

Oxford Triratna Annual Return 2024-25



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 Dharma, the Buddha's teaching, and 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,. OT maintains an overview of all activities taking place through public classes and invitation-only study groups and events. These activities support the practice 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 of the practice of Buddhist ethics, meditation, and wisdom.

When planning activities for the year, 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, practise 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 usually rent a room on a sessional basis, broadcasting our public events to our closed Facebook Group. We also conduct discussion groups over Zoom.

Achievements and Performance



Sangha Nights

We have continued to benefit from meeting in the Hodgkin Room at Peace House. On average during this period our Sangha nights have been attended by an average of 22.8 people, rising from 21.8 the previous year. We continue to live-stream our Sangha Nights to our closed Facebook group.

In December 2023 we heard that the Fellowship of Reconciliation was intending to make the whole of Peace House available for let to a single organisation. By late 2024, following no interest and a rise in bookings for individual rooms, the Fellowship of Reconciliation have assured us that they will not be pursuing this.

During this period we concluded our year on the theme of Mindfulness, including series on 'Mythic mindfulness', drawing on the figures and stories from the Buddhist tradition; 'Cyberloka', looking at mindfulness of the online world; Sangharakshita's aphorisms on Awareness; passages from the Buddhist scriptures on Mindfulness; a return to Botley Park for ReWild your Mind; and Mindfulness of ritual.

We then began a year on the theme of Energy, with series on what Energy specifically means for a Buddhist and archetypal symbols of Energy.

We were very grateful to be joined by guests Maitriyogini and Bodhidasa, who gave one-off talks at Sangha Nights in December and January respectively.

Since September 2024, we have expanded the team of keyholders to include Alex, Chris, Flora, and Pippa. They led the practical arrangements for Sangha Night: convening a team, organising the setting up and dismantling of our shrine room, overseeing refreshments, and collecting donations. This has been very welcome, as it has freed up the Order members to concentrate more on the teaching and friendship sides of Sangha Nights.

We have involved mitras in a consultation process around the Sangha Night themes for the autumn 2024 and the first half of 2025 - this has helped to keep our Sangha Night offerings relevant and interesting to our audience.

And since the start of 2024 a team of mitras have been leading the meditations in the first half of our Sangha Nights. This has been greatly appreciated by everyone, bringing a wider pool of voices and approaches into our meditation teaching.

Introductory Events

In October and November 2024 Sthiradeva, along with Tanya, Lesley, Pippa, Danni, and Jane L led an introductory course based on *Radical Dharma*, a course prepared by the Sikkha Project. Around 20 people in total attended, some of them coming regularly to Sangha Nights.

'Rewild your Mind', a series of evenings held in Botley Park, was publicised to newcomers as an introduction to meditation and attracted around 30 new people, in addition to regulars at Sangha Night who also attended. This year it was mainly run by mitras, Pippa, Flora, Vicki, and Anne.



Other Public Events

In this period, Lottie handed over the running of the monthly Sub30s group to Alex. This has continued to be a supportive context for younger people to encounter Buddhism and our community. One of the men from this group, Kieran, joined Prajnaketu on a Trackless weekend, a new initiative combining meditation and ritual with hiking and camping in Snowdonia.

Lottie, Tanya, and Michael B hosted a fundraising event for TiratanaLoka Unlimited in the form of a skills auction. The evening was very enjoyable and raised £1197.98.

Day and Weekend Retreats

We ran two residential retreats during this year, one in July (20 bookings) on the theme of the Four Noble Truths, and one in October (15 bookings) on the Diamond Sutra. Both were hosted at Adhithana in Herefordshire. During the July retreat Jane L became a mitra.

In addition to this, we participated in a 'combined Sangha' event at Adhithana.

We also ran a retreat day in May to celebrate our Buddha Day festival, at which we were joined by Khemabandu, who gave a talk. We also hosted a day retreat in September for our Padmasambhava Day festival. There were two women's days, led by Vidyamala and Dayadarsini, and Siddhimala, in May and November respectively. The proposed men's day in July was cancelled due to illness.

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 anyone can come and see for themselves whether, and how, they make such a commitment. In the TBC, adopted too in the 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 by which to live. Second, it means to put those principles into practice 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 16 active mitras. One person requested, and then became a mitra in July. We also two mitras move away from Oxford, another step back from involvement in Oxford, and three join us from elsewhere.

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. An online women's mitra study group started in November 2024, led by Dayadarsini and Maitriyogini, and includes 6 women mitras.



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We also continued the mixed study mornings, exploring Sangharakshita's *A Guide to the Buddhist Path* and *The Essential Sangharakshita*. These have been attended by a total of 17 people at various times.

Early in 2025 Prajnaketu and Vajrasakhi began a series of monthly groups supporting our mitras to become Dharma teachers. As of April 2025 we had conducted two of these sessions, with more to come.

Sthiradeva continues to meet with the 'Silver Sangha': two men Mitras, and a non-Mitra friend. The Charity welcomes 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). As of April 2024 there are 9 women and 2 men actively training for ordination. The 7 women meet in two separate groups, one composed only of 4 mitras based in Oxford; and an online one involving women from outside Oxford.

Vajrasakhi and Prajnaketu have run occasional study mornings for these mitras, roughly every quarter.

Celebrations

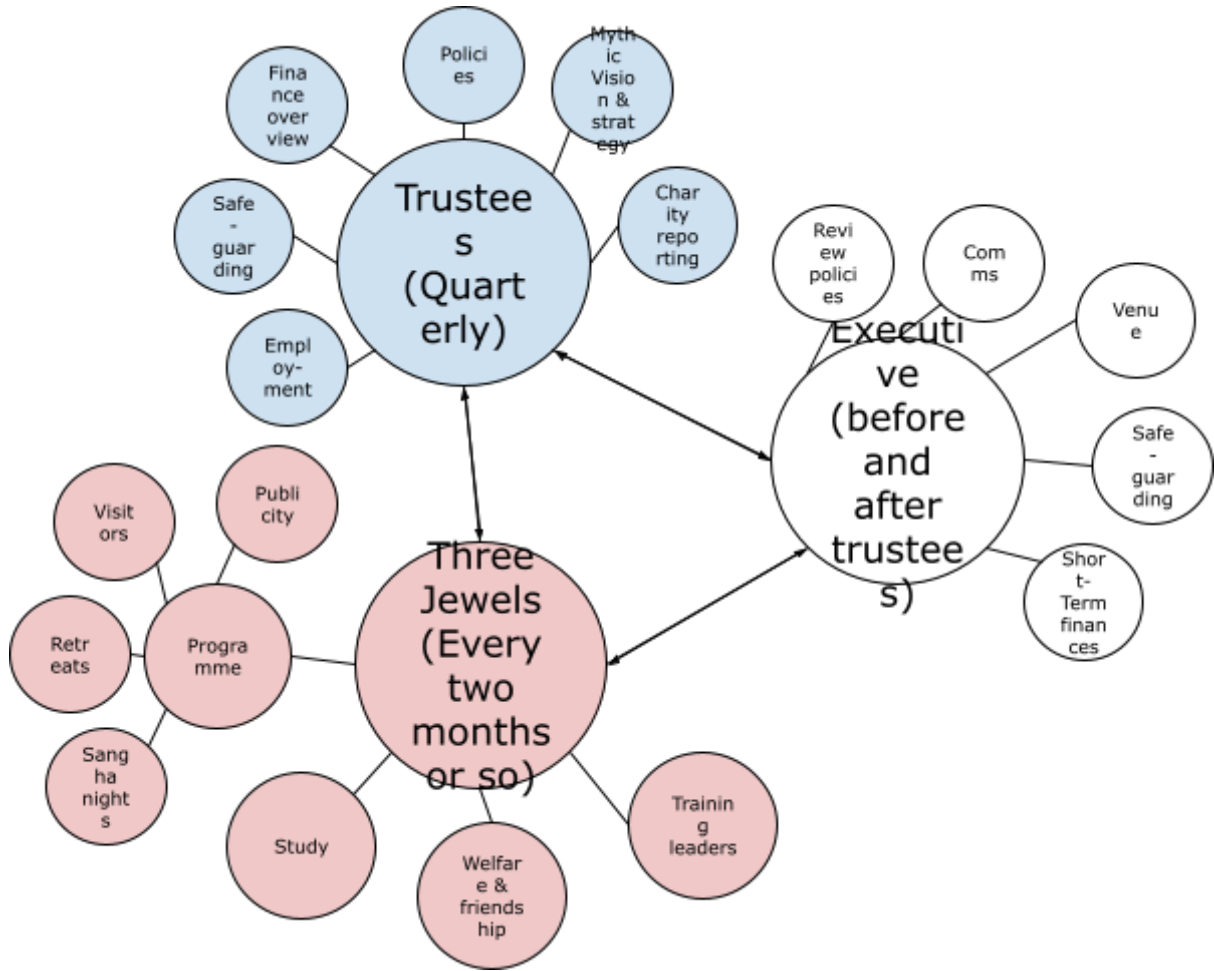
This year has seen a couple of significant appointments to our Charity's organisation. At Sangha Day in November 2024 we welcomed Sthiradeva as our men's mitra convenor, tasked with befriending men and supporting their deepening involvement in our community. We also welcomed Paramartha as our President, who provides an experienced outside perspective on our activities and is a support to everyone coming to our events.

Team, trustees and structures

The organisational structure of OT is as follows:



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Whose members are:

Trustees	Executive (subset of trustees)	Three Jewels (all the Order members in Oxford)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prajnaketu (Chair and safeguarding officer) • Padmakumara (Treasurer) • Sthiradeva (Secretary and safeguarding trustee) • Vilasamuni • Sangharuchi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prajnaketu • Padmakumara • Sthiradeva 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prajnaketu • Vajrasakhi • Sthiradeva • Padmakumara



Pastoral Care and Safeguarding

The Charity only runs classes for adults, and OT recognises that some of them have vulnerabilities. We are careful to do whatever we can so that everyone joining these classes feels welcomed and is safe from harm. When Sthiradeva joined the Board, he took on the responsibility as Safeguarding Trustee. On an executive level, Prajnaketu operates as Safeguarding Officer. Both deal 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 and friends 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 previous years, no training sessions were held on safeguarding matters, however, Triratna's overall Safeguarding Team produced guidance on good practice for online meetings software such as Zoom, as well as for in-person meetings. This guidance was followed by the Charity and included, for instance, not creating break-out groups of pairs, as this could not be monitored.

Pastoral care largely occurs in one-to-one meetings and as part of the broader approach of friendship known as *Kalyana Mitrata*. These one-to-one meetings are key to supporting people in their deepening of their Buddhist practice.

Triratna Buddhist Community

OT is an independent charity in relationship with other independent charities in the Triratna Buddhist Community. Participants in our activities are in contact with participants of other Triratna charities, through attending retreats together and visiting urban centres. We also benefit from central Triratna institutions such as thebuddhistcentre.com and Windhorse Publications, whose opportunities we share with OT's participants.

Interfaith and Educational Activity

While we're not in the position to host educational or interfaith activities, we nonetheless aspire to participate in them.

For example, in November 2024 Prajnaketu visited St Christopher's CE Primary School in Cowley to address around 50 year fours as part of an interfaith week. He also visited, in January 202, Woodgreen School in Witney, in which he talked to and received questions from a group of around 70 sixth-formers, as part of their mandatory religious education.

In addition to this Prajnaketu has been involved with the Oxford Dialogue Society, attending an event and offering some remarks in December 2024, as well as attending an Iftar dinner with Alex in April 2025.



Supporting Prajnaketu

In February 2022 OT began to financially support Prajnaketu for the equivalent of one day per week, to oversee the administrative aspects of running OT's activities. This has continued into 2025. His work has involved resourcing management team meetings, planning themes for our events, liaising with venues, producing publicity, and responding to communications on behalf of the Charity.

Financial Review

Oxford Triratna's 2025 accounting year runs from 6th April 2024 to 5th April 2025. Oxford Triratna has no fund restrictions placed on its income and expenditure. Unrestricted income for the year was £23,029 and expenditure £13,359. This resulted in a surplus of £9,670, a considerably different close of year picture than the £1,645 deficit projected at the beginning of the year.

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £23,029 (2024 - £12,370). 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. At £6,494 (2023 - £4,528) donations from these activities showed a significant increase (43%). During the year the team introduced a new contactless card reader to enhance the ease of use for donors. This means donations and some payments (for books, etc.) can take place without supervision. Regular Giving also increased to £5,818 (2024 - £3,722), or 56%. Indeed, Regular Giving income has almost doubled since 2023, a remarkable improvement. Yes, this reflects the absence of pandemic conditions, but importantly it also reflects conscious and concerted effort to encourage regular attendees to classes to give in this form, which tends to be a more reliable source of income. Weekend Retreat income increased in 2025 to £3,520 (2024 - £2,561). At the close of retreats a request for extra donations to help support the attendance of Order Members has been made, leading to on-the-spot donations but also an awareness of this when future retreats are booked. In brief, increasing the number of events, the type and requests for donations, and introducing a smoother donor experience (new card reader) have generated substantial income for Oxford Triratna and will be key elements to maintain and develop over the coming years. A final income source for 2025 was the claim made for historical Gift Aid. This brought in £5,417 of Gift Aid on donations up to the 2024 accounting year and is a one-off boost to Oxford Triratna's funds.

In 2024, total expenditure on unrestricted funds was £13,359 (2024 - £14,660) and very much as projected (£13,725). Salary and Pension costs were £4,427, slightly lower than expected (£5,000), and even lower than in 2024. Rent of £2,560 was much lower than in 2024 (£4,500). This in part, as noted in 2024's accounts, that close to that year end advance rent payments were made. For 2025's accounts I've taken account of such advance payments which also 'benefits' the picture in this year compared to others. Weekend Retreat expenditure, at £2,575, fell from 2024's £3,400, last year's accounts being affected by when in the calendar year (Jan-Dec) the two retreats fell. Again, as for Rent, 2025's accounts address payments for future Weekend Retreats differently, so although made in the current year the effect is borne in the year the event takes place.

Such a positive financial position has led to two major developments. First, in December 2024 the Board agreed to open a second Deposit account, again with United Trust Bank.



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This means that it currently holds £18,500 in interest-bearing savings accounts, £500 of which came from the maturity of one account. The second development is the consideration, at the close of the year, to offer Prajnaketu a second day of employment, for three months of 2026 in the first instance (with a view to extending it based on the 2025 results). On current account and deposit balances brought forward from the beginning of the year, along with other monetary assets (Prepayments) the balance carried forward at the 5th April on unrestricted funds was £30,256. This represents 17 months of the draft budgeted expenditure for 2026.

Reserves Policy

It is OT policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds which equates to three to six months of expected unrestricted payments, equivalent of draft. The balance of £30,256 held on unrestricted funds easily matches this and means the charity can look to invest further in its future development, respond effectively to surprises, and continue to take advantage of the relatively high interest rate environment.

It is our policy not to invest in stock market funds at the current time. Investments are made according to the charity's ethical investment policy as cashflow permits. It currently holds two such deposit accounts with United Trust Bank.

Volunteers

We would like to thank all the volunteers who worked so hard to make our sangha the committed and vibrant community it is, especially those who have supported our in-person teams and made it possible for us to extend our activities beyond Sangha Nights. We estimate that approximately 20 people have volunteered for OT during this period.

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 4 occasions during the year. Given the wide responsibilities the OT Board has a committee that held a business meeting on a six-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.



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Elected Members

Timothy Holden (Prajñāketu) – Chair
Robert Hubbard (Sthiradeva) – Secretary
Guy Potter (Padmakumāra) – Treasurer
Matthew New (Sangharuchi)
Ben Linsey-Bloom (Vilāsamuni)

Members

Timothy Holden (Prajñāketu)
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OT had the following policies in place at the end of this period:

- internal charity financial controls policy and procedures
- safeguarding policy and procedures
- financial reserves policy and procedures
- complaint's policy and procedures
- serious incident reporting policy and procedures
- internal risk management policy and procedures
- trustee expenses policy and procedures