

The background is a collage of images and geometric shapes. A large red triangle occupies the upper right. A blue triangle is on the right side. A yellow and orange geometric shape is on the left. A black and white photograph of a smiling man is in the top right corner. The text "ANNUAL REPORT" is centered in the red triangle, and "20 21" is in the blue triangle.

ANNUAL REPORT

**20
21**

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ABOUT US

Brixton Buddhist Community is part of the Triratna Buddhist Community; an international Buddhist movement founded in 1967 by Urgyen Sangharakshita. "Triratna" means "three jewels". These three jewels are shown in our logo.



They represent the three highest ideals that lie at the heart of Buddhism:



The Buddha
the ideal of
Enlightenment

The Dharma
the teachings
of the Buddha

The Sangha
the spiritual
community



We call ourselves
Brixton Buddhist Community
rather than a group or an organisation, because this spiritual community - the Sangha - is key to our practise and understanding of Buddhism.

OUR COMMUNITY

Brixton Buddhist Community is a network of individuals united by the shared aim of developing spiritually and living in accordance with Buddhist principles of friendship; generosity; honest, kindly communication and care for each other's spiritual welfare. A key part of this vision is helping others benefit from the teachings of the Buddha, such as meditation, mindfulness, ethics and social engagement.

The community is made up of practitioners at different levels of commitment to the Buddhist path; Order Members, Mitras, people who attend regularly, and people who just drop in to our classes.

WHAT IS AN ORDER MEMBER?



Someone who has been ordained into the Triratna Buddhist Order, is an 'Order Member'.

Ordination is a significant and powerful ceremony in which an individual makes a lifelong commitment to following the Buddhist path, placing this at the centre of their lives.

Training for ordination is a process which takes many years of personal practice, dharma study and periods of being on retreat. During their ordination, a practitioner makes commitments to practice for the benefit of all beings, to act in accordance with 10 Buddhist ethical precepts and to live in harmony with others. At Ordination they are given special meditation practice and a new Buddhist name to signify their commitment to the spiritual life. You can usually recognise an Order Member because they wear a symbolic white scarf (kesa) embroidered with the three jewels.

WHAT IS A MITRA?

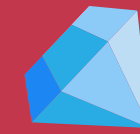
"Everyone who has contact with Brixton Buddhist Community, (such as coming to a class) is considered a 'friend'."

However someone who feels a particular connection with our community and has decided to follow the Buddhist path can ask to become a 'Mitra' (which simply means 'friend' in Sanskrit). Becoming a Mitra marks a deepening of commitment for the practitioner, and there are special activities, including retreats and study groups open to Mitras to support them in this.

People ask to become a Mitra when they:



Consider that they are Buddhists.



Are trying to live in accordance with the five ethical precepts of Buddhism.



Feel that the Triratna Buddhist Community is the appropriate spiritual context for them.

Once a person's request to be a Mitra has been accepted, they take part in a simple public ceremony on a festival day. This ceremony is recognised at all Triratna centres worldwide, and they will be regarded as a Mitra wherever they go.

Later on, some Mitras also decide to ask for ordination, and begin the process of training for ordination. However, this is not an expectation and many people practice happily as Mitras within our community the rest of their lives.



WHAT IS A STUDY GROUP?

All Triratna Buddhist Centres offer a four-year programme of study which covers the key aspects of the Buddha's teaching and Sangharakshita's approach to it. These study groups are mainly for Mitras to help them deepen their commitment to the Buddhist path.

However, at Brixton we offer the first year of this programme to anyone who would like to deepen their understanding of Buddhism and Buddhist practice. If you are interested in joining a study group, then speak to an Order Member at one of our classes.



DIVERSITY

RACIAL DIVERSITY

Brixton's rich cultural diversity is huge part of its appeal and we are keen that our community is fully representative of the community it serves.

Although our community is increasingly diverse, especially at our classes, we still have a way to go. This is particularly true amongst our teaching team and trustee board. Our hope is that within a few years, our diversity work will mean more members of our sangha from Black, Asian and other ethnic groups will start to feel sufficiently experienced to step into more of these leading roles.

Currently we work with the other London Buddhist Centres to support London-wide People of Colour activities for our sangha members. Brixton's trustees are also developing a new diversity plan with input from the London Buddhist Centre's Mindful of Race Group, and our involvement with the European Chair's Assembly Diversity Group. We hope this initiative will offer more pathways into our community for people of all ethnic groups, as well as offer specific support for People of Colour to deepen their Buddhist practice within our community.

The Triratna Buddhist Community is unique in the Buddhist world as it recognises equal ordination for both women and men

GENDER DIVERSITY

Within the Buddhist tradition, historically and culturally there has been a strict divide between men and women practitioners. The Triratna Buddhist Community is unique in the Buddhist world as it recognises equal ordination for both women and men, who both join a single sangha. However, it also recognises that there is much to gain by sharing our lives with those who have an experience closest to our own.

In Triratna this has led to the practice of women being trained and ordained by other women and men by men. It is for this reason that alongside our many mixed events, our study groups and residential communities are often established as women's or men's groups

Yet, we are aware that this structure does not suit everyone. In response to the emerging awareness of gender diversity, Triratna is currently in a process of creating more supportive contexts for people who are gender diverse, so that they have the necessary conditions to deepen their practice, become Mitras and train for ordination. These needs vary widely by individual, but examples include connecting people with the broader Triratna Gender Diverse Sangha, establishing gender diverse study groups and ordination training programmes, or in the case of people transitioning, supporting them to move between the existing men's or women's wings of the Order and movement.



TRUSTEES 2022

Brixton Buddhist Community is a registered UK charity. Decisions about the community's vision, activities, finances, and public communications are made by a board of trustees who meet bi-monthly. They are all volunteers, with the exception of Viryanaga, the Chair. Because we are a spiritual community, the trustees are all experienced Order Members able to guide the spiritual direction of the community. We are keen to have more women and people for colour on the trustee board, and hope to achieve this as more people in our community become ordained in the coming years.



MAITRINARA
MEN'S MITRA CONVENOR



AMARAPUSPA
WOMEN'S MITRA CONVENOR



S U D D H A K A



S A G A R A S I L A



VIRYANAGA
CHAIR



AMALADANA
FINANCE OFFICER

VOTING MEMBERS

Brixton Buddhist Community is a registered UK charity. Decisions about the community's vision, activities, finances, and public communications are made by a board of trustees who meet bi-monthly. They are all volunteers, with the exception of Viryanaga, the Chair. Because we are a spiritual community, the trustees are all experienced Order Members able to guide the spiritual direction of the community. We are keen to have more women and people for colour on the trustee board, and hope to achieve this as more people in our community become ordained in the coming years.

ELENA



PRAJNAGHOSA



ARYANISHA



IAN



EMMA



ALEX



MAITRINITA



DAISY



LIZZY



PAM



LEADERSHIP ROLES

We have two Mitra Convenors, both of whom are volunteers. Amarapuspa looks after the women's sangha, and Maitrinara takes care of the men's sangha.



VIRYANAGA

The role of the Chair is to oversee the direction of the community, support the team and all the volunteers, and make the many small day-to-day decisions involved with running a thriving Buddhist organisation. Initially this role was voluntary position, but as our community has grown in recent years, the work has also grown into a full-time responsibility, with Viryanaga now employed by the charity.

CHAIR

A Mitra Convenor takes special responsibility for supporting Mitras within our community, both through running events and meeting with people individually. They also meet with men and women who are becoming more involved with our community, to help them find appropriate study groups or events to support their practice. They help to guide people in the process of becoming mitras and are also often a point of contact for Mitras who want to ask for ordination. They are always happy to hear from people interested in becoming more involved in our community.



PARAMABANDHU

Paramabandhu is the president of Brixton Buddhist Community. A president offers spiritual counsel and friendship to a community, and can be a source of help when issues arise. Paramabandhu is a senior Order Member, who along with others, hold responsibility for ordinations within the Triratna Buddhist Community. He is also an ex-chair of the London Buddhist Centre in East London, where he lives, and is a highly valued teacher. He visits us at least twice a year.

PRESIDENT



MAITRINARA
MEN'S MITRA CONVENOR



AMARAPUSPA
WOMEN'S MITRA CONVENOR

MITRA CONVENORS

OTHER TEACHERS

If you come to our events, often one or two of our trustees will be teaching. However, there are also some other wonderful Order Members who support our community though teaching.



MAITRINITA



VAJRATARA

They either live in South London or regularly visit us. You may also see some of our Mitras who are training for ordination teach at our Monday meditation class.

The centre team is the organisational hub of Brixton Buddhist Community. Together they are responsible for coordinating all the events, as well as managing our online content. Lizzy and Ian work two days a week, while Alex and Elena currently work one day a week each.

THE CENTRE TEAM



VIRYANAGA

CHAIR



LIZZY

PROGRAMMES CO-ORDINATOR



ELENA

ONLINE MEDIA CO-ORDINATOR



ALEX

GRAPHIC DESIGN



IAN

EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR

2021 IN NUMBERS...

ORDINATION REQUESTS

5

NEW MITRAS

3

NEW STUDY GROUP

1



MITRAS IN THE BRIXTON SANGHA

2019
27

2020
35

2021
44

MITRAS TRAINING FOR ORDINATION

2019
12

2020
16

2021
20

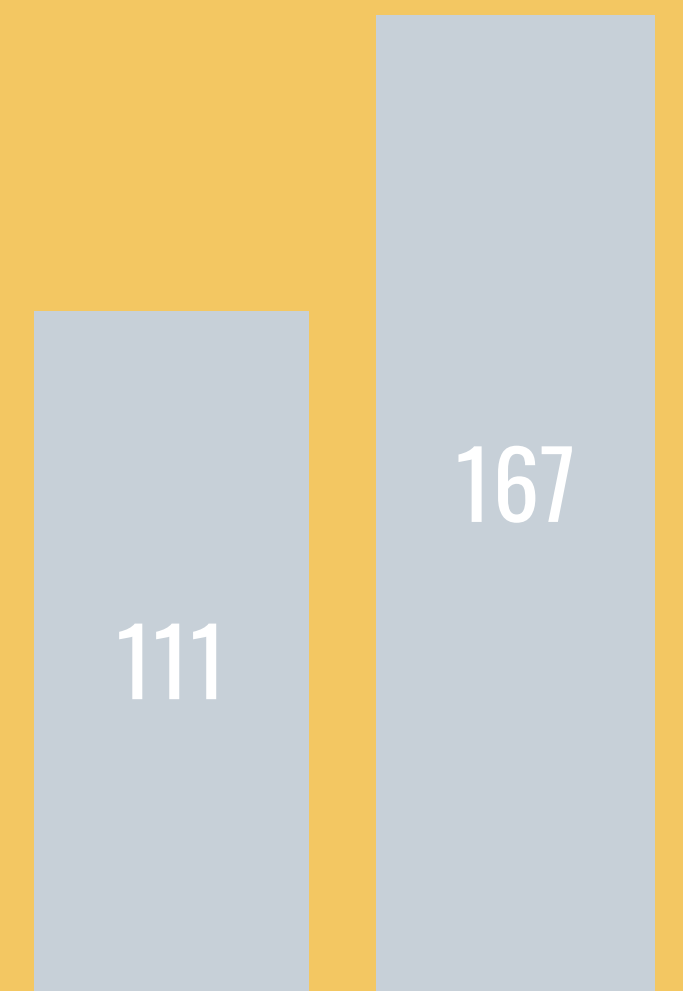
PEOPLE IN OR HAVING COMPLETED DHARMA TRAINING COURSES

2019
32

2020
39

2021
52

AN EVER WIDENING
CIRCLE, THE
SANGHA GROWS



2020

2021

COURSE ATTENDEES

CHAIR'S REPORT

VIRYANAGA

Sangharakshita, the founder of the Triratna Buddhist Community, has spoken of the spiritual community as not a group, not even a positive supportive group, but as a collection of individuals working in accordance with a shared vision and common ethical principles.

I was speaking to a friend the other day, the Chair of another Triratna Centre. He came to visit me in Brixton around 5 years ago, and was recounting his experience of visiting one of our meditation classes, crammed in under the eaves of the roof in the upstairs room at Yoga Point. I'd almost forgotten those times; 10-15 people who mostly all knew each other, sitting in front of a small Buddha rupa on the makeshift roof slate shrine, and the portal window.



The buses would rumble past and the noisy yoga classes would leave downstairs during our meditation sit. We've grown a great deal individually and collectively during this time.

Over the 6 years I've been involved with the Brixton Buddhist Community, we've moved from being a small positive spiritual group, to a large positive spiritual group. Now it feels like perhaps we are just starting to grow into a true spiritual community, as Bhante meant it - a collection of true individuals practising the Dharma.

One illustration that quickly comes to mind for me is a Dharma Study group that Suddhaka and I led for the past 4.5 years, which finished this year. It must be said, we were a rather rag-tag bunch of whoever was around at the time, literally whoever we could invite from the small classes back then. A few departed along the way, but those that finished are all now serious Dharma practitioners in their own right, displaying the qualities of generosity, selflessness, kindness, wisdom and awareness to a high degree. Many are now in the ordination process themselves, taking responsibility and starting to teach at some of our classes.

**"WE'VE GROWN A GREAT
DEAL, INDIVIDUALLY AND
COLLECTIVELY..."**



Another example is the support for Rathachuda and Amarapupsa by members of the sangha this year. If you are newer, you may not have come across Ratnachuda, but he was formerly a chair of Brixton and invested a great deal of love and energy into helping the sangha flourish.



RATNACHUDA

Amarapupsa, his partner, has been central here for many years too, and remains our women's mitra convenor. Ratnachuda unfortunately fractured his leg this year, resulting in an operation and extended hospital stay, so it's been very tough for him and Amarapupsa. What's been impressive is both Amarapupsa's effort in supporting Ratnachuda, but also the people in the sangha rallying around to help, whether that's hospital visits, taking around food etc. .

For me, this sums up sangha better than anything: genuine friendships and care between people who might not otherwise have close connections. More than just fair weather acquaintances or 'friends' you only see at meditation class

I know these aren't isolated examples, and I hear inspiring and heartwarming accounts of friends, mitras and Order Members involved with Brixton going beyond themselves in small ways every day. We are now blessed in having a good number of experienced people around the Brixton Buddhist Community. Those who've come in, come through and who, from my perspective, seem to have developed spiritually to a large degree, expressing brighter and brighter qualities over time. With such fine people around, living out the Dharma in their lives, I've no doubt that our community will continue to flourish. All we need to do is continue to broaden and deepen our own understandings, and continue to offer a space and place, both figuratively and literally, for people to encounter and explore the Dharma in their own lives.

**"THIS SUMS UP SANGHA
BETTER THAN ANYTHING:
GENUINE FRIENDSHIP AND
CARE BETWEEN PEOPLE
WHO MIGHT NOT
OTHERWISE HAVE CLOSE
CONNECTIONS"**

If you are feeling an affinity with the Buddhist path and you want to make a statement of commitment for the sake of your own practice, then you could also ask to formally join our community as a 'mitra' (a Sanskrit word meaning 'friend'). I won't say more about that here, but please ask someone in the community about that if you want to find out more.



THE ORDER TEAM

I like to use these reports to highlight some developments, but also to appreciate those who contribute practically to the running of the community. Largely, this year has been about regrouping from the disruption caused by covid. Both individually and well as collectively. Our classes and courses are now all fully in-person again, but are still returning to the sizes they were before the pandemic. We also had disruption to our normal retreat programme in 2022 because of difficulties with retreat centre availability. Thankfully this has been resolved, and I'm pleased to say that we'll again have two large sangha retreats at Vajrasana next year.

The core teaching team of Suddhaka, Amaladana, Amarapuspa, Sagarasila, Maitrinara, Aryanisha and myself, have been very stable and consistent over the last few years, running study groups and the public events, supported by a number of guest teachers. In this last year we've especially benefited from Vajratara attending regularly, especially to support the women's sangha, as well as visits from Paramabandhu, our centre president, and other Order Members, especially some from the East London Buddhist Centre.

It's looking likely that our teaching team may look somewhat different in the coming years as people take a step back or prepare to take long retreats and sabbaticals. It is however a great blessing to have a number of other Order Members and mitras involved and increasingly stepping up to teach.

Firstly, Prajnagosha, who has been teaching at Brixton for over a year now, has recently taken over coordination of the Monday Meditation class from Maitrinara, who resolutely supported the class for a number of years. Prajnagosha's enthusiasm and energy has been a delight to have around and the friendliness and warmth of his teaching is often commented on. We're very fortunate indeed to have him with us.

"IT WILL NOT BE SO LONG BEFORE SOME OF BRIXTON'S OTHER MITRAS WHO ARE TRAINING FOR ORDINATION...I THINK THERE WILL BE A COHORT OF REMARKABLE DHARMAFARERS NOT TOO FAR AWAY. "

Some of you will already know the Maitrinita, with her warmth, clarity and delightful energy. Mairinita has been involved for some years already, but after completing her breathworks training this year, she may be more available to be present at more events. This will be a huge boon for the sangha. I'm also really pleased that Brixton has been able to host a London People of Colour event this year, led by Maitrinita.



I'd like to mention Dharmasvara too. He is an Order Member who has been living in Brixton for some years, but who has also recently become involved in the community. He is a wonderfully insightful and considerate man. He recently supported a course I was leading, and very kindly and courageously stepped in at short notice when I became ill.

I hope that he feels moved to join the core teaching team in the coming year, as he's such a wonderful presence, and he has much wisdom and kindness to offer.

In terms of special mentions, I'm also delighted that Tom Axtell, a stalwart of the Monday Night team has been invited for ordination in 2023. I wish him all the best for his ordination retreat, and look forward to having him join the Brixton Order team on the other side of that.

**"SO THERE IS FLUX AND
CHANGE, BUT PLENTY OF
FRESH GREEN GROWTH,
AND MUCH TO BE
GRATEFUL FOR."**

Neither is this list the end of it. It will not be so long before some of Brixton's other mitras who are training for Ordination, will themselves be invited. Knowing them, and being involved in their processes in some cases, I think there will be a cohort of remarkable Dharmafarers not too far away. So there is flux and change, but plenty of fresh green growth, and much to be grateful for.



TRAINING, LEADERSHIP AND MONEY

To help create healthy opportunities for succession, we've put in place a couple of programmes this year to support those able to step forward to teach and to take responsibility for the running of the community. Firstly, Sagarasila is heading up a teacher training programme for our newer teachers to gain confidence and experience, so that they might take up bigger teaching roles in future. Secondly, we've also changed how we run the charity this year too, by inviting a broader range of people to participate in our council meetings, which set the vision and direction of the activities month to month.

The employed 'centre team' went through a few changes this year too. I went down to being part-time again, after formally being full-time as chair/centre manager. I did this because I wished to just focus on the chair's role, and I wanted to hand over some of my many administrative and organisational duties. This freed up some money to allow Alex and Ian to join the team. Alex as our graphics designer, working one day per week, Ian as our publicity coordinator doing two days per week. Lizzy moved sideways within the team, becoming our Programme Coordinator, taking up many of my previous functions.

She continues to work two days per week. Elena is working one day a week for us as our Online Media Coordinator, recording and sharing talks, and interviewing those in our sangha to share the inspiration of our community as widely as possible.

Alex and Ian have both been great additions to the team, bringing their skills and enthusiasm for the Dharma.

**"I REMAIN VERY IMPRESSED
WITH THE WORK ETHIC,
PASSION AND CREATIVITY
OF EVERYONE ON THE
TEAM,"**

Even though the number of hours the team is working overall hasn't increased hugely, their joining has created a feeling that we are actually now a team. This has been both enjoyable and supportive for everyone. I remain very impressed with the work ethic, passion and creativity of everyone on the team, and it's strangely satisfying to see excellent programmes and publicity going out that I've had very little, if anything, to do with. They are all excellent people, it's a joy to work with them.

And then of course there is money, some people don't like conflating money with spiritual community. But we are still of the world, and money is necessary if we want to have a space to invite people into to freely offer them the Dharma. I prefer to see our fundraising as giving those people with adequate income or savings the opportunity to put their money behind the values they really care about, rather than consumer products or the momentary delights of a worldly experience.

We are a registered charity, with the added layer that all of our money must be used for the furtherance of Buddhist practice and spent in accordance with Buddhist ethical principles. So no executive salaries, profits for shareholders, and we use every penny as carefully as we can. Mainly this is to support the basic living costs of the team, so that they can do the bulk of the organisational work, and also to cover the costs of venue spaces for events. You'll get a clearer sense of this from Amaladana's finance report.

"I PREFER TO SEE OUR FUNDRAISING AS GIVING THOSE PEOPLE WITH ADEQUATE INCOME OR SAVINGS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT THEIR MONEY BEHIND THE VALUES THEY REALLY CARE ABOUT, RATHER THAN CONSUMER PRODUCTS OR THE MOMENTARY DELIGHTS OF A WORLDLY EXPERIENCE."

We've had some incredibly generous one-off gifts this year, as well as many continuing to give regular standing orders every month. I cannot express how important this ongoing generosity is. We, along with everyone else, are facing increasing costs and we just simply could not operate without this - again the community is co-created, with love, with energy and frankly with money. So quite simply, thank you if you give, and please keep giving.

SERVING THE DHARMA

I'd like to sum up this report by thanking the volunteers who help run the classes, courses and retreats. We remain a largely volunteer organisation, with just a handful of employed part-time team members to help coordinate it all. Without all you wonderful volunteers offering your warmth, friendship, skills and time everything we do just wouldn't be possible.

"BRIXTON (BUDDHIST COMMUNITY) DOES HAVE...AN INTANGIBLE ENERGY OF WARMTH, POSITIVITY AND GOODWILL TO THOSE WHO COME THROUGH OUR DOORS, AND OFFERS GENUINE COMMUNITY AND LIFELONG CONNECTION FOR THOSE WHO STAY".

I also want to thank the council of trustees, who volunteer their time and energy to help to steer the project and support the sangha. There is a great deal of trust and shared vision that has built up between us, and our meetings are by and large, enjoyable and harmonious.

I'll finish by going back once more to the story about my friend, sharing his experience of visiting Brixton all those years ago. The thing I found most interesting about his account was, besides the close and cramped environment he remembered a certain energy and feeling hanging in the room. It's something I recognise and which I've come to think of as the 'Brixton Magic' and it continues to be commented on by guests and visitors. Triratna groups can be friendly, but Brixton does have something a bit more, an intangible energy of warmth, positivity and goodwill to those who come through our doors, and offers genuine community and lifelong connection for those who stay.

Long may this continue, and long may we, the individuals that make up that community, continue to mature in the Dharma, so that we become those true individuals who are able to heroically and powerfully express the qualities of generosity, ethics, equanimity, energy, mindfulness and wisdom in every aspect of our lives.

FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

AMALADANA

The following table summarises income and expenses by category for 2021 and shows our end of year cash balance. The sections following give more explanation on these categories.

Income	2020	2021
Money from events	£15,449	£22,771
Money from fundraising	£21,411	£22,187
Gift aid	£11,259	£6,589
Subtotal	£48,119	£51,548
Expenses		
Event costs	£14,229	£13,978
Support for the center team	£21,856	£35,675
Contributions to other Triratna Charities	£3,382	£3,400
Subtotal	£39,467	£53,053
Net Surplus/Deficit	8651	-1505
Cash balance previous year	49900	58551
End of year cash balance	58551	57046

2021 posed similar Covid challenges as 2020, requiring a constant review of events offered with respect to the latest government safety guidelines. The team, teachers and volunteers were flexible in providing in-person or online events as required throughout the year. The centre team increased in size in line with our budget and in order to meet the needs of our growing sangha.

'the centre team increased in size in line with our budget'

Overall we experienced a small deficit of £1.5k instead of our aim to break even in 2021. The main contributor to the deficit was an over optimistic gift aid budget, see detail below.

We would like to return to our policy of providing all events on a donation basis so that people are not excluded from any event due to cost.

When our performance against budget allows we will again offer all events, including retreats, on a donation basis. We also retain our ambition to lease or own our own premises in order to better control our calendar of activities and provide a solid base for our growing sangha.

'we retain our ambition to lease our own premises'

MONEY FROM EVENTS

Class, course and retreat events were mixed format (either in-person or online) throughout the year to comply with government regulations. A very significant 47% additional income over budget was realised under Money from events.

Classes – 11% above budget.

Retreat – Our ability to run 2 in person retreats at Vajrasana and receive January 2023 income for a third Vajrasana retreat allowed us to increase our retreat budget almost 5-fold. (The budget assumed we would only be able to hold 2 online retreats).

Courses – Similar numbers attended courses in 2021 as in 2020 (179 v 171) but there was a 16% increase in income verses budget.

MONEY FROM FUNDRAISING

The need to manage a turbulent year detracted energy from the fundraising effort and was responsible for an 11% drop in budgeted income.

GIFT AID

A 38% drop with respect to the gift aid budget was the main reason our overall budget was just missed in 2021. This was mostly due to an oversight at the end of Q1 2021 when we reduced our fundraising budget by 30% but did not correspondingly reduce our gift aid budget which is directly related to it, thereby overstating our forecast income for the year. (The reduction in fundraising budget was brought about by a need to focus on organizing our programme to address COVID regulations and a corresponding delay in beginning fundraising planning and activity).

OUTGOINGS

A negotiated rent reduction with an understanding landlord allowed us to reduce planned rent costs by almost 40%.

Support costs were slightly above budget due to illness in the team but otherwise were in line with our planned increase of .5FTE for 2020.

Contributions to other Tiratna charities includes a 5% contribution to the European Chairs Assembly.

WOMEN'S MITRA CONVENOR'S REPORT

AMARAPUSPA

The year up to December 2021 has been full of changing contexts as we have adjusted to different Covid restrictions. Throughout this a steady core of the women's community has continued to grow and develop. Charlotte Lawes was ordained as Aryanisha. Three women; Pam, Elena and Emma(?) asked for ordination and three others; Bex, Alison and Sara (?) became Mitras. New women were added into the two thriving study groups. We now have eleven Brixton women in ordination training.

I continue to find it a joy to be in a role supporting women to explore their connection with Buddhism and deepen their commitment.

The two women's study groups have seemed to thrive despite being online. Aryanisha has been co leading the Year Three group. It's been wonderful witnessing her step up to being an Order Member. We work well together. Friendships have developed in the groups and in person meet ups have taken place as restrictions have eased. However, meeting online for study groups has seemed to meet women's needs and there has been no strong impetus to switch to meeting in-person. Each group has women living outside the London area including one in New Zealand who formerly lived in Brixton.

I continue to be part of Jewel Quest South East which is a group of Order Members who aim to support women in ordination training throughout the South East by bringing them into contact with wider sanghas and a variety of Order Members.

"THE TWO WOMEN'S STUDY GROUPS
HAVE SEEMED TO THRIVE DESPITE
BEING ONLINE"

Brixton women are invited to these events and also other events held at the Croydon Buddhist Centre. As I continue to be one of the few women Order members active in Brixton, this gives women an opportunity to meet more Order Members and to have a sense of the wider Movement.

I have enjoyed working with Maitrinara, our men's Mitra Convenor, and Viryanaga, our Chair, to put on special events such as festival days and study mornings. I find being on the Council of trustees stimulating and rewarding as we work well together.

I became chair of the women's Mitra Convenor Gatherings during the year and have coordinated events both online and in-person. Mitra Convenors around the world have been invited to and taken part in the online events. This again, indirectly broadens the context for Brixton women.

It continues to be a challenge to be one of the few active Order Members in Brixton. I continue to reach out to female Order Members from other areas to take part in Brixton events. We continue to benefit from Vajratara's contributions to study mornings at the men's community, Danaprasaddha.

Vajratara also gave a talk at one of our festival days. Maitrinita has also taken part in some events including an online weekend retreat in Spring 2021. We continue to attract many new women. Two of these women are interested in forming a Year One study group. I lead and also support classes and courses partly in order to meet and engage with new women.

I look forward to another year as the women's Mitra Convenor in Brixton.



AMARAPUSPA
WOMEN'S MITRA CONVENOR
MAY 2022

MEN'S MITRA CONVENOR'S REPORT

MAITRINARA

"I feel proud of how Brixton Buddhist Community has pulled together during the pandemic and how we have emerged from it with more breadth and depth in the Sangha."

DHARMA TRAINING COURSES (DTC) - OFTEN REFERRED TO AS STUDY GROUPS

A great development in the Men's Sangha is the formation of a new DTC in April this year, led by Amaladana and myself. The 10 men starting the first year of the course have got off to a really bright start. Many of them had already got to know each other over the year or more we have been gathering this group together, having already been on courses, retreats and classes together and this has really helped the group come together.

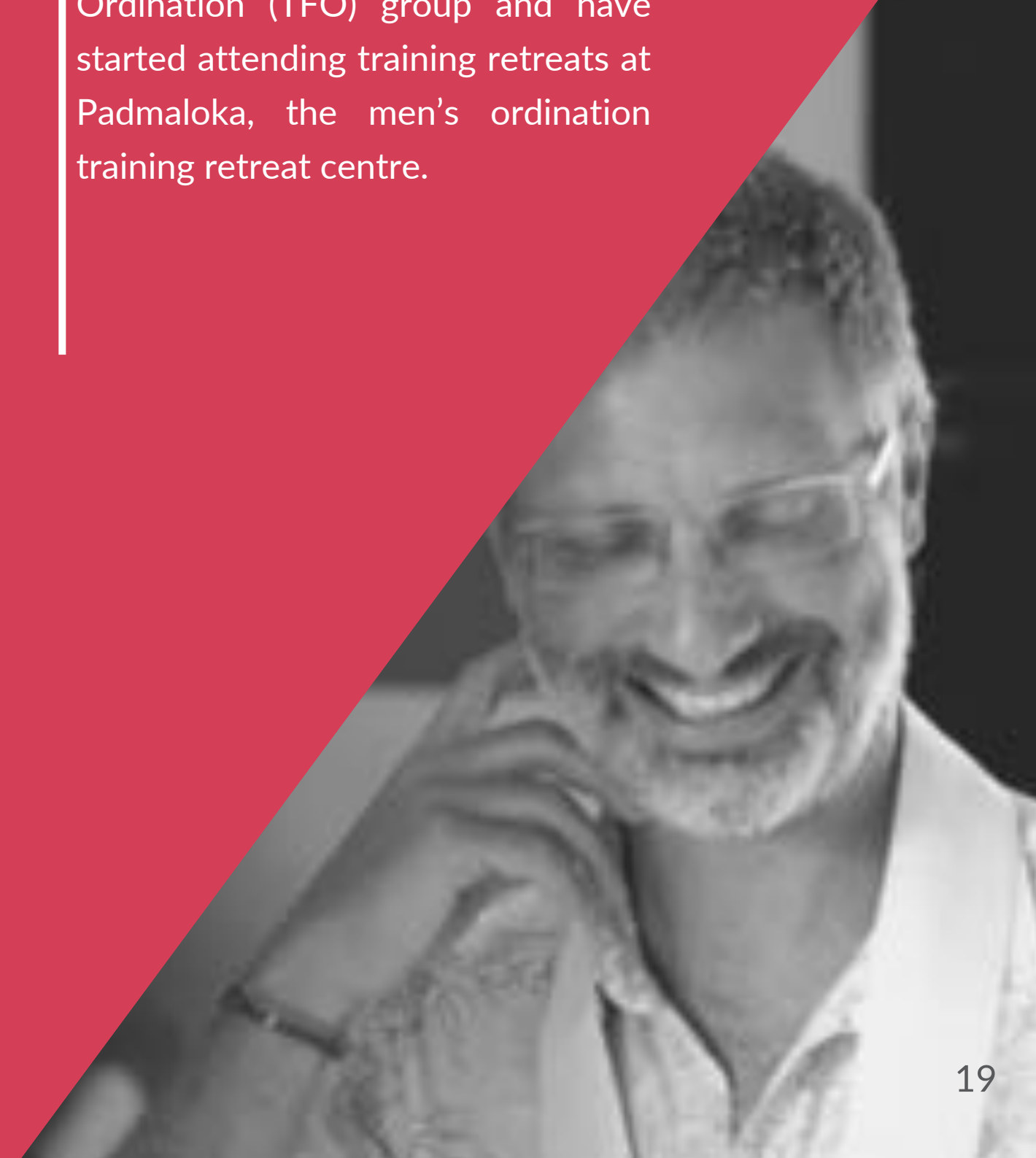
In May the first men's DTC in the Brixton Buddhist Community came to an end after four years of training together. The men in that group really appreciated what they had been through together, and were very appreciative of the guidance of Viryanaga and Suddhaka who had led the group. Several of the men have already asked for ordination into the Triratna order, and are continuing their Dharma training in this way.

I am looking forward to seeing the men develop their understanding and response to the Dharma, as well as deepening their friendships together.

The other DTC is also going strong, now in its third year. It has been sad to lose Stephen from the group, as he follows his vocation to help address the environmental crisis by continuing his training in California. We wish him well and rejoice in the brightness and clarity he has brought to the group.

MITRAS AND MEN TRAINING FOR ORDINATION

I was delighted to see Cameron become a Mitra this year in a beautiful Parinirvana day ceremony. Four men: Ian, Andy, Alex Bermingham and Jac, took the joyful step of asking for ordination into the Triratna Buddhist order. They joined the established men's Training for Ordination (TFO) group and have started attending training retreats at Padmaloka, the men's ordination training retreat centre.





"I WAS EXCITED TO BE CO-LEADING
THE FIRST LONG MEDITATION
RETREAT WE'VE HAD"

The camping retreat in Alfoxtons in April was a quite different retreat. I was excited to be co-leading the first long meditation retreat we have had in Brixton Buddhist Community. We were in the wild environs of Wordsworth's old house nestled in the Quantock hills, meditating together under a large tent over a lashed hazel branch construction.

We were lucky with the weather, and being so close to nature helped inspire meditation.

The devotional practices on this retreat were led by Aryanisha who created a series of beautiful pujas and shrines, and encouraged us to tap deeper into the energies of this amazing place.

RETREATS

The online retreats we had been doing together as a Sangha have been surprisingly good over the last two years of lock-down, but It was also a great relief to get back to in-person retreats which we did in Vajrasana in November last year.

We have had two retreats so far this year, one at Vajrasana and one at Alfoxtons, a new Triratna eco-retreat and cultural centre in Somerset. Both of these retreats were special in different ways. The Vajrasana retreat was fully booked and ran with a total of 62 people in January of this year.

Vajrasana is such a beautiful and inspiring retreat centre and I very much enjoyed co-leading this retreat with Amarapuspa. This retreat allowed many newer members of our community to get the unique experience of what more in depth Dharma practice can bring, as well as what it feels like to practise as part of a genuine spiritual community, with the depth of communication and responsiveness to one another, that comes from spiritual friendship. I particularly appreciate the team who were quite inexperienced in running retreats but did really well.



MEN'S COMMUNITY

The Danaprasada residential men's community in Streatham welcomed Sergio and Jack to live with us and they are responding very positively to this opportunity to live, practice and be in closer communication with other Buddhists. It's been a delight to see how both of them are really contributing to the life of the community, and to the wider Brixton Buddhist community.



**"I CONTINUE TO WISH EVERYONE
IN THE SANGHA INSPIRATION IN
PRACTISING THE DHARMA FOR THE
SAKE OF ALL BEINGS."**

A great privilege of this time has been the wonderful Monday night team who, together with my fellow teachers on the team, help create such a friendly community on the night which supports everyone who attends to go deeper with their meditation. I will continue to be part of the teaching team on Mondays.

Being part of this class has been a great journey for me, from the highpoint of 60+ people during the meditation challenge of 2019, through to running video classes from our tiny shrine room in Danaprasada, the men's community house, and then later in Effra space during lockdown with just me and the team present in-person.

MONDAY NIGHT CLASS

After four years of holding overall responsibility for the Monday night meditation class I am happy to be handing it on to two wonderful Order members; Prajnagosha and Sagarasila, who will bring their enthusiasm to the class, as well as restarting the class for regulars in the second room in Effra space.



PROGRAMME COORDINATOR'S REPORT

LIZZY

2021 has been a year of transition, both within the centre team, and for our Sangha more broadly. We began the year with our classes still running online and finished it with a full return to in-person classes, courses, retreats and festival days.

People warmly welcomed a return to in-person events and it has been joyful to gather in large numbers for festival days. Our numbers are, in fact, larger than before the pandemic as quite a few people connected virtually with our Sangha during lockdown and have since joined in-person events.

The Monday night meditation drop-in resumed in-person in June, albeit with everyone meditating together, rather than with a separate class for regulars as we had previously held before the pandemic. Our Wednesday night Dharma class also returned to in-person in June, having previously taken the form of a pre-recorded video discussion between two of our teachers which was then posted on YouTube.

**"PEOPLE WARMLY WELCOMED A
RETURN TO IN-PERSON
EVENTS...IT HAS BEEN JOYFUL TO
GATHER AGAIN..."**

We also ran our first in-person course of the year, Think, Act, Live (based on the Sikkha project course, Not About Being Good) in September for which we received the highest number of bookings for any course to date (54).

2021 also brought with it some transitions for the centre team. I was on long-term sick leave from April until September and Viryanaga was on sick leave for a period after that. We were supported by Maitrinara and Amaladana, as well as Alex Bermingham who stepped into my role while I was off. Due to the reduction in our team, as well as teacher availability, the trustees made the decision to stop running Dharma night classes at the end of August in order to focus our attention on courses.

**"WE RECEIVED THE HIGHEST
NUMBER OF BOOKINGS FOR ANY
COURSE TO DATE"**

We have continued to be greatly helped by the media team; a small but vital team of volunteers who help with our media and promotions. Emma has been a huge help in managing our mailing list communications, Lotte is very effectively managing our Discord channel (Discord is an online chat room that we have made use of as a way of connecting the Sangha during lockdown). I have also benefited from an excellent and responsive team of proof readers.

LIZZY
EVENTS COORDINATOR
(NOW PROGRAMME COORDINATOR)
MAY 2022



DESIGNER & BRAND MANAGER'S REPORT

ALEX

It's been a very busy year for the Brixton Sangha as we navigated through the Pandemic. We had gaps in the team due to illness and leave for a sustained period, so I initially stepped in to help with this; and in particular with keeping our events scheduled, organised and promoted. I've been working in a variety of areas to provide help and team cover on and off during the last year or so.


I've needed to stay quite flexible and fluid with my role, but have mainly provided cover for the events coordinator position, which focuses on our classes and courses. There's been quite a range of work going on, including admin, bookings, promotion and design. It's been good to try my hand at a variety of things; I quickly realised there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes which is all quite critical to making our events happen and run smoothly. This includes everything from making sure the ticketing website is updated, to writing descriptive info about classes, to making sure order members have the right equipment and team to run their nights.

"IT HAS BEEN A REAL HONOUR TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CARVE OUT IMAGERY THAT BOTH REPRESENTS AND PROMOTES THE THING I LOVE MOST — OUR INCREDIBLE SANGHA!"

During this time I've continued to develop and explore our visual identity and graphics. By trade I'm a graphic designer and illustrator, so that has been by far my favourite part of the job! It has been a real honour to have the opportunity to carve out imagery that both represents and promotes the thing I love most – our incredible Sangha! I find this quite an integrating activity to be involved in, as it brings together my love of visual art with the Dharma. It's also helped me learn more about marketing more broadly, and working alongside Viryanaga and his vision in this area has taught me a lot.

As well as the positive aspects of the job, there have also been some challenges. There has been lots of uncertainty, both in terms of other team member's leave and plans, and the nature of providing cover has meant lots of periods of starting and stopping, with relatively short notice.





I've also needed to try and find a balance with my work outside of the Brixton sangha, and developing my freelance output on my other days. Luckily Buddhism puts a big emphasis on the realities of constant flux, both in our lives and the wider world, so perhaps this has been a useful area to reflect on in work too!

It's been really great to work alongside my friend and teacher, Viryanaga, and also with our talented team members Elena and Lizzy. Most recently we welcomed Ian to the team which has been a great pleasure, particularly as we are both training for ordination and attending retreats together. Our work can now be an additional space in which to develop our spiritual relationship. Building on a right-livelihood Buddhist work principle here is very rewarding and useful as a context for our practice!

**"IT'S BEEN REALLY GREAT TO WORK
ALONGSIDE MY FRIEND AND TEACHER,
VIRYANAGA"**

This said, I'm very glad to say I'm now moving into a permanent one day a week fixture of design and cover work for the Sangha – so my work-life is likely to become more balanced and settled as a result.

The Brixton Sangha is very special. We have a lot of inspired, talented, and loving people here in South London, who are committed to living the Dharma in their lives as best they can. It's a real joy to be involved with the community and to be able to plug time, energy and creativity towards supporting and promoting it. I am looking forward to what the following year will bring us!

**ALEX
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
MAY 2022**

MEDIA COORDINATOR'S REPORT

ELENA

My work with the Brixton Buddhist Community started in April last year, towards the end of the 2021 lockdown. My main tasks then were to live stream the Monday meditation classes and record the Dharma night classes, as well as editing the videos to upload to Youtube.

To start my job by going straight into the nerve-wracking task of live streaming meditation classes was a big challenge! However I had the support of volunteers such as Emma and Jac who were brilliant at helping and making me feel more confident.

The other challenge I had back then was the video editing and managing the Youtube studio, which was something I hadn't done before but I was able to learn it quite quickly with the help of Jac who did some training.

At the end of the lockdown restrictions, we stopped the live streaming and the recording of regular classes and the video content was mainly created from special events such as festivals, retreats and one-off events with guest speakers. I have also recorded talks made during our Sangha retreats in Vajrasana in September last year and more recently in January.

**" I HAD THE SUPPORT OF
VOLUNTEERS SUCH AS EMMA
AND JAC WHO WERE BRILLIANT
AT HELPING AND MAKING ME
FEEL MORE CONFIDENT."**



ELENA
MEDIA COORDINATOR
MAY 2022

An exciting project I have been working on this year is the Sangha videos which feature members of our Sangha explaining why they consider themselves Buddhists and how their practice relates to their everyday lives and to the wider world. I've been enjoying this project very much. It has given me the opportunity to hear moving and inspiring stories and create bonds with people in the Sangha I didn't know very well.

I hope the Sangha videos will also be enjoyed by other members of our community and by people outside it who may be interested in knowing more about Buddhism. I'm planning to use them not only on our Youtube channel but also across other channels, especially on Instagram where we want to create content showcasing the diversity and vibrancy of our community.

I have enjoyed my work as a media coordinator very much. I feel very grateful to be working with such a kind, supportive and experienced team. I have also been able to work with interesting, inspiring Dharma content and I have learnt new skills such as video editing, live streaming and Youtube studio management. It's been a delight to work as a Media coordinator for the Brixton Community and I look forward to more this year!

**"I FEEL VERY GRATEFUL TO BE
WORKING WITH SUCH A KIND,
SUPPORTIVE AND EXPERIENCED
TEAM."**

PUBLICITY COORDINATOR'S REPORT

IAN

I joined the team as Publicity Coordinator in April 2022 and am grateful to be able to contribute to the work of sharing the Dharma in South London.

We already have a great team and working culture here, which has made getting used to the new role much easier for me! As well as the fantastic design work, video and photography and course development and organisation, I've been so impressed and slightly humbled by the work of our volunteers on the email newsletter and social media. We're lucky to have so many talents within the Sangha and I think it shows.

I hope we can build on what we've already achieved by reaching out to different communities – really making the Buddha's vision of the Dharma available, accessible and inviting for all. We are starting to work more closely with the People of Colour Sangha and are planning to host a PoC event in Brixton later in 2022. We're currently discussing different ways to keep our core Sangha engaged online.

As well as letting people know about events, courses and classes, a particularly enjoyable part of my role has been celebrating our Sangha through our publicity - on Instagram and Facebook - and by including more images of people on our website. There are lots of exciting possibilities for doing more of this in the future, whilst being mindful of the inherent pitfalls of social media and online communication.

IAN

PUBLICITY COORDINATOR

AUGUST 2022



info@brixtonbuddhistmeditation.org

Brixton Buddhist Community
is a registered UK charity
(charity no. 1084889)



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
Tirratna Buddhist Community (Brixton)

On accounts for the year
ended

31/12/2021

Charity no
(if any)

1084889

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2021

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Fay Pritchard

Date: 17/10/22

Name:

Fay Pritchard

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

AAT licensed accountant no: 1004354

Address:

8 Darwin Street, Shrewsbury, SY3 8QE

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).