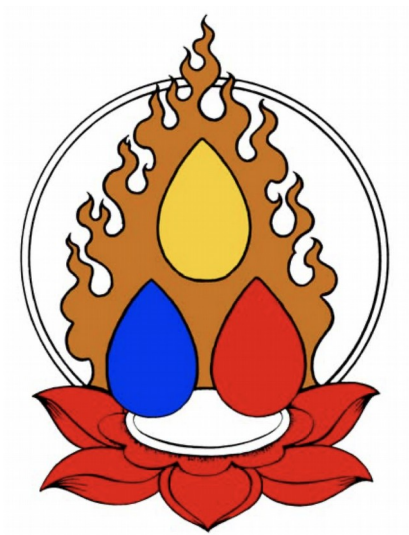


# *OXFORD TRIRATNA ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS*

2020-2021



*Board of Trustees*

*Oxford Triratna  
c/o Peace House, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford, OX1 1LD*



## Aims and Purposes

Oxford Triratna (OT, 'our', 'we', the Charity) is a charitable incorporated organisation responsible for the advancement of the Buddhist religion. This means communicating and practising the ideal of Human Enlightenment, exemplified by Siddhartha Gotama, the Buddha. It means communicating and practising the teachings of the Buddha, known as the Dharma, and, further, creating a community, or sangha, of individuals committed to the Buddhist life. It does so in collaboration with other groups and centres within the Triratna Buddhist Community. The Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are known collectively as the Three Jewels, and they are the totality of the Buddhist religion.

OT's particularly responsibilities concern the English county of Oxfordshire, and specifically the city of Oxford. OT's activities are not restricted to this area.

## Objectives and Activities

OT is committed to enabling as many people as possible to become a part of its sangha, or community. OT maintains an overview of all activities taking place through public classes and invitation-only study groups and events. These activities support the practise of Buddhism as a way of life, enabling individuals to make a voluntary commitment to the Buddhist life to the extent that they wish. Central to this is support on the practise of Buddhist ethics, meditation, and wisdom.

When planning activities for the year, the OT have considered the Charity Commission's (CC) guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. We seek to enable ordinary people to discover Buddhism, practice it, and realise its teachings as part of our community through:

- Ethics, Meditation, and Devotional practice; learning about the Dharma;
- Connecting with the ideal of the Buddha and learning what it means to adopt this as an ideal for themselves.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living as part of the community.
- Missionary and outreach work.

To enable this, we rent a room on a sessional basis at Peace House, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford, OX1 1LD. Due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, however, these classes did not take place in person as in previous years. All activities in 2020-21 were held online, via Zoom online meeting software.

## Achievements and Performance

### *Ethics, Meditation and Devotional Practice*

The pandemic brought significant challenges to the work of Oxford Triratna in providing a range of opportunities during the week, and throughout the year, that our sangha finds meaningful, fulfilling, and beneficial. Our main weekly vehicle for the sangha as a whole to come together, our Tuesday Sangha Nights, never took place in person. Due to the limitations of attention and impact on fatigue levels for online events, we shortened our usual Sangha Night format, holding them 7.30-9pm instead of 7-9.30pm. The Charity was keen for all key elements to be present online. Each session began, as usual, with a short devotional practice, followed by a period of meditation. Consideration was given to the visual background of those leading the classes, and an attempt was made to maintain the sense of beauty that a shrine brings, a beauty that stimulates faith in the Buddha. In the ritual each person was invited to turn toward, and honour, their own shrine spaces, helping to build that connection, and elicit that beauty and faith, in attendees' own meditation spaces. We encouraged participants to develop their 'at home' ritual spaces, bringing quiet, with appropriate lighting, décor, and furnishings that help them meditate, attending more closely to body, heart and mind. This fundamental preparation assists in



exploring the Dharma together with others and optimises the susceptibility to deeper and clearer understandings of Buddhism. In addition to our Sangha Nights we sought, ultimately in vain, to offer a weekend retreat in person when restrictions were eased. Day retreats were also very difficult to organise, so we hoped to use online versions. Unfortunately, none took place during the year, though we did manage a weekend retreat in March 2021. As the Charity had to cancel an earlier attempt to lead a weekend retreat, we were pleased to see this one take place. Attendance was healthy and given the limitations of being online, OT did consider that it was well worth running.

#### *Learning about the Dharma and Connecting with the Buddha*

Each Sangha Night also includes the exploration of a theme. This might be one directly related to the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gotama, or a theme that has developed in the subsequent unfolding of the Buddhist tradition. OT has an ecumenical approach, and all forms of the Dharma can be explored so long as they are in accord with basic Buddhism, those teachings that are associated with the historical Buddha. These classes are open to members of the public on a drop-in basis, and anyone can turn up on any week.

During the year we noticed that attendance at Sangha Nights, though working well, was dropping to about 12 per class. The Charity was already aware that running Sangha Nights online was not enabling new people to simply turn up in the way it was encouraged for in-person events. Toward the close of the year, therefore, OT chose to change Sangha Nights so that it would operate as a kind of second introductory course for those who had just done a first, 6-week one.

Sangha Night themes included the Four characteristics of life, aspects of the human realm from the Wheel of Life, the Four Brahma Viharas, or Sublime Abodes, Tathagatagarbha, several weeks inspired by a lecture by Sangharakshita, Triratna's founder, on 'Buddhism, World Peace, and Nuclear War', and 'The Taste of Freedom', itself a lecture by Sangharakshita, given in 1979.

Along with this, for several months over the Summer of 2020 Padmakumara led morning meditations online, at 8am, for anyone in the sangha to join.

#### *Introductory Events*

Though the move to online activities was successful in terms of Sangha Night, it did leave us a little unclear on how to incorporate new people or what type of extra classes and courses we should run to help them join the sangha. This was made more difficult due to human resource limitations, but the primary concern for the Charity was that in-person meetings were believed to be so much better for people who don't previously know each other. Those at Sangha Nights had usually met in person before and the strength of connection and friendship, therefore, so much the stronger. When it was clear that we would not be returning to in-person classes for many months, a plan to lead online courses emerged.

'How to Keep Your Head While the World is on Fire' was a 6-week introductory meditation course led by Sthiradeva, and began in September 2020. A follow-on, ~~second~~ introductory Buddhism course entitled 'Re-Master your Life' was then led by Prajnaketu. Both courses were supported by Mitras and others committed to the sangha. We had good bookings for both of these online courses, and were able to integrate some of those attending into our Sangha Nights. This was helped by holding the introductory courses on a Tuesday evening, and moving Sangha Nights to Thursdays whilst they took place. This was a worthwhile experiment that the Charity may repeat in future.

#### *Day and Weekend Retreats*

Essential to Buddhist life is the activity of retreats. For OT this entails going to a tailored venue, in which an individual can fully immerse themselves in what it means to fulfil the Buddhist life. There's more opportunity for meditation, for teachings, for reflection and



friendship. For weekend retreats, we were hoping to return to Adhithana for an in-person event. As this did not occur, towards the close of the year, OT held a weekend retreat online, entitled from 'Darkness to Light'. We'd had to cancel an earlier weekend retreat due to low numbers but this one proved a success, with over a dozen people in attendance.

There are five major Buddhist festivals that OT celebrate on a recurring annual basis. These are usually tied to our day and weekend retreats. Due to pandemic restrictions OT did not hold either an in-person or online day retreat. This meant that our festival days were incorporated into Sangha Nights, and, as thebuddhistcentre.com, an online Triratna environment, spearheaded several international festivals, we joined with these. On one occasion, for instance, for 'Buddha Day 2020: A Worldwide Celebration', we individually joined a talk online given by Subhuti, attended by people across the world, before going into an OT-only discussion group. This worked well, but conditions meant we couldn't repeat this for other festivals such as 'International Sangha Day: an Online Festival of Light', so we made such events known to the sangha for them to join individually.

#### Mitra Study

In OT we believe the Buddhist life is one of commitment to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The classes we offer to the public are offered as an invitation, so that any individual can come and see for themselves whether, and how, they make such a commitment. In the TBC, adopted too in OT, there are two major acts of commitment. These are becoming a Mitra and Ordination.

Mitra means 'friend', even spiritual friend, and is connected with a word meaning love. In the TBC becoming a Mitra has three elements. First, it means to consciously adopt the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha as the values, or principles, upon which to live. Second, it means to put those principles into practise by adopting five ethical precepts: loving-kindness; generosity; simplicity/stillness/contentment; truthful communication, and; a clear, bright, awareness. Finally, becoming a Mitra entails making a commitment to the TBC as the primary sangha in which to live out the Buddhist life.

At the beginning of the year the Charity had 18 Mitras. Due to the pandemic OT struggled to facilitate this kind of step, to support individuals' in shaping their practice into this form of commitment. We saw no new Mitras during 2021, though as noted below, the Charity did manage to develop possibilities for charting this course in 2022 if so much of its activities are confined to online classes. 2021 ended with 15 active Mitras.

An aspect of the training offered by OT is Mitra Study. This is led by an Order Member and occurs in single sex groups of, usually, not more than eight people. Due to the lack of a female Order Member in Oxford two groups of women Mitras have been participating in study using an internet-based platform. In total there are now three Mitra Study groups, all of which are online. Prajñāketu leads a group of men and they moved online, and the women continued to meet online. This currently leaves two female Mitras without a group. One chose to leave a group for their own reasons and the other is looking for an online group among Order Members outside Oxford whom she knows.

A Mitra, Ben Linsey-Bloom, started a study group for those interested in exploring whether to be a Mitra. They looked at the first year of the Mitra Study Course.

Sthiradeva began meetings with two senior men Mitras, and before the year concluded they were joined by another committed non-Mitra friend. The Charity welcomed such developments as it values the commitment and intimacy of smaller group environments to facilitate a deeper appreciation of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

#### Ordination

Those who wish to take their commitment to the TBC and Buddhism deeper can ask for ordination. The individual will then embark on a series of retreats that trains them for the purpose of joining the Triratna Buddhist Order (TBO). After Sthiradeva joined the Order



sangha in 2020 OT were hoping to welcome a fourth, as Ben Linsey-Bloom had received his invitation to be ordained on a 16-week retreat in Spain. Like so many events in 2020-2021 this was postponed, and Ben wasn't ordained until after the OT year ended. Sthiradeva settled into Order life well, though, joining the Excalibur Chapter, and becoming involved in leading introductory events and supporting some senior sangha members.

Oxford Triratna is also active in supporting those who have asked for ordination or who are considering doing so. Two women asked for ordination during the year, both of whom participate in the Mitra Study group run by Siddhimala. One man asked for ordination, so that as 2021 ended there were 8 people training for ordination into the Triratna Buddhist Order.

#### Pastoral Care and Safeguarding

The Charity only runs classes for adults, and OT recognises that not everyone attending these is free of vulnerabilities. We are careful to do whatever we can such that everyone joining these classes feels welcomed and is safe from harm. When Sthiradeva joined the Board, he took on the responsibility for Safeguarding. On an executive level, Padmakumāra operates as Safeguarding Officer. Both dealt with any issues and reported to the Board regularly on safeguarding matters. There were no incidents to report to the Charity Commission.

The Charity encourages Mitras to support the running of our classes. For in-person activities, this can involve them meeting the public as they arrive. Sometimes this means having contact with the public without a member of OT present. Unlike in the previous year, no training sessions were held for Mitras on safeguarding matters, however, Triratna's overall Safeguarding Team produced guidance on good practice for online meetings software such as Zoom. This guidance was followed by the Charity and included, for instance, not creating break-out groups of pairs, as this could not be monitored, and quite different practice compared to in-person classes.

Later in the OT year, when the opportunity for in-person classes that OT was holding out for, was impossible, an Introductory Course entitled 'Do Something That Works' was held. A team of Mitras supported the course and led discussion groups for which they were briefed on safeguarding and welfare good practice, along with tips on how best to facilitate discussion.

Pastoral care largely occurs in one-to-one meetings and as part of the broader approach of friendship, what is known as Kalyana Mitrata. These one-to-one meetings are key to the process of enlightening others about the Buddhist religion, and again, unfortunately, OT conducted fewer of such meetings in the year. Those that did take place remained a vital part of how we create sangha.

#### Triratna Buddhist Community

OT is an independent charity in relationship with other independent charities in the Triratna Buddhist Community. OT participated in online Triratna-wide festival dates during the pandemic restrictions. This was a new development, facilitated by thebuddhistcentre.com, an online Triratna presence that seeks to give voice to what is happening throughout the Triratna world. They developed several new activities to support Triratna sanghas such as Oxford, including daily meditations, home retreats, podcasts, the Dharma Toolkit newsletter and more. We made these available to the local sangha, largely through links on our Facebook group page.

#### Interfaith and Educational Activity

The Charity does not have its own building, a Buddhist Centre. Along with limited human resources the capacity to develop this is hampered. OT was unable to visit schools, universities, etc, due to restrictions imposed by the English government's pandemic response. That said, Prajnaketu was involved in several Multifaith Virtual Prayers - in which he offered a Buddhist perspective alongside those from other faith groups.



### *Coronavirus*

At the close of 2020's year OT remarked that the pandemic had begun to affect its operations. All in-person classes ended on 10<sup>th</sup> March and as stated above, these did not return during 2021. Immediately, we moved online, first to broadcasting via 'Facebook Live' but then moving to Zoom online meeting software. This meant we could hold 'break-out' groups for people to hold discussions. OT continued to utilise this software throughout the year, incorporating a smaller number, but a broad range of classes, courses, festivals, in addition to the online Mitra Study groups

The new website has worked well, especially in using it to schedule events through which people can pay and donate, like they would with any online booking or purchase system. The Charity continues to use Mailchimp to send weekly announcements about what is happening, which also are posted on our public Facebook page. After initial success using Meetup this platform has proved less useful, as it seems especially suited to single events. On balance, and especially for the introductory course 'Do something that works', the Charity chose to maintain its subscription.

### **Financial Review**

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £7,921. OT has a policy of not charging a fee for most of its activities. Sangha Nights, Day Retreats, Mitra Study, and Introductory Courses all operated on this basis. This is in keeping with the traditional practice of offering the Dharma freely. Donations from these activities were higher than the previous year (£4,367 compared to £2,842). Tracking income from Sangha Nights was difficult as online options, using PayPal and then Stripe, were open during the week, so if people didn't give directly at the end of a Sangha Night class the Charity couldn't tell if it was related to Sangha Night or not. Receipts were at £416 for the year. Regular Giving was down on the previous year (£2,421 compared to £3,233), falling by a third. OT were monitoring this fall throughout the year and were not surprised by the results but are concerned that it is a second considerable fall in a row, meaning income from Regular Giving has nearly halved in two years. No fundraising events or drives were launched during the year and this was likely a factor, though some people chose to stop giving regularly because they did not attend online events or understood that our expenses were lower as no venue was hired.

Other Income was almost solely comprised of the final part of a refund due to a processing error in respect of payments for Rent / Lease of Buildings. As part of its application to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, OT had already taken steps to mitigate the likelihood of such errors in future, by requiring a second authorisation and approval procedure for internet payments.

The inability to meet in person had a significant effect on expenditure, as there were no charges for hiring a venue (Sangha Nights and Weekend Retreats in particular). Total costs were £1,389 compared to £11,875 the previous year, a remarkable drop of 90%.

The net result of the year was an excess of receipts over payments of £6,533. This compared with an excess of payments over receipts of £1,527 for 2020. Adding bank and deposit balances brought forward at the beginning of the year, the balances carried forward at the 5<sup>th</sup> April on unrestricted funds totalled £21,520. There are no designated or restricted funds.

### **Reserves Policy**



It is OT policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds which equates to six months of unrestricted payments, equivalent to £695. The balance of £21,520 held on unrestricted funds easily matches this.

It is our policy not to invest deposit accounts or stock market funds at the current time.

## Volunteers

We would like to thank all the volunteers who worked so hard to make our sangha the committed and vibrant community it is. We want to thank [Flora Botsford](#), Erica Stross, Jenifer Zeligs, [Tanya Berman](#), [Greetje Corporaal](#), and ~~and Mike Green???~~ for supporting ~~the Do Something That Works~~ introductory courses as well as [Rose Perkins](#), [Vajrasakhi](#), [Michael Buick](#) for supporting [Sangha Nights online](#). OT would also like to thank Tom Thorpe and Ellie Pearce, who helped with hosting online classes. Finally, OT would like to thank everyone who attended our classes, contributed to discussions, and asked questions. Perhaps without knowing it, you helped make a valuable contribution to OT and we are grateful for it.

OT also wish to thank Padmakumara in acting as voluntary Director during the year.

## Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment is set out in the OT Constitution. The Board of Trustees consists of Triratna Buddhist Order Members who are members of the Charity. All Order Members in the local area are encouraged to register as a member of the Charity and stand for election to the OT Board.

The OT Board are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the Charity, including deciding on how the funds of OT are spent.

The full OT Board met on 3 occasions during the year with the level of attendance at 100% aside from one meeting when 1 Trustee sent apologies. Given the wide responsibilities the OT Board has a committee that held a business meeting on a weekly basis. Three of the current Board attend this meeting. It covers matters of publicity and finance, programming of events, inter-Triratna matters, safeguarding and pastoral care, Mitra and Ordination requests.

In September 2019 OT held a vision meeting, inviting all Mitras to participate in creating the priorities for the Charity over the coming years. One conclusion from this is that a number of committees need to be formed. Currently the single committee is overburdened. Unfortunately, there wasn't much development on this during 2021, but the Board remain desirous of increasing participation in OT's operations and will report on this in 2022.

### Elected Members

Timothy Holden (Prajñāketu) – Secretary  
Robert Hubbard (Sthiradeva) – Treasurer  
Guy Potter (Padmakumāra) – Chairman  
Matthew New (Sangharuchi)

### Members

Timothy Holden (Prajñāketu)  
Robert Hubbard (Sthiradeva)  
Guy Potter (Padmakumāra)  
Matthew New (Sangharuchi)

## Oxford Triratna – Annual Return 2021



Approved by the OT Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 and signed on their behalf by Guy Potter (Padmakumāra)

**Oxford  
Triratna**

**Receipts and Payments Accounts for the period:  
06/04/2020 to 05/04/2021**

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**Section A: Receipts and Payments**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds to the nearest £</b>	<b>Restricted Funds to the nearest £</b>	<b>Endowment Funds to the nearest £</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>Last Year</b>
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Day Retreats	-			-	282
Intro Course	2,218			<b>2,218</b>	298
One-off Giving	1,732			<b>1,732</b>	372
Other Income (note 2)	589			<b>589</b>	2,869
Regular Giving	2,421			<b>2,421</b>	3,233
Sangha Nights	416			<b>416</b>	2,188
Weekend Retreats	545			<b>545</b>	1106
<b>Subtotal</b> (Gross income)	<b>7,921</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,921</b>	<b>10,348</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales</b>					
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>7,921</b>			<b>7,921</b>	<b>10,348</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Administration	39			<b>39</b>	230
Consultancy (note 3)	-			-	1,521
Donations	-			-	200
Day Retreats	-			-	15
Equipment	288			<b>288</b>	33
Governance					-
Insurance	196			<b>196</b>	196
Publicity	688			<b>688</b>	344
Rent / Lease of Buildings	-			-	8,044
Sangha Nights	13			<b>13</b>	123
Volunteer Costs	-			-	-
Weekend Retreats	140			<b>140</b>	1,124
Training	-			-	45
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1,388</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,388</b>	<b>11,875</b>

**Receipt and Payments Accounts (Continued)**

	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Restricted</b>	<b>Endowment</b>	<b>Total funds</b>	<b>Last Year</b>
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# Oxford Triratna – Annual Return 2021



	Funds to the nearest £	Funds to the nearest £	Funds to the nearest £	£	£
<b>A4 Assets and investment purchases</b>					
<b>Subtotal</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>1,388</b>			<b>1,388</b>	<b>11,875</b>
<b>Net of receipts / (payments)</b>	<b>6,533</b>	-	-	<b>6,533</b>	<b>-1,527</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>14,987</b>			<b>14,987</b>	
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>21,520</b>			<b>21,520</b>	

## Section B: Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the End of the Period

Category	Details	Unrestricted Funds to the nearest £	Restricted Funds to the nearest £	Endowment Funds to the nearest £
<b>B1 Cash Funds</b>	Co-op Current Account	21,520		
	<b>Total Cash Funds</b>	<b>21,520</b>		
<b>B2 Other Monetary Assets</b>	Tax Recovery as Gift Aid	1,230		
<b>B3 Investment Assets</b>	N/A			
<b>B4 Assets retained for the Charity's own use</b>	N/A			
		<b>Fund to which asset belongs</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Current Value</b>
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>		<b>Fund to which liability belongs</b>	<b>Amount Due</b>	<b>When due</b>

The attached notes form part of these financial statements.

Approved by the OT Board of Trustees and signed on their behalf by Padmakumāra (Guy Potter – Chairman) and Sthiradeva (Treasurer)

## Notes to the Receipts and Payments Accounts

- The financial statements of Oxford Triratna have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the requirements for accounting periods ending after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.

# Oxford Triratna – Annual Return 2021



## 2. Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowments £	Total £
Refund on Rent/Lease of Buildings	589			589
Total Other Income	589			589

## 3. Consultancy

This refers solely to the work carried out for the Charity by Padmakumāra, acting as a volunteer Director in 2021 and as supported Director in 2020.

## 4. Independent Examination

The Charity Commission threshold for mandatory independent examination or audit is an income of £25,000. OT will not be appointing an Independent Examiner for the year 2020-21.