



# The Orchard Sangha Newsletter

The beautiful warm weather and clear blue skies of a few weeks ago have given way to more familiar spring weather. However, the bluebells are out, the swallows have returned and the tadpoles wiggle happily in their ponds - a glimpse of summer yet to come. As I look out of my window I see the Himalayan Blue Poppy flowering in all its delicate beauty, so evocative of its native homeland.

Spring is traditionally the time of new births so what better time to announce the arrival of a daughter for Tomoko and Chris and sister for Shunryu. Tomoko has movingly offered her account of Maria's birth. We send our very best wishes to them all.

The photographs throughout this issue of the newsletter were beautifully taken by Amarana. They offer a window onto precious moments at the Orchard this spring. If you look closely, the perfectly formed air bubble below even contains the image of the Orchard house. Thank you Amarana for sharing them with us.

Sandra



*Just Looking*

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Tomoko writes:

"Maria Satsuki Eowyn was born on Sunday, the 8th of May at 2.05p.m. She was born at home in our Zendo on the exact spot where we meditate in 90 mins, with only Chris, Shunryu (our 3 and a half year old son) and myself present. Chris received Maria into his arms. It was very much a precious moment.

Shunryu went into a deep sleep in the beginning of labour and awoke 5 min before her birth and came upstairs by himself and saw the baby come out. He was very much centred and wonderfully mature.

The midwife did not turn up for another half hour after birth. The birth was very smooth, harmonious and without fuss. The Shiatsu Chris gave me during labour was amazingly supportive. I was really lucky to receive his wonderful Healing-Shiatsu regularly through the whole pregnancy. My focus was always to get in touch with deep awareness in my body in order to nurture Maria inside me. Shiatsu was very much supportive for that. Attending the "Mindfulness of Body" retreat with Sonia and Ad in February was very much supportive, too and gave me such a confidence and deep trust in my body.

I am breastfeeding now and she is feeding very well. She looks to be a very strong and beautiful being."

Thank you very much.

Lots of love from Tomoko

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## From The Orchard

### Update from the Orchard Finance Group

This is an update of our report in the last newsletter (January 2011).

The wonderful news is that donations received in response to our appeal for funds to support Sonia's attendant now stand at over £11,500. Approximately half this sum will ensure that Sonia's current attendant, Amarana, can stay for the coming year. We are hoping that another attendant will emerge over the next few months to support Ad and Amarana, since we are aware that they are sometimes stretched to cover the role. We have therefore earmarked the remainder for this person.

A thank you card, beautifully designed by Barbara Johns, has been sent to each donor. If, by any malchance, there is someone who has not received one, then we apologise, and would like to take this opportunity to send huge thanks and metta to you all for your generosity.

### Cultivating Authentic Dialogue

Everything about this workshop was gentle..... the setting, the content, the pace and the depth. Sarah's extensive knowledge of Dialogue and her deep commitment to Mindfulness helped create a safe space so that we could *gently* begin to explore our authentic voice and engage in authentic Dialogue.

I arrived Friday evening feeling very tired and stressed having had a hard week's work and a long journey. I was immediately struck by the beauty and tranquillity of The Orchard and its surroundings. We were welcomed with lovely nourishing food and a warm welcome; I was amazed at how quickly I began to relax and feel at ease. The combination of meditative and reflective exercises and theoretical inputs worked really well. I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. I have taken away a strong desire to connect more fully with my authentic voice trusting that it will enable me to connect with the authenticity of others.

Monica Manning,  
Community Action Network - Dublin

### Dialogue Weekend

Many thanks again to Sarah for facilitating another excellent dialogue weekend.

There was much fun, laughter as well as tears as Sarah gently and skilfully encouraged us to explore our own and each other's potential for authentic dialogue. Looking deeply into the discrepancies between our inner and outer dialogue was a moving experience for all of us. Within this we all felt very gently held and supported by each other, our mindfulness practice and the nourishing environment of the Orchard.

It was a joy to attend a workshop run with great care and ease by Orchard students, from Amarana's playful Chi Gung which she taught with confident expertise at the beginning and end of each day to Barbara's tasty, nourishing and well timed meals. Everyone who attended generously contributed to the smooth running of the weekend.

What a wonderful flowering of practice for us students and gift to Sonia and Ad.

Eleri



*One of many bees which thought the Maple hut keyhole was the door to its beehive. The real beehive is under the roof.  
(I love this photo of Amarana's. It is almost possible to see the confusion on the bee's face.)*

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## *From Sonia and Ad*

At the time of writing there are still places available on the Chenrezig – Compassionate Involvement retreat.

***Chenrezig – Compassionate Involvement***  
*9<sup>th</sup> (eve) – 12<sup>th</sup> (4pm) June Cost: £125*

Chenrezig means “continuously all seeing”. Kuan Yin, the Chinese deity of compassion, “deeply listens to all the cries of the world”. Compassion is the openness of the heart towards all beings without exception. This weekend is a time of meditation, bowing and moving in the spaciousness of the heart-mind of compassion.

We can say that for a practitioner on the spiritual path the many levels of realisation that are gained and the progress made are all dependent upon cooperation and interaction with other sentient beings.

To help us to apply this practice in our daily inter-being with other beings we will explore the “Eight verses that transform the Mind (Lojong) as our guidance and support for how to apply compassion in our daily existence of inter-dependence.

***Meditating on Chenrezig will nurture in us the strength on our path to become truly compassionately involved in the world.***

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**Date and theme for the November retreat:**  
*The Preciousness of the Human Life and Loving Kindness (17<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November)*



*Gill's hands lovingly tending the plants*

This year the spring has been glorious with such an abundance of colour, smell, bird songs and the many flowers. We all have witnessed this explosion of the power of life in all its vibrancy at the Orchard.

As the richness of nature was almost overwhelming, we saw the attendance on the retreats being strong and it peaked in the May retreat when we had to turn away some applicants, the retreat being fully booked.

We are very happy to see so many students returning to the Orchard and offering their gift of the practice.

The new format of teaching with Ad invited to share his knowledge of the Pali Canon is experienced as complementary and supportive. This is encouraging and we shall repeat where possible this format.

The new flower beds and path in front of the zendo, first conceived by Sue and Ken Edney, have been lovingly shaped, nurtured and tended by Gill Blair whose dedication to this project has been unshakeable.

So many beings play a vital role in nurturing the Orchard and that demonstrates the interdependence of life and how this interbeing-ness is at the heart of any human endeavour. No wonder why the Buddha talked about the preciousness of this human birth.

In the summer we will welcome several long term resident-meditators and with more retreats planned in June, July and August, Ad and I will take a break in September to be ready for the Autumn programme.

Some of you have already asked me about the retreat in November and I can say it will be on The Preciousness of the Human Life and Loving Kindness and as always embedded in mindfulness.

We look forward to welcoming you at The Orchard.

Be well and happy.  
Metta, Sonia



*The new flower garden*

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## From The Orchard

### Cultivating Authentic Dialogue

By Maura White

When I arrived at the Orchard I entered a world of peace and contentment. The experience was profound which I find hard to put words on. I enjoyed being in a space that encouraged me to be mindful but it also unnerved me a bit. I think it was just the suddenness of stopping which I find very difficult to do. I am the type of person who is always ahead of myself. I rush from place to place. My mind is in overdrive. The suddenness of stopping and being present in the moment was wonderful and weird. The dialogue sessions we had were thought provoking but gentle and gave me a lot of food for thought in how authentic I really am when I speak with others.

My experience on the weekend has helped me see that being mindful is actually quite simple and yet powerful. We sometimes make life so difficult for ourselves, we get caught up into what others think we should be and not listen to our own thoughts on how we want to be. Although I have left the space of tranquility in the Orchard I have brought the experience with me and I am amazed at how it has had a positive impact on my day to day life.



*Barbara working in the garden during her 6-week dana stay at The Orchard.*

Bye for now .....

Many students will have met Jane and John whilst on courses or retreats at the Orchard. Their quiet presence has always been a delight and a support. I have fond memories of John's delicious cooking and Jane's ready smile. Now they have decided to stretch their wings a little, have packed their rucksacks and are off on their travels. They will be sorely missed and I am sure the Sangha will join me in wishing them much happiness on their journey.

... and Hello

To fill one of the gaps Steve Felgate's son, Callum, who runs his own gardening and maintenance business, has taken over some of the gardening tasks that used to be carried out by John. So, welcome to Callum.



The photographs above show Marion who, incredible though it may seem, came all the way from Germany for two days to offer help with the spring cleaning at The Orchard. She did a wonderful job.

Thank You so much Marion.



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## Practice Makes Perfect

On the insight retreat in March I was sitting in Maitreya house watching the flies on the windows. Their behaviour seemed to strike a chord with the practice I was doing and I was inspired to write a poem.

### The Fly

It sees the light and feels the heat of the sun shining down through the glass of the window pane.

Frantically it scrambles buzzing and banging an invisible force blocking its way.

Too locked into its habits, bound by its patterns to cross over onto the next window pane.

A helping hand appears.

It feels panicked and cornered fearing that its escape route is blocked.

It has no choice but to cross over the darkness onto the next window pane.

Instead of resistance the window is open it flies out in to freedom boundless space.

It loops around in a circle kissing the sky.

Then habitually driven towards familiar surroundings

It flies back through the window into the room and bangs into the window pane once again.

Dedicated to Ad and Sonia for their willingness to offer a helping hand time and time again.

Love from  
John



*Spring blossom by the Dulas hut.*



*Just Walking*



### Personal Practice Days

A reminder that Personal Practice Days at The Orchard for the remainder of the year are:

20th May

17th June

29th July

26th August

9th September

21st October

11th November

9th December

Please bring food to share and Dana for The Orchard.

Also, do let Sarah know if you are unable to come but plan to give yourself a day of practice from wherever you are so that we may share in the practice together.

[Sarah.hill@dialogix.co.uk](mailto:Sarah.hill@dialogix.co.uk) or  
01452 741603



*Present Moment*

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## The Bookshelf

*Great news is that we have our first book review. This is from Gini.*

I would like to recommend "Cave in the Snow" by Vicki Mackenzie, published by Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 1999.

It is a fascinating biography of Tenzin Palmo (nee Diane Perry), an English Buddhist nun who goes on retreat in the eponymous cave for twelve years. She is a very accessible personality, warm and human. Her story is especially inspiring for women, since female Buddhist role models are rare. She is still alive and well, and can be seen on YouTube.

*Gini also adds:* When I mentioned this book to Sonia she gave me another inspiring book, called "Dipa Ma, the life & legacy of a Buddhist Master" by Amy Schmidt, published by Windhorse in 2005. This time the person in question was Bengali. The key aspect for me is that they are both women - unusual in Buddhist iconography.

*Has anyone else read "Dipa Ma" and would perhaps like to offer their thoughts on it?*

With the elderflower blossom about to appear the following recipe makes a wonderfully refreshing and fragrant drink. Just dilute with water for a taste of summer.

**Elderflower Cordial** (makes about 2½ litres)

2 kg of sugar

35 elderflower heads (the plate-shaped mass of flowers)

2 litres of water

3 lemons

100g citric acid (from most chemists)

Place sugar and water in a large pan and slowly bring to the boil, stirring now and then. While the pan is heating, remove the zest from the lemons and place it in a bowl large enough for all the ingredients.

Slice each lemon into four and put the slices in the bowl with the zest and the elderflowers. (Don't wash the elderflowers but do check there aren't any small creatures in them).

When the sugar/water mixture boils, stir to make sure all the sugar has dissolved and carefully pour it over the elderflowers and lemons. Stir in the citric acid and cover with a tea towel.

Leave overnight. In the morning, strain the mixture through a square of muslin and bottle with tight stoppers. This keeps well (especially in the fridge). It can also be frozen – just pour into suitably clean plastic milk containers and freeze.

Then, in the long dark winter months, sit back and drink deep and long and remember a time when the days were warm and the skies were impossibly blue.

 [Contact Details](#) 

**Offers of assistance** - Gill - [sangha@gn.apc.org](mailto:sangha@gn.apc.org) or on 01981 241315

**Healing Requests to Blue Healer Minds** - Sarah on [sarah.hill1@mac.com](mailto:sarah.hill1@mac.com)

**Bursary Fund** - Gini at [gini\\_wade@lineone.net](mailto:gini_wade@lineone.net)

**Finance** - Jo on [jolechandy@googlemail.com](mailto:jolechandy@googlemail.com) or on 01432 890312

**Newsletter** - Sandra - for comments and contributions – at [sygoodfellow@hotmail.com](mailto:sygoodfellow@hotmail.com) or on 013873 70787

**Orchard Sangha Website** – [www.orchardsangha.com](http://www.orchardsangha.com)