pandemic taught us how to be an online centre. All our activities shifted to Zoom. This produced an outcome that many people joined in with activities who may otherwise have been unable to due to physical distance and other accessibility issues.

Tuesday Night Introductory Courses had much increased attendance (up by approx 300% over the previous year) with a varied range of courses derived from a mixture of Sikkha Project courses and home grown courses on the Brahma Viharas and Satipatthana. This gave newcomers the opportunity to sustain involvement with us and make the transition to deeper involvement via our regulars' session (Sangha Morning) or the Foundation Year of the Dharma Training Course for Mitras. Another noteworthy feature of these courses was the continuing presence upon the teaching teams of mitras, who often showed remarkable talent and confidence in the task. Other things to mention about these courses are the effectiveness of

publicity for them (which has comprised video announcements and targeted Facebook advertising, and the decision for the majority of the lockdown to provide them on a Dana (by donation) basis. This has surely furthered our reach into the community and will have been good public relations. It has proven financially viable and meant that for months we were operating entirely on a Dana Economy which was an inspiring financial model. This was possible due to regular donations from Sangha members, increased numbers of Standing Orders and Gift Aid claims, along with a period of stable residency in the flat above the centre, which in recent times has been harmoniously occupied by three men who, if not super involved in local Triratna activities have all attended some, have an interest in spiritual growth and are very sympathetic to our aims.

Wednesday Nights continued as Dharma Training night online, and through the assistance of Saddhabhaya was able to grow to accommodate a fourth group doing the Foundation Year. This brought the total meeting to deepen their Dharma practice each week to 32. The programme was supplemented by regular devotional and practise evenings, especially for rejoicing in the merits of those departing to be ordained, and for the Mitra ceremonies of 6 participants (which due to their groundbreaking nature attracted visitors from around Triratna and encouraged other centres to follow suit.

Friday Nights throughout lockdown intensified to become a weekly puja night, with a regular handful of participants. As the year proceeded it was possible to have limited numbers in physical attendance, puja loaning itself quite easily to the hybrid virtual/physical style.

Sangha Morning (our weekly session for all regulars) was remarkably consistent in attendance throughout the the year with on average 15 people attending. We continued with our series of topics based on Bhante's Guide to the Buddhist Path, supplemented by explorations of the Metta Sutta and the 4 Mind Turnings. The sessions were also good occasions to welcome popular guests from the broader Triratna world including Mokshini, Danapriya, Maitrimala and Padmavajra.

Sundays also saw significant expansion in activities with monthly single-sex meetings for men and women. This was a welcome development in our facility to offer the benefits of single sex environments, known for the depth they enable. Four Festival Day Retreats and our own unique Sunday Morning Philosophy club, in which we looked at Western Philosophy from a Buddhist viewpoint, introducing and discussion ideas from Plato, Aristotle and Descartes.

We also had Jo Newman offer a series of online yoga sessions on a dana basis, and likewise with early morning meditations offered by Dylan and Chris.

The summer enabled us to hold one event for our community outdoors in the form of a picnic, meditation and puja at Lakeside Country Park. It was a joy to meet in person in the largest numbers the year allowed, and to meet some in person for the very first time. The weather was fortunately kind.

A final significant point to add is that all this growth in our general attendance is also finding expression through bookings to our annual weekend retreat. Presuming that Rivendell are able to relax social distancing requirements, the event will be fully booked by Southampton Sangha members for the first time, without recourse to inviting people from other groups to make up numbers.

Lessons learned from Corona Year

Key points

- Much increased attendance shows there is a hunger for what we offer. More are looking for something than we might assume
- Our geographical scope broader than Southampton
- Our physical location in St Mary's may not be ideal in the long term, therefore there is a need to adapt our thinking on how to realise our vision of bringing the 3 Jewels to people in the longer term
- Clearly online is an effective means, and one that it may be wise to continue in some form
- And yet there is great value in meeting in person - A fuller 'vital mutual responsiveness' that much aids the creation of Sangha
- Our pathway of deepening involvement is quite effective : Introductory courses - Foundation Year - Sangha Morning - Dharma Training for Mitras - Requesting ordination Life in the Order.
- We could perhaps signpost that pathway more explicitly

Charity Aims and Strategy

The trustees held a couple of meetings to address these during lockdown. The conditions of lockdown inhibited progress, so this needs to be taken up again. Nonetheless, subject to review we did identify 5 Strategic Priorities

1) The Need for Depth and Intensity

Given the distance of our centre from other Triratna projects, and that our growing Sangha is still relatively spiritually inexperienced, there is a need for the Dharma to take deeper root amongst us. This could be enabled by developing more of a culture of going on retreat, particularly among newer Friends and Mitras.

Intensity and deepening Going for Refuge could also be aided by teams engaging in projects together leading the participants into closer existential contact with one another. This could take the form of outreach classes (there seem to be a number of us in the proximity of Winchester), fundraising ventures or projects to add environmental benefit to the locality of St Mary's.

2) The Need to be Distinctly Triratna

We are not a generalised Buddhist Club, but a distinct traditional Buddhist community, continuing to derive guidance from our particularly gifted root teacher Urgyen Sangharakshita and his senior disciples. In terms of depth this means continuing to plumb Sangharakshita's Dharmic exposition to the fullest. In terms of breadth it means developing stronger links and interaction with the broader Triratna world.

3) Maintaining and Developing our current centre premises

Recognising that the St Mary's location may not be the best in the long term, and consequently not over investing in it with major structural renovations, there remains the need to maintain and beautify it as a place of inspiration for our current efforts.

4) Recognising our Charity Scope

Our "catchment area" of participants in the Dharma extends beyond Southampton and into Hampshire and Dorset. This requires a conscious strategy in order to be built upon.

5) Developing our Public Image and Interface

This means creating a unified and consistently recognisable interface at all points of contact with the public: Decor, Online and Physical publicity design ("branding"), overhaul of website

Final Points

Whilst we are at a point of growth and potential, our human resources of committed Buddhists are still limited. 7 order members are still few. The experienced needs both to be facilitating the next generation of committed Southampton Triratna Buddhists, and also to be forming teams to take on

our charity projects so that teamwork remains effective and no individual is overloaded. This can mean e.g. the passing on of mitra convening batons, and the creation of teams for such areas as centre maintenance, courses and outreach work.

In short there is plenty of opportunity for those deepening their involvement with us to play a key part in shaping our future.

Dhammavijaya June 3 2021

Triratna Southampton

2020 Annual Accounts

Receipts and Payments Accounts

Receipts

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
<u>Dharma Activities</u>		
Women's group	53	123
Thursday sangha class dana	150	
Friday Evenings	25	617
Saturday class	1,152	
Lunchtime Meditation		236
Mitra Morning		
Retreats	1,250	1,710
Courses	2,215	2,462
Men's group		123
Southampton Council Group	81	393
Study Groups	2,229	1,906
Sangha Night		1,666
	<hr/> 7,155	<hr/> 9,236
<u>Donations</u>		
One-off donations	1,606	390
Fundraising		
Standing Orders	9,070	5,091
Gift Aid Tax	2,140	2,052
	<hr/> 12,816	<hr/> 7,533
<u>Other Income</u>		
Book Sales (net)	200	320
Yoga	390	811
Mela		24
Rental Income	11,440	10,144
Bank Interest		
	<hr/> 12,030	<hr/> 11,299
Total Income	32,001	28,068

Payments

Administration

Insurance	909	1,071
Loan Interest (Windhorse)	2,755	2,978
Computer/Internet/Telephone	285	313
	<hr/> 3,949	<hr/> 4,362

Triratna Southampton

2020 Annual Accounts

Receipts and Payments Accounts

Continued

Payments

Continued

2020

2019

Building - repairs and maintenance

1,685

894

Central Triratna Dana

120

314

Dharma Activity Costs

Publicity / Advertising

562

1,065

Teaching materials

417

Retreat Costs

1,374

709

2,353

1,774

General Costs

Miscellaneous/Unknown

309

200

Staff Costs

11,280

7,100

Yoga Teachers

378

Travel

60

248

11,649

7,926

Costs associated with the rental income

Electricity

367

1,017

Gas

2,562

2,241

Water

731

539

Council Tax

891

1,319

4,551

5,116

Asset and Investment Purchases

Loan repayment (Windhorse)

8,237

8,014

Historical adjustment:

Windhorse has now recorded the December 2017 loan repayment that was made to them.

As this wasn't recorded in the SOFA at that time, we are now recording it here. It was, however, recorded in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities, as an asset. Therefore that latter entry has now been removed from the 2020 Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

Loan repayment (Windhorse) - December 2017

2,025

Loan repayment (Windhorse) - December 2017 (INTEREST)

276

Total Expenditure

34,845

28,400

Net Income

-2,844

-332

Triratna Southampton
2020 Annual Accounts

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
<u>Fixed Assets</u>		
Building & Land	257,150	257,150
FFE (Mats)	550	550
	<u>257,700</u>	<u>257,700</u>
<u>Current Assets</u>		
Co-op Bank Account	5,862	6,406
extra loan re-payment made to Windhorse (Dec 2017)		2,301 Note 1
	<u>5,862</u>	<u>8,707</u>
Total Assets	263,562	266,407
<u>Liabilities</u>		
Windhorse Loan Capital	90,400	100,662
	<u>90,400</u>	<u>100,662</u>
Net Assets	173,162	165,745
<u>Represented by</u>		
Funds brought forward	165,745	158,063
roundings adjustment	-1	
Surplus for year	-2,844	-332 Note 1
Capital payments made in the year to reduce the Loan liability	10,262	8,014 Note 1
	173,162	165,745

Note 1

In December 2017 the charity made a payment of £2,301 to Windhorse Trust. This was, in the end, not recorded in the accounts and was a payment made in addition to the schedule.

It was therefore added to this Statement of Assets and Liabilities as an amount owing back to the charity from Windhorse Trust.

However, following a revision to the loan schedule in 2021, it has come to light that Windhorse have adjusted the schedule accordingly, to take account of that December 2017 payment.

This £2,301 payment has therefore been removed from the assets section of the Statement of Assets and Liabilities, and added as a historical adjustment into the Receipts and Payments accounts for this current year of 2020.

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Triratna Southampton

I report on the accounts of Triratna Southampton for the year ended 31/12/2020.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. You consider that an audit is not required (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to examine the accounts following the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act), and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of examiner's statement

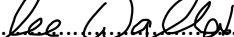
My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's unqualified statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met, or to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mr Lee Walford MAAT (AAT Licensed Accountant No. 1000163)

24 Temple End, Great Wilbraham, Cambridge, CB21 5JF

Signed 

Date: 27th September 2021