



AUKANA

newsletter 1/2021

HOUSE OF INNER
TRANQUILLITY



There is the most delightful quietness and everything is going on quite as it should be and there isn't a single thing out of place, but nothing in all of that flux is remaining for more than a moment, it is always changing. All that exists is this wonderful graceful infinite timeless flow. It does not belong to anyone, it is just wholeness, you realise you are the totality, you are not the fraction. You are complete. But there is no you. There is only complete, empty perfection.

PAUL HARRIS

INTRODUCTION

These are times of uncertainty for many people worldwide. For followers of the Buddha's teaching, this is the perfect time to reflect on the Buddha's maxim that whatever arises has the nature to pass away. The Buddha's teaching is one of noting transience, suffering and non-self. This is the very acknowledgement of uncertainty. By noting whatever arises, both physical and mental, and observing and clearly registering that none of it lasts, we learn about reality and wear away our views that things should be different from the way they are. That is the path to freedom from suffering.

The new year has ushered in changes at the House of Inner Tranquillity. Covid-19 restrictions have meant the cancellation of meetings,

retreats and day student attendance. Paul has taken six months off from all teaching duties and we are making an appeal for additional donations as the Trustees review the best way for the Trust to move forward.

We are looking forward to Wednesday evening meetings and day student attendance recommencing as soon as government guidance allows. ■

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NEWS

Trustee Update: It was agreed at the Trustee meeting on the 31st December 2020 that Paul should take a six-month break.

This will give Paul the chance to recharge his batteries, and the space for him and the other Trustees to reflect on how the Aukana Trust can move forward in a positive and sustainable manner.

The Trustees had an extraordinary meeting on the 25th January 2021 and it was agreed that **David Gilbert** would become chair of the Aukana Trust and two more Trustees would be appointed. We are delighted to confirm **Liz Kemp** and **Peter Case** have both accepted the invitation to take up these positions. We believe that both Peter and Liz offer a wealth of experience which will be invaluable to the Trust.

Events: Vaccinations are underway to protect against the Covid-19 virus and government guidance is regularly reviewed so we look forward to Wednesday evening meetings recommencing as soon as possible.

We will hold our biennial Open Day this year on Sunday 4th July between 2 and 6 p.m. The houses and gardens will be open and members of the community are welcome to attend

and invite family and friends. More details will be given on the web site and Facebook page nearer the time. We look forward to seeing you then.

Online: We are well aware that the local community benefits tremendously from meeting regularly with like mind people; good friends in the Dhamma. It has been a difficult year for members of the group in this regard and Paul's livestreams were a lifeline for us all enabling us to have questions answered and keeping us all on track. For the time being, Paul will not be conducting any livestreams and no new material will be posted on the YouTube channel or as Podcasts. However, the Aukana Trust has a wealth of teaching material available in those media to sustain the enthusiasm of followers.

Sally Passfield and **Natalie Watson** have kindly taken on the administration of the Facebook page in Paul's absence. They and **Glenda Brewer** have administered the Facebook Group page for some time and continue to post items there regularly. Currently they are inviting people to offer their favourite book or audio excerpt to post. The Group has more than 600 members. Anyone is welcome to join and contribute.

Appeal: Since it was founded in 1980, the House of Inner Tranquillity Meditation Centre has always been fully supported by donations and it is very appreciative of the support and generosity of the Sangha. This support enables the Aukana Trust, which administers the meditation centre and monasteries, to offer teaching and retreats on a 'no charge' basis.

Generosity is the first of the Ten *Paramis* (trainings in the development of compassion) which provides a foundation for spiritual development and is a thread that runs throughout the Buddha's teaching.

We are currently in a period of transition with the goal of supporting our Spiritual Head to create a clearer delineation between private and public life in order for him to thrive in his role. To this end, we recently consulted with Paul about his accommodation and the benefits to his wellbeing of him living off site, which he has agreed would be a good idea.

Since he became Spiritual Head, the Trust has provided Paul with free accommodation on site and a small stipend. To support our joint decision for him now to live off site and have more independence, whilst continuing with his invaluable work for the Trust, we will need to increase his stipend to cover his additional expenses.

To offset the increase in the Trust's

expenditure, the Trustees have reviewed the suggested donation for those attending retreats. For some 20 years this has been £25 per day and most people donate this amount. We have decided it is time to increase the suggested amount for retreat donations to £30 per day.

The majority of the Sangha make regular monthly donations to the Aukana Trust which is a registered charity and therefore eligible for Gift Aid. We would be grateful if you would consider increasing your monthly donation, and if you don't already make a regular donation, perhaps you will consider doing this.

Bank Information

- Aukana Trust
- Sort code: 40:13:17
- Account number: 53038939

Gift Aid Declaration: If you are a UK taxpayer, the Trust is able to claim back 25p for each £1 you donate from the Inland Revenue. You can use the following link to the Aukana Trust web site to complete and submit a Gift Aid form to us (there is no requirement that Gift Aid declarations are signed). <https://aukana.org.uk/support.html>. Please contact us if you would prefer to receive a paper copy to complete or if you have any other queries about donating.

People: The autumn season has been marked by periodic lockdowns and intermittent times when day students could attend. The day students that came in all appreciated their contact with the Centre, and the residents enjoyed getting to know new-comers to the group. Socially distanced tea breaks on the main lawn in the summer sunshine were perfect settings for varied discussions.

Even without regular meetings and retreats, Paul had a busy year in 2020. Paul put up several YouTube videos on *metta* and mindfulness as well as recording a question and answer podcast with **Steve Hemmingsley**. Paul did more than 90 livestreams on the 'House of Inner Tranquillity' Facebook page between April and December. They were regularly attended by local meditators as a substitute for the usual Wednesday evening meetings. Several former attendees at the Centre tuned in and a worldwide audience was attracted to the teachings.

Garden: The vegetable plot produced an abundance of beans, courgettes, carrots, onions, butternut squash and beetroot. Without the usual consumption by retreatants and day students, the produce sustained the full-time community longer than usual, well into the new year, with some of the vegetables having to

be frozen. There are still a couple of packs of courgettes, deftly grated by day student **Marc Cooper**, lingering in the freezer waiting to be used for lunch-time soup.

Leylandii trees behind the fence and the shed at the lower end of the Japanese garden were cut down. **Brother Nigel** replaced these with newly ordered yew trees to soften the view of the fence for the neighbours. He tidied the severed trunks and stacked them by the shed until he found another use for them.

Brother Nigel replaced a stretch of hawthorn hedge at the bottom edge of the vegetable plot which grew above the wall bordering the neighbour's garden. The hawthorn hedge was labour intensive, requiring trimming three times a year, and it was difficult to handle and dispose of as it had substantial thorns. Part of the lower edge of the vegetable plot already had an established yew hedge so more yews were ordered to replace the hawthorn.

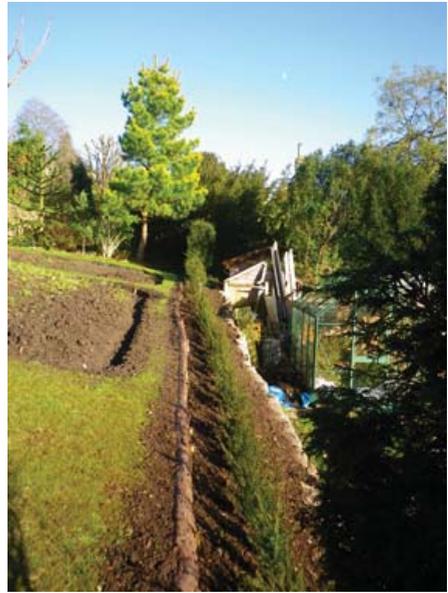
Day students David Gilbert, **Jason Rebello**, **Steve Marsden** and Steve Hemmingsley helped with the removal of the old plants. The trunks left over from the old *Leylandii* hedge were used as a border to the path adjacent to the hedge. **Brother Theo** prepared these by chopping the spurs of branches off the trunks. A trench was



Brother Theo

dug ready to receive the new plants. Compost and a root growth supplement were added before planting the yews. Brother Nigel used the rest of the tree trunks as borders to stabilise paths around the vegetable plot.

Brother Theo dug out, with considerable effort, an old Elder and a field maple at the far end of the vegetable plot. Periwinkle in the surrounding area was rooted out at the edges to stop it swamping other plants. We await an opportunity to visit a garden centre to select something new to plant in the vacant space.



Completed yew hedge

Maintenance: The tile that broke off no.10 roof on 14th February 2020 had to be accessed from a scaffold tower to replace it. The scaffolders erected and dismantled the tower without inconveniencing the traffic. There is a temporary one way system around Bradford on Avon to enable pedestrians to socially distance. Little traffic comes down Masons Lane as there is no entry to Market Street or access to the town centre and traffic flows freely and intermittently up Masons Lane. Repair was delayed due to lockdowns but **Nigel Tripp**, our roofer, eventually replaced the tile swiftly one October morning. ■

Extract from a discourse by the Buddha

The Buddha was talking to Anathapindika who was a generous supporter of the Buddha and the *Sangha*.

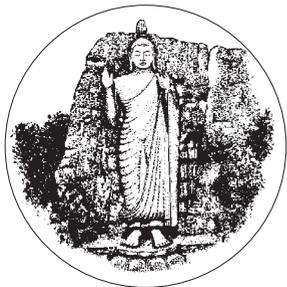
The Buddha told Anathapindika about the many gifts given by the brahmin Velama who had lived long ago. At that time, however, there was no one around who was worthy of a religious donation.

The Buddha went on to describe the fruitfulness of various actions beginning with generosity.

The following is taken from the discourse 'About Velama' translated by Bikkhu Sujato. The full text can be found at the web site 'Sutta Central':

"It would be more fruitful to feed one person accomplished in view than that great offering of Velama. It would be more fruitful to feed one once-returner than a hundred persons accomplished in view. It would be more fruitful to feed one non-returner than a hundred once-returners. It would be more fruitful to feed one perfected one than a hundred non-returners. It would be more fruitful to feed one Buddha awakened for themselves than a hundred perfected ones. It would be more fruitful to feed one Realized One, a perfected one, a fully awakened Buddha than

a hundred Buddhas awakened for themselves. It would be more fruitful to feed the mendicant *Sangha* headed by the Buddha than to feed one Realized One, a perfected one, a fully awakened Buddha. It would be more fruitful to build a dwelling especially for the *Sangha* of the four quarters than to feed the mendicant *Sangha* headed by the Buddha. It would be more fruitful to go for refuge to the Buddha, the teaching, and the *Sangha* with a confident heart than to build a dwelling for the *Sangha* of the four quarters. It would be more fruitful to undertake the training rules – not to kill living creatures, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie, or take alcoholic drinks that cause negligence – than to go for refuge to the Buddha, the teaching, and the *Sangha* with a confident heart. It would be more fruitful to develop a heart of love – even just as long as it takes to pull a cow's udder – than to undertake the training rules. It would be more fruitful to develop the perception of impermanence – even for as long as a finger snap – than to do all of these things, including developing a heart of love for as long as it takes to pull a cow's udder." ■



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*The Aukana Trust is a registered charity
(no 326938) which provides instruction in
the Buddha's path to enlightenment,
from introductory evening classes
to full-time monastic training.*

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