



marpa house
chös khor ling



A Year of Precious Blessings

newsletter - october 2023 to march 2024



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**BUDDHIST MEDITATION AND
RETREAT CENTRE**



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TRUSTEE NEWS

We have certainly been blessed this year. Firstly, the joy of having Rinpoche return to the House to teach at Losar and celebrate the Tibetan New Year with us. For me, it felt like the years Rinpoche had been in retreat and away from the House melted into weeks, as if 'linear time' simply melted away as we were enveloped in an atmosphere beyond time and space. But time is also cyclical, and after a long cycle of dormancy at the House, this year was certainly the opposite and full of incredible activity - what an auspicious way to start our 50th year celebrations.

Easter saw an inspirational White Tara weekend from Tulku Pasang Rinpoche, complete with empowerment, teaching and practice, the experience of everyone chanting along with the beautiful and powerful voice of the umze is something to remember.

And then there was the delight and privilege of hosting HH Rabjam Rinpoche for a set of incredible teachings and empowerments. Likely the biggest event Marpa House has held, it was a fast learning in organising and something beyond anything we'd experienced before. Trying our hardest to learn the right etiquette for we knew we were representing Rinpoche, we wanted everything to be perfect, well as perfect as we could make it. It was a wonderful and precious event for all involved and the blessings from this visit will continue to ripple out in ways unknown for a long time to come.

And from the spiritual to the mundane - all these events need a huge amount of preparation, organisation and help on the ground during the actual events. It's impossible to express adequate thanks to the wonderful teams of helpers that have been involved. These people bring a wealth of experience, skills and enthusiasm and turn the mundane into the spiritual. But the concern is that this pool of wonderful people will grow smaller over the coming years with the inevitability of ageing. It's essential that a younger generation step forward and at a time where the wisdom and experience of those who have spent a large part of their life with Rinpoche can be passed on.



After a long cycle of dedication and devotion to Rinpoche and Marpa House, Keith Howell retired as a trustee in April. Keith's commitment of 25 years, with over a quarter of this time spent as the Chair is something to celebrate and I know is widely appreciated by everyone. He brought so much knowledge, experience, and pragmatism and along with his warm friendly and welcoming nature is, and will continue to be greatly missed, especially by the remaining trustees! So now Keith gets to enjoy the House as a guest, but I think the garden may always be waiting for his loving care!

Somehow the cycle of finding helpers along with a secretary, volunteer staff and committee members seems to run faster, and yet again we find ourselves in the difficult position of looking for help. Everyone that offers their time and energy does so that you and a wider community can enjoy the precious place that Marpa House is. It carries such huge blessings from so many high masters and teachers, including our own beloved Rinpoche. It is so many things to so many people, a place of sanctuary, a place of coming home, a place of learning, as well as bringing calm, peacefulness, contemplation, inspiration, reflection, warmth, joyfulness, friendship, laughter, community and so many other things that could fill the pages of this newsletter!

It is our devotion to Rinpoche that unites us all. And with this devotion comes our collective responsibility to carry Marpa House and Rinpoche's legacy into the next 50 years and beyond, and so for that we need your help, we need a younger generation to step up, we need people to offer their time and energy in whichever way they can, however large or small, to help look after the House both now and in the future.

With love and warmest wishes

by Louise Kuka - Chair of the Trustees

COMMITTEE NEWS

Unexpectedly, I find myself being chair of the Management Committee. "How come?" you might ask and "why would you want to do that?"

Well, this has been answered before me, and here are some quotes from previous Committee members.

Barbara Wolter wrote in 2020, quoting Pema Chödrön: "We work on ourselves to help others, but we also help others in order to work on ourselves." She also said: "This for me is the core of what being on staff at Marpa House is all about. ... It reminds me of the importance of our interconnectedness with each other – we are not in this alone. We are in this together! Rinpoche has always told us that **“if you want to wake up fully, you are going to get the tests and challenges you need, and they are all going to come from working with other people.”**

In the same Newsletter, Sue Sternberg wrote: "As Rinpoche has said in his teachings, students earn merits by contributing, helping out and looking after their centre. This is an important part of Buddhist practice and repays itself many times over. The opportunity is right here."

And in the Summer 2018 Newsletter, Janet Scott wrote: "The opportunities for practice and offering are tremendous. For example, it is so interesting to sit in a meeting or be carrying out some duty when there is aggravation or praise, and watch your own internal emotions and thoughts, and then live the aftermath. It is such a great gift to experience that with people you know are Dharma practitioners too – everyone knows they are learning."

For me, the great thing of working at Marpa House is that it is a place where you can leave your persona behind, where you can find out who you really are and then work



on it in an understanding and accommodating environment. Over time, I have found that this connects you with people and – dare I say it – makes life more enjoyable. There will be plenty of ups and downs, but as you learn to smile at them you become calmer and more relaxed. Here is a short story:

A few weeks ago, I found myself chatting to a dog-walking lady I had seen occasionally on my previous walks around Ashdon village. The conversation led me to mention that I am a Buddhist, which prompted the lady to exclaim: "That's why you are so calm..."

There are many things to report on as this spring and summer were incredibly busy with events and amazing teachings. However, as these are mostly covered elsewhere in this Newsletter, I want to just mention what stuck in my mind after thinking about 50 years of Marpa House recently; as a sangha, we are all incredibly privileged to have Marpa House as an important part of our lives, and the best way we can honour Rinpoche is to make sure that the House remains so for future generations.

We must ensure it is sustainable as an organisation and continues to help people on the Buddhist path. We are all responsible for contributing, and as chair of the Management Committee, I am truly honoured to be part of ensuring that Lama Chime's legacy has a bright and vibrant future. Ideas are always welcomed by the Committee and the Trustees.

Last but not least, I want to say a huge THANK YOU to Dan Brett, whose tenure of the Committee chair came to an end this summer. Dan was full of enthusiasm and worked really hard during the various events, even helping out with cooking for the House once a week. I hope, Dan, we can get together on one of your next visits to the House so I can pick your brain and learn from your experience. Big thanks also go to Brian Richardson who served on the Committee for just over a year and contributed

not only hard work but also a number of interesting ideas on running the House.

by Hartwin Busch, Chair of the Committee



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Staffing Opportunities

We need volunteers to come on staff in 2023/24. You can volunteer for up to one year and would receive a small honorarium to cover basic living costs. All meals and accommodation are provided free of charge.



This is a great opportunity to spend time in a beautiful Dharma centre and to practice in a lovely and peaceful environment. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact the Secretary:

t: 01799 584415

e: mail@marpahouse.org.uk

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LOSAR with Kyabje Chime Rinpoche

We were absolutely overjoyed, and incredibly honoured, that Kyabje Chime Rinpoche very kindly agreed to join us and teach at Losar for our Tibetan New Year celebration back in February.

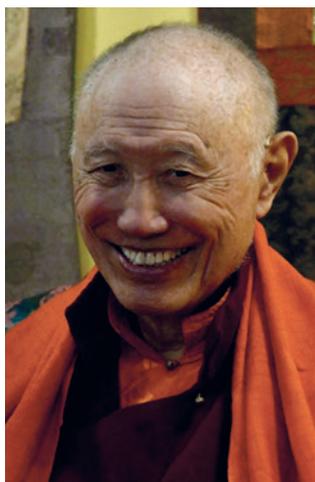
We were all so happy to welcome Rinpoche back to the House for the first time in five years and the freezing cold weather didn't stop it being a truly memorable occasion, the delight on everyone's faces was all the evidence needed.

Ten years almost to the day after I arrived for my year-long stint as Secretary at Marpa House, I was back in the role temporarily, looking after the house for the month of February 2023 and looking forward to Losar: we had heard that Rinpoche would be joining us!

It felt like a dream and also the most natural thing in the world to be preparing the house for Rinpoche's visit and for the sangha to arrive back in the house to hear him teach. What an atmosphere! The trustees had done an amazing job of organising wonderful helpers, the shrine room and marquee, and everything seemed like it would go very smoothly after such a long gap since Rinpoche's last teaching at the house, and it being still the middle of winter.

We had our traditional Mahakala practice days and bonfire with Lama Alasdair for Losar itself, and we spent the rest of our time preparing to welcome Rinpoche and honour him, to show him how much we had missed him and were so happy for his return!

However, as in many good Buddhist stories, we needed to go through some trials and hurdles first before we saw the lama –



So, quite early on in the month we ran out of heating oil (faulty gauge reading) and huddled around electric heaters for a couple of days while new supplies were delivered and the ancient boiler was restarted. We laughed a lot and just got on with things, cold but happy. Then, a few days later, the alarm system suddenly sounded and told us there was a fire outside Room 5 upstairs, when there very plainly wasn't a fire. Ok, reset the alarm and – there it went again! And again, and so on. Until the next day when finally we discovered it was a faulty alarm call box and it was fixed. We seemed to be doing fine working through and clearing all these obstacles and potential problems before Losar and Rinpoche's visit. But wait! There was more to clear, including the sewage! Everyone thought the septic tank had

been emptied recently enough, however, it was suddenly backing up! So, we went slow on showers, flushing loos, and the washing machine until the problem could be sorted. Somehow, it was all no bother, it's just how it was ... all the clearing and cleansing for Losar and waking up the house again.

But we did it, we got the house back up and running and looking just immaculate and amazing for the big event, after its long Covid slumbering

and Rinpoche's retreat. We got there with the help of all the wonderful trustees, committed committee and so many happy helpers. The day came, Rinpoche arrived and so did we all – the sangha gathered together again at Marpa House – pure joy! Rinpoche gave us Losar teachings on the progression of Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism and then shared with us his very special Khenpo Gangshar Calling the Lama. We offered him a mandala and all the offerings to begin, and everyone offered khataks to end. It was magnificent.

The day for me was a joyous dance, ten years after being Secretary the first time, finding myself serving the house and Rinpoche in that way again. Rinpoche has said in the past that when we see him, we see our own mind – we are looking in the mirror. The gift for me of reprising the role in that way is that I can see, although there is such a long way to go, I am slowly making progress on the path: my connection to Rinpoche is strong and deep and I have more confidence in the practice and in myself. Thank you to everyone for being part of this very special Losar experience.

by *Eva Ward*



White Tara Transmission & Teachings with Tulku Pasang Rinpoche

We are absolutely delighted that Tulku Pasang Rinpoche conferred the important White Tara empowerment for us at Marpa House over the Easter weekend.

White Tara is a yidam deity and her practice is associated with the development of compassion, healing, health and longevity. Pasang Rinpoche taught with such clarity and simplicity it was a joy for everyone present. Thank you, Rinpoche, for sharing your wisdom with us.



Visit of SHECHEN RABJAM RINPOCHE

to Marpa House, May 2023



What a blessed, blissful and incredibly precious few days with HE Rabjam Rinpoche we had at Marpa House in May. We received Lojong teachings, and Dorje Drolo, Chod and Vajrayogini empowerments.

It was such a special time, we are all so happy and grateful... so beautiful to see our beloved Chime Rinpoche and Rabjam Rinpoche together again, two such highly realised teachers... full of love and joy! Thank you Rabjam Rinpoche, Sean Price and everyone who helped make this happen. Just wonderful!



ONE POINT

At one point in his teachings, Rabjam Rinpoche said 'Mind the Gap'. Khenpo Tseten, when I was taking him to Luton Airport after the teachings, told me that this was a joke. Khenpo said that he was surprised that nobody laughed. Then he asked me what I thought Rabjam Rinpoche meant by The Gap. I said it is perhaps the gap between sensation and perception. Others could say it is the space between thoughts, or the space between breaths. Khenpo Tseten said no, it is the gap between the past and the present. So I wondered, is it Now? And is it also the gap between the present and the future?

I didn't think to ask Khenpo these two questions, so I got no answers. But there are also other gaps. There is the gap between what we have and what we want. Maybe this is not a gap to mind too much about. Then there are geographical gaps. For example, the Watford Gap, which about two hours north of London on the M1 motorway. For thousands of years, travellers have passed through this Gap. Two rivers rise from it. They flow off in opposite directions. One for the past, and one for the future.

Another gap, and the one that I really felt the most after Rabjam Rinpoche's visit, was the gap left by the departure of Rabjam Rinpoche, Kyabje Lama Chime Rinpoche and the other Lamas, and the hard-working helpers, and the many visitors, all of them our fellow travellers through The Gap.

Thank you very much Rabjam Rinpoche and Sean Price and everyone from Shechen Monastery for a very special four days. It was a wonderful gift for the House's 50th Anniversary. Thank you too to the Trustees and the people who planned, organised and ran the whole visit, coping with unexpected events with great fortitude. Let's not forget - Mind the Gap, now!

by Brian Richardson



The Journey Home from Marpa House

Curiously, one of my abiding memories of the wonderful week we spent at Marpa House when Rabjam Rinpoche came, did not take place at Marpa House but on our bus journey back to Stansted Airport.

Fixed in my mind is an image of an old-fashioned Red Telephone Box, a historic monument to England's past, which stands alone at a crossroads called Debden Green. I know it stands there because I had to look it up on Google Maps when I got home.

Our bus ride began in Saffron Walden, and it was one of the most hair raising, exhilarating and hilarious bus journeys I have experienced. From the moment the bus lurched into the High Street traffic, the driver, a young man from London, drove at breakneck speed through the narrow, winding lanes of beautiful, lush green countryside. Until I moved to Spain in 2002, I lived in Essex for more than twenty years and never did I appreciate the beauty of the countryside in those parts until we were sweeping along, (they say that all your life passes in a flash at the moment before death and this seemed a distinct probability) as we shot past ancient listed houses and places that to my mind, appeared as if unchanged since Medieval times.

We gripped the handrails and gasped at the sheer brilliance of the driver...who suddenly lurched us all, five passengers, to a halt at Debden Green. We sat back in our seats, stunned by the sudden stillness and the fact that there was nothing out there to see, no one got on, no one got off. A man beside us called out, 'Where are we please?' The driver said he did

not know because as I have already mentioned, he lived in London.

There was no road sign to indicate where we were, only a signpost pointing to other places beyond. There were just a few houses and a small, grassy triangular green upon which stood the Red Telephone Box. You can see it on Google Maps.

Wondering if the phone was still in use, I zoomed in a moment ago and peering through the glass window, could see an intact cable presumably with a handset attached but that was not visible.



Another passenger shouted out, 'Have I got time to take a photograph of that phone box please?' The driver replied, 'Yes' and without hesitating the passenger, a friend from Germany unaccustomed to seeing this English oddity, rushed out of the bus, took a quick shot and leapt back in again as no doubt he thought the driver might decide to shift off again without him.

We made it to Stansted Airport, thanked the driver for an extremely exhilarating ride and stepped out into hectic, contemporary reality.

What struck me about the Phone Box standing in that isolated, nameless location was its symbolism of a stubborn, determination to survive and withstand all the chaotic changes of life around about. In a similar way, Marpa House represents to me, a kind of monument too; imbued with the ancient traditions and historic past of Tibet, surviving and flourishing in the midst of Essex countryside, it is a landmark for peace, harmony and joy in our changing world.

by Ann Westley



Kyabje Chime Rinpoche's

advice on Ageing, Youth, Illness, Birth, and Death



Lightness and heaviness

On 1st July it was very wonderful to gather at Marpa House to hear Kyabje Chime Rinpoche's advice on Ageing, Youth, Illness, Birth, and Death. What a perfect afternoon it was, being with our precious teacher again, and being with each other as sangha at Marpa House! It was a profound and practical teaching all at once – none of us escapes these stages of human life. Rinpoche said that having a good community of practitioners around us and our own meditation practice, plus confidence, courage and determination, will help us navigate all of these stages when we each one will meet them. Very encouraging and inspiring.

We also offered heartfelt prayers for the swift return of Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche. It was a beautiful day from start to finish and I feel so grateful to everyone who helped to organise the day, to everyone who was able to come, and of course to our beloved Rinpoche for coming to teach us. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

There were many important messages that Chime Rinpoche gave to us at his recent teaching at Marpa House: but the one that is most vivid to me now is, of course, the very first one that I ignored: "Be careful with your bodies. You may have the mind of a 20-year-old", Chime urged, "but you can hurt yourself very easily. I did this to myself", he said, "simply in an attempt to open a window".

Well, I set off for my holidays with an absurdly heavy suitcase about the size of a small wardrobe, filled with the complete works of Baudelaire and a hefty novel by Balzac, not to mention my own self-important writing; and, lugging it up and down some very picturesque French stairwells carelessly- *la chambre au troisieme etage!* - I have, not to put too fine a point on it, done my back in. So perhaps we need to think twice before carrying around the heavy weight of the past, or at least be aware of how it impinges on the present.

On the day of teaching itself, midsummer, the 1st of July, and as it happens my birthday, I awoke excited and meditated, looking out on to a glorious view, an expanse of Essex fields, each tree perched out there fluffy and far away as if they were exhibiting their own personality, bathed in a golden light with epic cloud-shadows sweeping across the fields. If only I could begin every morning with this feeling of purpose, of spaciousness, and effortless joy!

Then, to my amazement, I stumbled across a German member of our Sangha to have breakfast with - and even the glorious breakfast was offered to me "on the house" - "I don't have my card reader on me, mate, don't worry about it!" Indeed, I was staying at that very hotel thanks to the generosity of John Prince. It was a day on which I was showered with auspiciousness and generosity.

I got to Marpa House and, in various stages, sort of met up with more or less everyone again. Iris very kindly gave me a cake and a dharma book. And then I chatted with Marlis and John O - my fellow Londoners. I overheard Chris Sladdin saying, "Right, I'll just get a Jimmy before it all kicks off" and of course I wanted to ask him what that phrase meant (I think I guessed it correctly), but there wasn't time; we were being steered into the marquee for the teaching.

Rinpoche proposed that he would speak about four topics in the following order: birth, death, suffering, and old age.

But preceding all of that, he said: "Number one,

we are a community. That's very important. We don't have a monk or a nun, but..." Later on, Rinpoche was to urge us that if we crossed paths with someone in the Sangha with whom we didn't feel like we had a lot in common, the essential thing was not to get into arguments: live and let live...

I now find, casting my eyes over my notes, that at the time I had written in huge capital letters

Rinpoche's advice: "Do not dwell in the past. Do not dwell in the future. Dwell on the here and now." I think I must've written it in capitals, because my own habit is to live in the past. (Rinpoche explained that the only healthy relationship with the past is to harvest it, to see how we might learn from our own mistakes). Rinpoche spoke movingly about the selflessness and dedication of mothers: "You can't imagine how much pain goes through the mother. Man couldn't go through pain like

that." After all, who did we originally learn what loving-kindness was, if not from our mothers? "They are in a sense the gurus."

At that point, Rinpoche launched into a charming anecdote about his own Mum's bemused reaction to his preliminary studies, as a boy, of the doctrine of no-self, sort of along the lines of let's just call a spade a spade:

MUM: But you are Chime!

CHIME (BOY): No, I'm not! Nobody knows who I am. 'Chime' is merely a name, a label!

MUM: What is wrong with you today?





With characteristic humour, Rinpoche pointed to how he was at the time given to understand that perhaps the more abstruse aspects of Buddhist theory ...were better not brought up at the family table. I had heard a story similar to this once before.

With regards to illness, Rinpoche spoke about what his experience had been going into NHS wards: they resembled a "war zone" he said, and everyone in the tent murmured a soft sound of assent. Hospitals, he suggested, "were like little factories. People need a little bit of emotion." He spoke about staff shortages. And much else. On death, he said simply:

"You will not really believe. There is no really death." There was a general silence in the tent. Rinpoche repeated the above words once again.

Then he hinted at how other teachers might at times have been tempted to give him a bit of a ticking off: "Now Chime, just you watch out! All this telling your students to have a good time!

Don't you know, there's a huge big book all about dying?"

There was later on a very funny story about the realisation that there seemed to be a field of cannabis plants, right slap bang close to a dharma centre. There is (alas) not space enough for me to reproduce in details Rinpoche's nuances of observations, cast in snatches of dialogue:

"Oh my God. Do I have to tell policeman?"

"Maybe it's being grown just for rope."

"Oh, that's dope, believe me. I know it's dope. I was in Afghanistan."

Rinpoche winks at us: "...I don't actually think he really had been in Afghanistan."

Well, I don't know about you, but I know which approach I prefer: listening to learn and learning to listen, learning through stories, sitting on the edge of my seat and trying (not always succeeding!) to follow a comical or tragic story...or ploughing my way through a huge, big book.

I have done the latter, of course. We all have. But the problem with huge big books: they do your back in. And after all, it's enlightenment we are interested in.

By Ben Smithies





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PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

OCTOBER 2023 - MARCH 2024



Kyabje Chime Rinpoche's Birthday

Saturday 14th October 2:30 pm



We are absolutely delighted that our precious teacher has very kindly agreed to celebrate his birthday with us at the House! Please join us for meditation, celebrations (and cake!) together in celebration of Rinpoche's birthday.

Booking is absolutely essential as numbers are strictly limited. Details will be emailed to you all!

'As for you, who have a precious human life for the moment and have received instructions from a spiritual master, the embodiment of all the buddhas of the three times, think with joy and enthusiasm of travelling the great path of the supreme Dharma!' (Shabkar)

Family Weekend



The House will be closed to visitors on 28th-29th Oct for a private event, a family weekend. If you are interested in joining these in future, please contact us to be put in touch with the organisers.



Guided shamatha or calm-abiding meditation practice

Sunday 5th November

Sessions at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm

Free of charge

Shamatha (or 'Shi-Neh') is an essential meditation practice. It is designed to create the calm, stable, supple mind necessary for Mahamudra and Dzogchen practice as well as in its own right. These sessions are suitable for meditators of all levels, with guided meditation from experienced sangha members, and are offered free of charge. We hope you can join us.

'Everyone is homesick because our true home is inside us, and until we recognise that, we will long for comfort outside ourselves.' (Saljay Rinpoche)

Teachings with Traleg Khandro, via Zoom

November 2023 - dates & timings tbc



We are delighted that Khandro-la has very kindly agreed to offer some teachings for us via Zoom! Details to be confirmed and will be emailed nearer the time.

Traleg Khandro, long-time student and wife of the late Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche IX, is the Director of E-Vam Buddhist Institute America and Nyima Centre Online Learning in Australia. Khandro studied Buddhism under Traleg Rinpoche's guidance for 30 years and has undertaken numerous long meditation retreats. Khandro gives teachings on Buddhism and Lujong in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Europe. Khandro also has a degree in Psychology. We are overjoyed to welcome her again.





Guided shamatha or calm-abiding meditation practice

Sunday 3rd December

Sessions at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm

Free of charge

Shamatha (or 'Shi-Neh') is an essential meditation practice. It is designed to create the calm, stable, supple mind necessary for Mahamudra and Dzogchen practice as well as in its own right. These sessions are suitable for meditators of all levels, with guided meditation from experienced sangha members, and are offered free of charge. We hope you can join us.



Christmas and New Year retreat

Friday 29th December 2023 - Tuesday 2nd January 2024

We are holding an informal winter meditation retreat. This will be self-guided, but the House will be in silence with sessions guided from the shrine room. A wonderful opportunity to deepen your practice in the deep peace of the House at this magical time of year.

£200 for five nights in a single room and including all meals.

*'Never forget how swiftly this life will be over,
like a flash of summer lightning or the wave of a hand.
Now that you have the opportunity to practice Dharma,
do not waste a single moment on anything else'.
(Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche)*



JANUARY



Guided shamatha or calm-abiding meditation practice

Sunday 7th January

Sessions at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm

Free of charge

Shamatha (or 'Shi-Neh') is an essential meditation practice. It is designed to create the calm, stable, supple mind necessary for Mahamudra and Dzogchen practice as well as in its own right. These sessions are suitable for meditators of all levels, with guided meditation from experienced sangha members, and are offered free of charge. We hope you can join us.

FEBRUARY



Guided shamatha or calm-abiding meditation practice

Sunday 4th February

Sessions at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm

Free of charge

Shamatha (or 'Shi-Neh') is an essential meditation practice. It is designed to create the calm, stable, supple mind necessary for Mahamudra and Dzogchen practice as well as in its own right. These sessions are suitable for meditators of all levels, with guided meditation from experienced sangha members, and are offered free of charge. We hope you can join us.



Mahakala Pujas

Wednesday 7th - Friday 9th February

Mahakala pujas each day at 2:30 pm, led by Lama Alasdair

These Dharma protector practices are performed before Losar every year to avert obstacles for the year ahead.

Lama Alasdair has been a student of Kyabje Chime Rinpoche's for over forty years and was Rinpoche's resident Lama at Kagyu Cho Khor Ling in the Black Forest. We are absolutely delighted that he's leading these practices for us at Marpa House.



Losar - Tibetan New Year - Year of the Wood Dragon
Saturday 10th February 2024 at 2:30 pm

Free of charge

Losar is a wonderful holiday and time of celebration. We will have a Lhasang bonfire; and health permitting, Kyabje Chime Rinpoche hopes to join us. We hope you can join us too for an auspicious start to the New Year!

Our love, best wishes and aspirations for the New Year, may all beings be peaceful and happy and may compassion and wisdom flourish everywhere.

*'Many understand meditation, few understand letting go'.
(Tsangpa Gyare)*

MARCH



Guided shamatha or calm-abiding meditation practice

Sunday 3rd March

Sessions at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm

Free of charge

Shamatha (or 'Shi-Neh') is an essential meditation practice. It is designed to create the calm, stable, supple mind necessary for Mahamudra and Dzogchen practice as well as in its own right. These sessions are suitable for meditators of all levels, with guided meditation from experienced sangha members, and are offered free of charge. We hope you can join us.



We were deeply saddened to hear of Thrangu Rinpoche's passing into parinirvana on 4th June 2023. As a mark of respect, Kyabje Chime Rinpoche requested that we move all of the 50th-anniversary celebrations of Marpa House until 2024.

These celebrations will take place after March 2024 and further details will be announced closer to the time.



A TIBETAN EXCURSION TO 1960'S IRELAND

In August 2021, Marpa House was contacted by Eleanor Sutherland, a supporter of Kagyu Samye Ling in Dublin. This is her tale.

"I was asked if I would help a friend's family take care of their elderly mother who is 99 years old now. I am a friend of one of her daughters. The lady's name is Sonia. I heard this story from them.

Tibetans came to Cloona Lodge in Co Mayo, Ireland, through a person in the Buddhist Society who was a friend of Sonia. Apparently, the Dalai Lama was involved in the idea of setting up a community of Tibetan refugees who would support themselves through hand weaving. The name I have heard mentioned is 'Ricky' although he may not have been the original friend of Sonia who was a woman, I think.

Sonia's memory is not great nowadays, so she only remembers a few bits and pieces. She talks about 'Chime' and 'Geshe' and does not remember if there were any others who came but she thinks there might have been.



'Chime' is the Venerable Lama Chime Rinpoche, the founder of Marpa House and I am not sure who is 'Geshe'. Sonia recalls that Geshe did not speak English "though he had been to a special school for six years". She remembers that



Geshe moved out to a small cottage by the sea with a girl called 'Jenny' who Sonia says was an English heiress, while Lama Chime stayed on at the Mill Lodge house in a spare room.

The Tibetan refugees had to leave Cloona Mill when the Irish government refused to give them visas to live in the country. Sonia thought they went to Scotland.

I had heard some vague stories about Tibetans living at the old Mill, and doing Irish traditional weaving, so I was intrigued to discover more about it. I also do this rare type of weaving. Sonia talks about the locals following them around as they looked so exotic riding bicycles in their robes. She says she based her very successful Health Retreat on ideas she got during their stay with her.

I have been reading any books that I can find that are written about those times but I have not found even one mention of the Lamas coming to Ireland. I guess it was a brief visit. I did not really have any idea about Lama Chime until I found a book in Sonia's library by the name of 'From the Land of Lost Content' by Noel Barber.

Sonia's family, who are now in their sixties and seventies, were amazed when I told them about Lama Chime's life story before he arrived in Ireland.

So this is a rather long story. I am amazed to consider that Lama Chime was weaving traditional crios belts where I am living now and find it fascinating those circumstances brought me to Cloona at the time I started a project to grow endangered Tibetan medicinal plants in Ireland. I wonder whether Akong Rinpoche might also have come here - he is one of my sources of inspiration to see if these plants would prosper here in Ireland.

I would love to hear if you have any records or letters or any other pieces of information

about the visit of the Tibetans to Westport, and the identity of the other Tibetans who came to Ireland with Lama Chime.

Anyone who would like to contact Eleanor should do so via the Editor or Marpa House.



Alan “Bicycle” Hale

1941 - 2022



It is with a sad heart that we say goodbye to Alan “Bicycle” Hale. He died at home this past December 21st, the Winter Solstice, that moment where the Earth moves from the dark into the light.

His birth started less peacefully than it ended, as he was born in London in 1941, during World War II, while bombs were falling. Alan embodied certain characteristics of both his parents. His Mother, who had a full-time job outside keeping house for her family, was keenly interested in astrology & spiritual phenomena, and his father worked for the Gas Board, letting off steam by racing around on his motorbike and playing football.

At 14, after the war, Alan left school & trained

to be a mechanical & structural engineer, eventually gaining an HNC qualification. While working briefly in Canada, he began practising Karate with a Japanese Zen Karate expert named Basil Shintani. This relationship changed his life as he learned about Zen Buddhism & Samurai warriors who engaged in battle with no hatred or malice towards their enemy.

Upon returning to London, Alan took up Time Trial bicycle racing. Bike racing became his Samurai battle, where he could be beaten yet wish the winner well.

In seeking further spiritual answers he began going to the Buddhist Society in London & studying Astrology. In 1980 he met his Tibetan Buddhist teacher Lama Chime Rinpoche. By this time, cycling had become his meditation. Lama Chime recognised this and in the tradition noted in the book titled, “The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas”, gave Alan the name ‘Bicycle’. In that book, 84 men & women of diverse backgrounds – from cobblers & gamblers to royalty – used everyday experiences as their path to develop spiritually & as their path to enlightenment. During the first 7 years as a student of Rinpoche, Alan embarked on a spiritual retreat, during which he cycled & studied Buddhist texts every day. He estimated that he clocked up 80,000 miles on his bicycle - an average of 30 miles a day.

Many years ago, Alan asked his Mother if he would become “enlightened”. She replied, “yes, if you approach it with the intensity of youth!”. He definitely did that. After a courageous 5 year battle with metastatic prostate cancer, Alan took his last breath at 2:10 am on the Solstice. He is survived by Carol, his wife & spiritual partner.



As lightening flashes through the darkness
of a cloudy night sky,

illuminating everything for a brief
moment,

so through the power of Buddha we may
occasionally experience a good thought.

by Lama Chime Tulku, Rinpoche



