



About Bristol Insight Meditation

April 2016

Our beginnings

In 2003, a small group of people who had been to retreats at Gaia House 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, 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.

Insight Meditation has its roots in the Theravada schools of Buddhism found mostly in Burma and Thailand. Early pioneer Western teachers such as Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein and Christina Feldman came back from practice and study in Asia in the early 1970s, and it is from this group of teachers that Insight Meditation Centres such as Gaia House in Devon and Spirit Rock and the Insight Meditation Society in the USA were formed. Bristol Insight has close links with Gaia House, and draws inspiration from the wide range of teachings in the worldwide Insight Meditation community.

As well as Insight Meditation, 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 a Buddhist to attend our events, 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. Our core purpose is to cultivate the practice of Insight Meditation for the benefit of people in Bristol and the surrounding areas.

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. If there is a charge, we operate a sliding-scale fee, and we operate on a 'not for profit basis'

What we do

Our supporter-led charity is run by a small team of volunteers. All contributions of time and service, however small, are warmly welcomed.

Organisation and structure

Many different people participate and volunteer at Bristol Insight in lots of helpful ways. But since we successfully attained charitable status in 2015, our governance rules require us to register the official supporters (called 'members' by the Charity Commission) and trustees of the charity.

Supporters

Registered supporters can take a more active role in the development of our organisation. They are eligible to vote for and stand as trustees and may also call official general meetings. All those who support the aims and values of Bristol Insight Meditation, and who participate in our activities, are invited to become supporters.

Trustees

The role of trustees is to ensure that Bristol Insight Meditation is acting within our stated purpose, aims and values and in accordance with charity law. We are required to appoint up to 12 trustees who oversee our activities. At present, we have five trustees in place: Max Beseke, Jill Bird, Mannie Burn, Jonathan Edwards and Julia Wallond.

Trustees currently take responsibility for the following areas:

- Finance and accounts – Jonathan
- Charity law – Max
- Strategy – shared by all
- Communication – shared by all
- Events – shared by all

Trustees are elected by our supporters annually at our AGM. Elected Trustees serve a term of 3 years and aim to meet regularly during the year. In 2016 our AGM will take place during our Annual Sangha Celebration Day on Saturday 25th June.

Organisers

Anyone involved in arranging a group, event or activity is recognised as an organiser.

Organisers meet regularly to coordinate, share and develop their plans. Supporters or event participants with new ideas or suggestions are warmly invited to come along to these discussions. Most of our trustees are also organisers and attend these meetings too.

Our current organisers are:

- Day retreats – Julia Wallond, Christine Ramsey Wade, Mike Baker
- Tuesday night sangha – Jill Bird
- Monthly daytime sangha group – Gordon Adam
- Self-led day retreat – Max Beseke
- Longer, teacher-led courses – Mannie Burn
- Focusing group – Gordon Adam
- Sangha walks – Gordon Adam
- Newsletter – Mannie Burn
- Website – Jonathan Edwards
- Finance and accounts – Jonathan Edwards

Please note: it is important to us that Bristol Insight is an inclusive, supportive organisation, founded on respect, equality and compassion. Whilst we hope these ideals are never compromised, our constitution allows for participants, supporters and trustees to be removed if any conduct is considered inconsistent with the purpose and values of Bristol Insight Meditation.