

# **Bristol Insight Meditation**



## **Annual Report and Financial Statements**

**Year Ended 31 December 2021**

## About Bristol Insight Meditation

In this our sixth annual review we set out our charitable objectives and our activities to promote those objectives for public benefit.

### Background information

In 2003, a small group of people who had been to retreats at Gaia House in Devon got together to support each other in their meditation practice – and Bristol Insight (originally named Bristol Gaia House Group) was born. Today, whilst our original, supportive intentions remain unchanged, that small group has grown organically into a peer-led registered charity - a network of over 350 people involved in a wide range of organised activities.

### Our approach

At Bristol Insight Meditation, we support the practice and study of Buddhist Insight Meditation also known as Vipassana (literally translated as ‘seeing deeply or clearly’). This is the practice of developing a calm and mindful investigation into the nature of experience, leading to wisdom, compassion and the end of suffering. The Vipassana movement began in the Theravada schools of Buddhism in the early 20th century in Burma and Thailand, and attempts to reconnect with the teachings of early Buddhism. In its spread to the West, teachers such as Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman integrated Vipassana with understandings from Western culture, while remaining true to the Buddha’s teachings.

It is from this group of pioneer Western teachers that centres such as Gaia House in Devon and Spirit Rock and IMS in the USA were formed. Bristol Insight Meditation has close links with Gaia House and draws inspiration from the wide range of teachers and teachings from the worldwide Insight meditation community. As well as Vipassana, some of us have practice backgrounds in traditions such as Quakerism or Tibetan and Zen Buddhism.

Our approach emphasises inquiry, experiential exploration and mindfulness amongst many other influences. It is not important to hold particular beliefs or to consider yourself to be a Buddhist to participate in our activities, all are welcome. What we do have in common is an interest in our own personal development as part of a supportive community. Ethical living is important to us too, including our collective responses to current social and environmental challenges.

### Our aims and values

Through our groups and activities, we aspire to build a community that nurtures wisdom and compassion: for ourselves, for others and for the world we live in. We strive to be open to all and do not seek to convert or discriminate, irrespective of religious or political beliefs, ethnicity, gender, social background, age, sexual orientation or disability. We invite donations to cover our costs but our activities are open to everyone, irrespective of means.

## **What we do**

We offer a range of activities to support meditation practice. Please visit our website: **[www.bristolmeditation.org.uk](http://www.bristolmeditation.org.uk)** for full details. Our longstanding association with Gaia House, a well-known retreat centre for Insight Meditation, means we regularly invite their teachers, as well as those from other linked traditions, to lead our own retreat days and courses. These are reputable, highly experienced teachers who commit to a code of ethics. Our supporter-led charity is run by a small team of volunteers.

## **2021 Annual Review**

### **Charitable Objective**

To advance the education of the public in the subject of meditation and the teachings of the Buddha in particular but not exclusively by supporting and encouraging the study and practice of Buddhist Insight Meditation (also known as Vipassana meditation practice) for the benefit of people in Bristol and the surrounding areas.

### **Education**

During the year we organised the following activities to promote education:

#### **Six Teacher Led Day Retreats**

These were facilitated by teachers associated with Gaia House Retreat Centre, Devon on a range of subjects, combining teaching and practice. In 2020 we had the following retreats:

20<sup>th</sup> March: Power Mindfulness with Venerable Canda

29<sup>th</sup> May: Resilience and the Art of Happiness with Zohar Lavie

24<sup>th</sup> July: Boundless Heart, Vulnerable Earth with Yanai Postelnik

25<sup>th</sup> September: Enriching Life with Kirsten Kratz

20<sup>th</sup> November The Kaleidoscope Heart with Julia Wallond

Having these teachers come to Bristol Insight was greatly appreciated by us all.

### **Supporting practice**

We provide a number of opportunities for people to support and develop their meditation practice through small group communities:

- Weekly evening sitting group, combining practice and discussion to support individual practice;
- Teacher-led retreat days every two months with teachings and guidance in the practice of insight meditation;
- Monthly 'Self-led' day retreat, which provides alternative sitting and walking practice sessions, together with opportunities for discussion;
- Monthly nature meditations in open woodland;
- Monthly group to support focussing practice;
- Insightful ageing group;
- Book group to support practice;
- Occasional Sangha walks;
- A monthly newsletter with news and contributions from the sangha;
- A website that provides up to date information and links to bookings for our events.

All activities are publicised widely, including on our website and in our monthly email newsletter. Participants are requested to make donations to cover associated running costs, but low income is not a barrier to participation.

*"Without community my practice would mean very little. I take delight in helping to run the Tuesday meditation group. This involves welcoming newcomers and overseeing the meditation and mindful sharing sessions. As we sit in a circle a deep sense of connection and community emerges. I'm also a member of the day retreats team helping to bring dharma teachers to Bristol for a day of practice for our wider community. It is deeply satisfying to work within a team to plan retreats, from the initial idea to organising the day itself and to know that many people have benefited."*

(A Bristol Insight volunteer)

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## Some Highlights from 2021

### Teacher Led Retreats

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Having these teachers come to Bristol Insight was greatly appreciated by us all. In particular the special atmosphere of a retreat was felt to be most supportive and deeply enhanced our sense of community.

### Self Led Day Retreats

The retreat continues to run successfully on the first Saturday of each month. Attendance varies between approximately 10 to 15 people. The format of the day has not changed significantly from previous years. It consists of periods of silent sitting and walking meditation. Plus, a recorded Dharma talk. The day concludes with a period of group sharing.

After more than a year of providing a home-based retreat supported by a Zoom meeting, the retreat returned to its Bristol venue at the Friends Meeting House last Autumn. COVID precautions included wearing of masks, lateral flow testing, packed lunches, and social distancing. These precautions are no longer required. There is a welcome return to a shared lunch at 1:00 o'clock.

The cost of the retreat has gone up to £20 for the day for waged participants. This covers the cost of hiring the venue. This is the only significant cost of running the retreat. There is a small surplus in the retreat's bank account.

The small team of volunteers continues to organise the retreat. This includes sending out a monthly e-mail, managing the finances, facilitating the introduction to the day and the sharing period. Also selecting and playing the Dharma talk, etc. Plus managing the annual contract with the venue.

Attendees vary between those who have been coming for several years and newcomers. Most people have either some or significant experience in meditation. As such, we do not teach meditation during the day. People can choose to practise whatever technique they are happiest with. The feedback from attendees has been very positive. They're happy with the format of the day and the venue itself.

*David Ringsell*

## **Tuesday Evening Sitting Group**

The weekly evening sit continued throughout 2021 in an online format with many newcomers and a dedicated team of facilitators. We introduced a “Caring Sangha” space at the start of the evening where we invite members of the group to bring to mind with loving kindness individuals or groups of people suffering from illness, accidents or other forms of distress, or to hold in our hearts those who have experienced joyful events for celebration. Our “Cultivating our Practice” programme covered in-depth exploration of several Dhamma topics – including the Five Hindrances, the Five Precepts, the Seven Factors of Awakening, the Three Poisons, non-duality and the ego and an exploration of mandalas. The group also listened to recordings of the spoken discourses of the Buddha and recorded talks from meditation teachers. These often formed the basis of lively discussion. We continued with our popular Poetry and Prose and Spiritual Book Sharing sessions. The group also continued to provide support for meditation practice both for beginners and those more experienced in meditation through its monthly Mindful Sharing sessions.

## **Focusing Group**

The Focusing group continued to meet on a fortnightly basis alternating between meeting online and meeting at the Zen centre on the Gloucester Road. The flexibility of venues was much appreciated by focusers. Participants appreciated the willingness to sit with one’s experience from a place of presence, acceptance, warmth and curiosity in the presence of the partner or companion .

## **Sangha Walks**

Sanga walks provided an opportunity to socialise with other sangha members, ground ourselves in our natural environment, take gentle exercise and to practice mindful walking.

Three sangha walks happened this year:

In April the Long Ashton circular walk

In May the Stanton Drew Stone Circles

And in July a Pilgrimage to the Holy Cross church Kilgwrrwg Monmouthshire

Sadly the October walk was cancelled.

## **Insightful Ageing Group**

The Insightful Ageing group continued to meet about once every two months throughout the year. The group used the book “Older and Wiser - Classical Buddhist Teachings on Ageing, Sickness and Death” as a basis to explore the challenges of ageing. Many lively discussions took place offering new perspectives to view meditational practice as a support for the process of ageing.

*Mike Baker*

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## **Nature Meditation**

This group started in June 2020 and has grown in success over the past year with over 100 people on the mailing list. We meet monthly on Sunday afternoons in some beautiful woods just outside Bristol. Each retreat has a theme e.g. Rain! (July 2021), Letting Go of Wanting Things to be Different (Sept 2021), The Gift (Dec 2021). The retreats last three hours with periods of sitting, personal and nature meditation practice followed by a facilitated sharing. In the winter, we had fires. Covered areas offer protection from the rain. Between 6-14 people attended every month. A major success is that we have perfected the vegan nature meditation flapjack recipe!

*Lesley Wye*

## **Book Group**

March to Sept 2021 a small group (3) of us read 'Life of the Buddha: according to the Pali Canon' by Bhikkhu Nanamoli. This wonderful text had been put together by Nanamoli entirely from passages translated from the Pali Canon. It felt like we were being given privileged access to the Buddha and his entourage, their lives and concerns, in a way that felt almost contemporaneous. As we read it we found that different parts stood out for us, or we interpreted things differently, and the discussion we had around the text enhanced the reading for all of us.

Nov 2021 we got together to decide on the next book we would read together, settling on 'Standing at the edge: Finding fear and freedom where courage meet' by Joan Halifax. We were joined by two more people and read this book in 2022. In the near future, those of the 5 that wish to be involved in a group next year will have a zoom meeting to determine which book to read, and a time/day that suits all. At which point we will seek to advertise it in the monthly newsletter, all are welcome to join.

*Mandy Stuart*

## Charity Information

### TRUSTEES

Michael Baker

Jonathan Edwards

Jocelyn James

Christine Elizabeth Ramsey-Wade

Alastair Wakely

Geoff Windle

Barbara Kenney

Lesley Wye

### LEGAL STATUS

#### Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Charity No 1162182

### FURTHER INFORMATION

**Website:** [www.bristolmeditation.org.uk](http://www.bristolmeditation.org.uk)

### BANKERS

The Co-operative Bank, PO Box 250, Skelmersdale WN8 6WT

### INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Independent scrutiny of accounts is not required where the gross income for the financial year is £25,000 or less.



# Annual report of the trustees of Bristol Insight Meditation for the year ended 31 December 2021

## 1 Factual information

### 1.1 Structure

Bristol Insight Meditation ("Bristol Insight") is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (No: 1162182)

### 1.2 Object

The Object of the charity is:

To advance the education of the public in the subject of meditation and the teachings of the Buddha in particular but not exclusively by supporting and encouraging the study and practice of Buddhist Insight Meditation (also known as Vispassana meditative practice) for the benefit of people in Bristol and the surrounding areas.

### 1.3 Governance

The charity is managed by a group of Trustees. All trustees are required to be members (supporters) of Bristol Insight. Trustees are recruited on the basis of skills and needs identified by the group of Trustees. A variety of methods are used to identify suitable candidates. Trustees are elected by the members (supporters) of the charity at the Annual General Meeting. Each year one third of the Trustees retires by rotation. The group of Trustees has the power to co-opt members during the year but these members must stand for election at the next Annual General Meeting. Trustees are given an induction pack containing key information about our organisation and on becoming a trustee. Trustees are encouraged to identify gaps in their knowledge, which are then addressed by briefings or other training delivered to some or all of the trustees as appropriate.

### 1.4 Management

The Committee of Trustees currently comprises 7 members and meets approximately 6 times a year. The Trustees are supported by 'organisers' who organise and support activities on an operational basis. Organisers report to the Trustee Committee. The charity was registered by the Charity Commission on 15 June 2015. Trustees serving during the year 2021 were:

Michael Baker (elected 25 June 2016, re-elected 13 April 2019)

Jonathan Edwards (appointed 15 June 2015, elected 25 June 2016, re-elected 7 July 2020, retired 13th July 2021)

Alastair Wakely (elected 13th April, 2019, retired 13th July 2021)

Jocelyn James (elected 7 July 2020)

Christine Ramsey-Wade (elected 7 July 2020)

Geoff Windle (elected 13 April 2019)

Barbara Kenney (elected 13th July 2021)

Lesley Wye (elected 7 July 2020)

## **2 Review of Activities**

The review of activities is set out in the 2021 Annual Review earlier in this report.

## **3 Financial Review**

Total income for the year was £ 2236.22 (2020: £3,310.50) and total expenditure for the year was £1999.34 (2020: £3,799.35). Both income and expenditure were significantly reduced as very few in-person events were held due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The total net assets held at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 were £4,854.65 (2020: £4,617.77) represented by cash at bank and in hand.

## **4 Risk Management**

The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the trustees, have been reviewed during the year and the trustees are satisfied that systems have been established to mitigate those risks. The charity has arranged employers and public liability insurance cover of £10M through an insurance policy underwritten by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group.

## **5 Format of financial statements**

The report and accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011

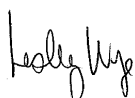
## **6 Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements**

Legal regulations require the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities for the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the Committee of Trustees and signed on their behalf by



Lesley wye, trustee and Treasurer

## Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2021

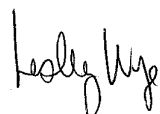
	Teacher Led Day Retreats & Admin	Self-Led & Nature Day Retreats	Tuesday Sitting & Introd Course	Teacher Led Courses	2021 Total	2020 Total
<b>INCOME</b>						
<b>Voluntary Income</b>						
Donations		£598.72	£180		£778.72	£1,853.00
<b>Investment Income</b>						
Bank Interest					£0.00	£0.00
<b>From charitable activities</b>						
Event booking fees	£1,457.50				£1,457.50	£1,457.50
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£1,457.50</b>			<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£2,236.22</b>	<b>£3,310.50</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>						
<b>Cost of charitable activities</b>						
Payments to Teachers	£121.80				£121.80	£702.12
Hire of Halls & Venues	£110.00	£676.05			£786.05	£1,748.25
Travel & Accommodation					£0.00	£40.07
Admin Services	£667.50				£667.50	£825.00
Coffee, Tea, Biscuits					£0.00	£13.80
Printing & Stationery					£0.00	£15.00
Liability Insurance	£364.00				£364.00	£364.00
Website & IT	£59.99				£59.99	£91.11
Purchases					£0.00	£0.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£1,323.29</b>	<b>£676.05</b>	<b>£1,092.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£1,999.34</b>	<b>£3,799.35</b>
<b>Net Movement of Funds</b>	<b>-£232.73</b>	<b>-£16.12</b>	<b>-£240.00</b>	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£236.88</b>	<b>-£488.85</b>
<b>Reconciliation of Funds</b>						
Balance B/F at 1 Jan 2021					£4617.77	£5,106.62
Balance C/F at 31 Dec 2021					<b>£4,854.65</b>	<b>£4,617.77</b>

## Balance Sheet at 31 December 2021

	2021	2020	2019
<b>Tangible Fixed Assets</b>	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Current Assets</b>			
	£4,599.5	£4,362.7	£4,752.7
Cash at bank	8	0	5
Cash in PayPal account	£178.89	£178.89	£178.89
Cash in hand	£76.18	£76.18	£174.98
	<b>£4,854.6</b>	<b>£4,617.7</b>	<b>£5,106.6</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>£4,854.6</b>	<b>£4,617.7</b>	<b>£5,106.6</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Represented by</b>			
	£4,854.6	£4,617.7	£5,106.6
Unrestricted funds	5	7	2
Restricted funds			
	<b>£4,854.6</b>	<b>£4,617.7</b>	<b>£5,106.6</b>
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

**Note:** we have a credit of £672 with the Friends Central Meeting House for 16 Tuesday evening sessions prepaid but not used in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and signed on their behalf by



Lesley Wye  
Trustee and Treasurer

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**Independent Examination**

Independent scrutiny of accounts is not required where the gross income for the financial year is £25,000 or less.