

Bristol Insight Meditation



Annual Report and Financial Statements

Year Ended 31 December 2022

Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Registered Charity No 1162182

About Bristol Insight Meditation

In this our seventh 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 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.

2022 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 meditative 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 2022 most of the retreats took place in person at Glenfrome Primary School. We had one online retreat and one cancelled one. We had the following retreats:

- Stephen Fulder “What Can We Rely On? Living with Steadiness in an Uncertain World” - online
- Bernat Font Clos - ‘Pain, Pleasure & Beyond: practising with how it feels – in Person
- Yanai Postelnik - ‘Either Boundless Heart, Vulnerable Earth or Contemplating our Mortality’- in person but cancelled by Yanai
- Julia Wallond – ‘Befriending ourselves and the world’– In Person
- Nathan Glyde - ‘Freedom of the Heart Unbound’– In Person
- Gavin Milne – ‘Aligning with a liberating flow of life’– In Person

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;

- Monthly 'Self-led' day retreat, which provides alternative sitting and walking practice sessions, together with opportunities for discussion;
- Monthly nature meditations in open woodland;
- Occasional overnight camping meditations for women in open woodland
- Insightful ageing group;
- 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."

Some Highlights from 2022

Teacher Led Retreats

The Teacher Led Retreats team have worked hard over the last year to deliver 6 retreats though one was sadly cancelled due to teacher illness. The retreats have reflected a rich variety of perspectives and practices within the Insight tradition. We ran most of the retreats at our usual venue at Glenfrome School with one retreat online due to the locality of the teacher being abroad. However, the numbers that have returned to in person are still lower than they were pre covid so we have actually made a loss on at least one of our led retreat days due to lower numbers and having to cover the cost of hall hire, refreshments, travel and accommodation costs in comparison to just zoom fees being the only out going previously. I have recently asked for feedback from participants and a number have feedback that the online facility suited them as they live further afield.

Since Lesley took over the treasurer post we get regular updates regarding the Led Team finances which is helpful.

We have decided to run a structured booking system with two levels (early bird and tier 1) to try to encourage people to book on earlier and to endeavour to cover our costs.

We are also asking people to sign up for Gift Aid so we can claim back on some of the booking fees through this scheme.

We need 25 people to attend in order to break even.

We have also capped our accommodation budget at £30 for those teachers choosing to stay overnight in accommodation other than that offered by the team. We encourage teachers to book travel etc as early as possible to keep those costs to a minimum.

Although we may make a loss on some retreat days, overall we break even over the course of the year. There is a pot of profit which can act as a buffer if needs be.

We do have a freely given option for those that are in financial difficulty to ensure we are as accessible as possible.

We have had quite a lot of new people attending these days which is encouraging.

Claire-Louise Symonds

Self Led Day Retreats

The self-led retreats were well attended in the last year. We had between 8 and 14 participants approximately each Saturday. We kept the same popular structure of silent sitting and walking meditation periods. We included a one hour recorded Dharma talk and 1/2 hour sharing period. The day does not include any specific meditation instruction. Participants generally have some meditation experience.

The verbal feedback from participants is positive. They appreciate the opportunity to meditate for a whole day in a supportive atmosphere. Full details of the retreat can be found on the Bristol insight website.

The team of four organisers continue to volunteer their services. We have occasional short meetings to coordinate this.

David Ringsell

Tuesday Evening Sitting Group

The weekly evening sit returned to in-person meetings in the Spring of 2022 at the Central Quaker Meeting House. This was much appreciated by many after a long period of meeting on Zoom. Attendance for the meetings continued to be good with newcomers each week. Several of the newcomers have volunteered to become facilitators at the meetings. Our "Deepening our Practice" programme covered explorations of the relationship between meditation and therapy, scientific research, working from home and the cost of living crises. 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 sessions and enjoyed socialising during our Chat Café 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.

Mike Baker

Focusing Group

After a break three monthly in person meetings took place from September to November.

Daytime Meditation and Sharing Group (formerly Daytime Sangha Group)

This group disbanded towards the end of 2021 and did not meet in 2022.

Sangha Walks

There were 2 local sangha walks this year in October and December, the popular Sugar loaf walk in the black mountains and Dolebury Warren.

Sangha walks have been happening intermittently since the first walk in 2005. There have been fewer walks this year due to facilitator illness. Most of the walks have been led by Gordon and occasionally by a volunteer walk leader, we would like to encourage other volunteers to lead walks going forward. Children and dogs are welcome on the walks and part of the walk is held in silence. We walk at a gentle pace and walks generally last for 2–4 hours and include a pub or picnic lunch during or at the end of the walk.

The sangha walks are open to anyone, and new people often come on the walks. Connections get made and new people get to hear of other group activities through conversation with sangha members on the walks.

Joss James

Insightful Ageing Group

The Insightful Ageing group continued to meet about once every two months throughout the year. The membership of the group remained constant but continued to remain open to new membership. The group largely used the book “In Praise of Ageing- Awakening to Old Age with Wisdom and Compassion by Carmel Shalev” as a basis to explore the challenges of ageing. Many lively discussions took place around the themes in the book which included Courage, Freedom, Compassion, Joy and Wisdom in older age. Group members continue to express that they highly value the continuing support of the group.

Mike Baker

Nature Meditation

Nature meditation retreats continued to rise in popularity with 11 retreats offered attended by an average of 10 people (lowest attendance = 5 and highest = 17). Themes included 'managing difficulty using RAIN', 'feeling tone' and working with the phrase 'true freedom is about being without anxiety about imperfection'. Rupert Marques, formerly of Ecodharma in Catalunya, offered a whole day retreat combining the four directions (North, South, East & West) with dharmic principles. This proved very popular. Three retreats were cancelled because of high winds, low interest or facilitator illness. All the retreats took place in Wraxall woods near Bristol.

Lesley Wye

Rewilding Women

In 2022, Rewilding Women was in a transitional phase, being partially under the BIM umbrella although the finances were kept separately. Four retreats were offered with three garnering sufficient interest to run; the March retreat had few takers! Themes were 'Wild Garlic & Bluebells' (May), Abundance & Gratitude (July) and Letting Go; Starting Afresh (Sept). The first two retreats ran in Wraxall woods while the final one was held in Wildflower Woods near Bruton. An average of 7 women attended (6-8). Feedback was very positive.

Lesley Wye

Safeguarding training

An online session for facilitators and supporters was run in July and a new safe guarding policy has been put in place.

Charity Information

TRUSTEES

Michael Baker

Jocelyn James

Barbara Kenney

Christine Elizabeth Ramsey-Wade

Geoff Windle

Lesley Wye

Heather Ruffell

Riley Yin Au

LEGAL STATUS

Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Charity No 1162182

FURTHER INFORMATION

Website: 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 2022

1 Factual information

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 needs identified by the group of Trustees. A variety of methods is 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 comprised 5 members and met approximately 6 times a year. The Trustees are supported by 'organisers' who organise and support activities on an operational basis. The charity was registered by the Charity Commission on 15 June 2015. Trustees serving during the year 2022 were:

Michael Baker (elected 25 June 2016, re-elected 13 April 2019; resigned 14 Sept 2022)

Jocelyn James (elected 7 July 2020)

Barbara Kenny (elected 7 July 2020)

Christine Ramsey-Wade (elected 7 July 2020)

Heather Ruffell (elected 14 Sept 2022)

Geoff Windle (elected 13 April 2019; resigned 14 Sept 2022)

Lesley Wye (elected 7 July 2020; re-elected 14 Sept 2022)

Riley Yin Au (elected 14 Sept 2022)

2. Review of Activities

The review of activities is set out in the 2022 Annual Review earlier in this report.

3 Financial Review

Total income for the year was £5221 (2021: £2236.22) and total expenditure for the year was £5618 (2021: £1999.34). The total net assets held at 31st December 2022 were £4484.67 (2021: £4878.65) represented by cash at bank.

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

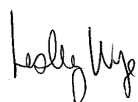
6 Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

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 2022

	Day retreats	Self-Led	Tuesday Eve	Cou rses	RW	Bursa ry	2022 total	2021 Total
INCOME								
Donations	1190	1952.50	1973.50	0	90	15		
Total Income	1190	1952.50	1973.50	0	90	15	5221	2236.22
EXPENDITURE								
Hire of Halls & Venues	(660)	(1806)	(1428)				(3894)	(786.05)
Travel & Accommodation	(103.29)						(103.29)	(121.80)
Admin Services	(697.50)						(697.50)	(667.50)
Printing & Stationery	(28)						(28)	
Liability Insurance	(124)	(120)	(120)				(364)	(364)
Website & IT	(79.17)						(79.17)	(59.99)
Purchases		(2.65)					(2.65)	
Dharmaseed		(64.39)					(64.39)	
Refunds			(375)				(375)	
Transfers		(10)					(10)	
Expenditure	(1691.96)	(2003.04)	(1923)				(5618)	(1999.34)
Net Movement							(397)	236.88
Reconciliation of Funds								
Balance B/F at 1 Jan 2022							£4878.65	£4617.77
Paypal account							18.95	
Day retreats cash							(15.93)	
Net movement							(397)	
Balance C/F at 31 Dec 2022							£4484.67	£4878.65

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2022

	2022	2021	2020	2019
Tangible Fixed Assets				
Current Assets				
Cash at bank	4226.58	4623.58	4362.70	4752.75
Cash in PayPal account	197.84	178.89	178.89	178.89
Cash in hand	60.25	76.18	76.18	174.98
Net Current Assets	4484.67	4878.65	4617.77	5106.62
Net Assets	4484.67	4878.65	4617.77	5106.62
Unrestricted funds	4484.67	4878.65	4617.77	5106.62
Restricted funds				
Total Funds	4484.67	4878.65	4617.77	5106.62

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees
on and signed on their behalf by



Lesley Wye
Trustee and Treasurer