



The Salisbury Centre

Some Stories and Memories on the occasion of our 50th Anniversary

With great thanks to everyone who has contributed we are delighted to present this collection of stories and memories across our 50 years of history so far, as we gather to learn from our history, celebrate the present, and look to the future.

The stories are presented in alphabetical order (by first name) and have not been edited.

Andrew Haughton - early resident

30.09.2022

Some recollections by a resident.

I joined the community of the Salisbury Centre in the autumn of 1974 aged 19, having left another very new community, Lothlorien, set up by my parents in the wilds of Kirkcudbrightshire. There were many communities and groups trying to work in a better way in the world and I wholeheartedly approved of and admired my parents' plans but I was impatient for change on my own terms. Besides, in the eyes of that 19-year-old, Edinburgh was an amazing and exciting city, full of promise. In a version of communal spirit I am not proud of, I nicked my brother Phil's bicycle and cycled 70 miles to Edinburgh, aiming for The Salisbury Centre.

'The Centre', as we called it (of the Universe, I think we sometimes thought) was a glorious family, full of energy and confident of being part of great change. For me it was a place of initiatives, new ideas and beginnings. We, the 'residents', were typically from diverse backgrounds but with mostly similar ages and sharing a common optimism. There was shared effort, shared meals and shared prayer in the form of meditation early each morning. This meditation, silent, powerful and beautiful, ended always with the sound of 'Hu', a tradition taken straight from the Sufi practice of Zikr. This meditation was the heart of the community then. It took place in a tiny room at the top of the house. The meditation room, so close to the sky, was then a space where I felt sacredness and holiness in the world. We knelt in a circle. There was a single candle. I think it was lent to us from some heaven.

I stayed less than a year. During that time I performed the task of treasurer, very badly. Having pretensions as a woodworker, I built some shelving in the laundry room which was still there 40+ years later at the re-launch ceremonies. That job was the tentative but certain beginning of what became my first career as a furniture maker. I think I was actually paid an allowance by the trustees of the Centre, but in reality I should probably have been paying the Salisbury Centre!

Daily life included shared household chores, gardening, looking after the unique library which was frequently added to by donated books, welcoming visitors for study groups, classes such as yoga and all sorts of talks and lectures by visiting teachers, gurus, and all sorts of practitioners from the great outpouring of desire for a new beginning that so many were drawn to. There was a lot of emphasis on the concept of 'inner work' and one opportunity for this was the remarkable, astonishing 'dream groups' with Dr Winifred Rushforth who had studied under Jung. How lucky we were! Some of us found paid work outside. There were hearty meals, such as fantastic miso soup, prepared by whoever was the most able cook among us, and based on a vegetarian diet that was an unofficial house rule. I and another member of our community, the late Michael Cox, mischievously flouted this restriction by occasionally cooking bacon and eggs on Sunday morning. I recall this was frowned upon by fellow residents Tom and Erica but Michael was about 30 years older than all of us, so they couldn't really argue too much.

While living at The Salisbury Centre I fell in love with Nur, also part of the community. Her devotion to and love of Mevlana Jelalludin Rumi was something I came to share. The Salisbury Centre graciously hosted our wedding party a few years later. That was a wonderful beginning which led to our two children Gabi and Matthew.

For all this remarkable centre gave to me, I'm truly grateful. And to many known and unknown people who brought the Salisbury Centre into being and guided it along its way, allowing me and many, many others to look at possibilities we may never have found otherwise, thank you.

Angus Marland

My first visit to the Salisbury Centre was in 1973 or 74, with Peter and Eileen Caddy when we stopped off on our way south from Findhorn on a journey to Glastonbury and other places in England. I remember we gathered in the library with Winifred, Di, Monica and others and that there was a collective affirmation of our shared purpose and aspirations.

I left Findhorn and moved to Pencaitland in East Lothian in 1980, and became a regular visitor to the Centre, taking part in many activities and meditations. I became a trustee in the mid 80's, a role that lasted, I think, until the mid 90's, and this included my being treasurer for a number of years. I do remember that we were always on pretty thin

ice from a financial point of view, managing to keep the Centre going and carrying out some major repairs like repointing the outside walls and fixing the pottery skylight, but never having sufficient resources for a proper renovation of the building.

During that time I was involved in setting up the monthly Angel of Edinburgh and the Lothians meditation with Gelda, Joanna and others from Woodhall, Lady Kay Oldfield's home near Pencaitland. We also set up a weekday mornings meditation which I think was 8.30 to 8.50, and both meditations ran for several years. Gelda and Joanna may have a better memory of this than me!

In February 2001 I hosted a group from Findhorn who were completing a year-long educational programme, focalised by Stewart Friendship and Elisabeth Tønsberg. They were interested in learning about 'Life after Findhorn', and so my sharing was largely about the 20 years I had spent in and around Edinburgh, and in particular about the Salisbury Centre.

Little did I know that within six months I would be back at Findhorn, living with Elisabeth, and working in the Foundation as well as continuing my own business in ecological water and waste water treatment.

Thank you Salisbury Centre, and all who have been involved in keeping the flame alight, holding and developing this wonderful resource for Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Anna Howard

Memories from my time there.

I lived at The Salisbury Centre for 2 years, from 2004 – 2006, and quickly found myself getting involved in the spiritual life of the Centre. I had moved in when the Centre was transitioning away from being a residential community, but my earlier experiences of living in community and The Salisbury Centre's history of being one meant that there was a natural 'fit' and there was far too much going on outside my bedroom door to stay shut away behind it!

I took on a role in the Office and became one of the complementary health therapists and Meditation teachers at the Centre. But more memorable for me than anything, all these years later, is the special place that The Salisbury Centre played with regard to a pilgrimage I undertook after the death of my father in 2005.

Whilst living at Samye Ling Tibetan Centre in the Scottish Borders a few years before, I'd become very devoted to a female deity known as Tara. Tara is described as a Buddha or a Bodhisattva; a manifestation of enlightenment in female form. She is often depicted as green in colour: green representing dynamic, fearless compassion and swift,

protective action. Green Tara is commonly seen in both monasteries and ordinary households, her 'practice' one that many Tibetans do on a daily basis.

After losing my father, I felt rather lost and displaced. Dad had lived and died in England, where I was also from and his death was pulling me 'home' again, despite the love affair I had had with Scotland since the 1990's.

One day, whilst doing my daily Tara practice, I had an idea. Or perhaps I should say an instruction from Tara! The message was to undertake a Tara Peace Pilgrimage: working with each of the 21 Taras that represent the emanations surrounding Green Tara, I would take or send each one to where in the world she could be of greatest benefit. Each of the 21 Taras had a particular quality, a protective power, that she was associated with: protecting from earth-related disasters, for example, or protecting from sickness or untimely death.

And so it was, in the Spring of 2006, that I set off from The Salisbury Centre with 21 small statues of Tara in my pocket and headed 'into the world'. I travelled first to Lindisfarne and then up to the Isle of Skye, before beginning the journey south and onwards to wherever I was led. Working with each Tara was a joy and a source of great inspiration, comfort and courage. I had undertaken this pilgrimage for the benefit of others, to bring Tara to the places and people she might help and to help raise money for a Tara Centre in South Africa, but looking back, I can see how much Tara helped me during a time in my life that might otherwise have been filled with a lot of grief and sadness.

My own capacity to take Tara beyond the UK was limited by funds, but that didn't matter. In fact, a solution better than I could have initially imagined presented itself: I would continue to work with each of the Taras in turn, and then trust in the synchronicity of events and see who appeared on my path. I would recognise a suitable candidate to give a small Tara to – someone about to embark on a journey of significance abroad and someone who was either already a Tara practitioner or had a strong affinity with her – and ask if they would like to take Tara with them and place the little statue wherever they felt she should go. It was a joyful process and resulted in Tara statues being taken to Alaska, India, Tibet, Russia, France, Italy, South Africa, Australia, Zimbabwe, the United States, Nepal as well as England and Scotland of course.

Eighteen months after leaving The Salisbury Centre, I returned for one last visit: to place the 21st and final Tara statue in the garden there. Having begun the Pilgrimage at The Salisbury Centre, and with so many happy and grateful memories, it felt very right to come full circle and to bring the last Tara 'home'. I placed her in one of the old trees in the garden.

Perhaps she is still there.

Erica Day (Witt) – Ex resident

The Salisbury Centre 1974-75...

I arrived on the doorstep of the Salisbury Centre with a small home-made deerskin backpack and a heart-shaped edible mushroom I had found along the way, hitch-hiking up from Bedfordshire. I had written ahead to say I hoped to visit, and had met Tom Freeman who also hoped to visit, a few weeks before at a Sufi gathering in London. My other contact was the Sufi writer and teacher Reshad Feild who I had met in North Vancouver, British Columbia, the winter before when I felt lost, far from home and in need of inspiration. I had saved a wedge of money on a Canadian make-work programme teaching crafts to prison-inmates, psychiatric sufferers and other community projects and travelled 'back' to Europe to a summer camp in the Alps near Chamonix, led by Pir Vilayat Khan of the Chisti Sufi Order.

I had turned 30 and had no idea what to do next with my life to reflect something of my longing to "help". I had travelled too far from my parents and their "middle class" way of life in Bedfordshire and not far enough yet to settle and create a viable alternative. I hadn't found a "mate" and held an open heart, I hoped.

I was welcomed in for supper and a bed for the night and I stayed about nine months, becoming "a member of the community", cooking, cleaning, leading meditations, welcoming all-comers, listening to others' problems and worries and going to a dream group led by Winifred Rushforth.

There was the upper structure of Patrons: Winifred Rushforth, Anne, whose surname now eludes me, a Church of Scotland minister whose name is also now erased, and Michael Cox, who joined the live-in community soon after I arrived. Those who had founded the Salisbury Centre had recently left and there were spaces and ideas to pick up and fill. My principal memory is Sue (Daena) Turner who had moved to London to study cranio-sacral osteopathy, who later became a friend when I also moved to London. There I later trained in Counselling and Psychotherapy, another emerging training ground for open-minded souls (Practitioners of the New Age or Hippies or whatever journalistic euphemism for those on the edge of respectability and credibility then) There was also Keith and Helen Farvis, who somehow managed a separate private life and family and yet kept, and keep, an invaluable connection to the survival of the Centre. Trish (Jamila) was living there then, the admin force. And Brian McCombe (Rahim) who set up a pottery and taught classes there. We later studied Kabbala with Glyn Davies together several years further on. Nur (another Patricia I think) moved in with 3 black cats, and soon after Andrew Haughton. Tom Freeman stayed for some months. I have probably missed others who were friends then. I apologise.

The Islamic Sufi names must have raised eyebrows in Edinburgh circles. The famous lines of the 13th Century Sufi poet Jelaluddin Rumi were printed and posted above the Collection Box in the hall

Come. Come. Whoever you are, Come!

Even if you have broken your vows a thousand times.
Ours is not a caravan of despair... (a rough, remembered translation)

1984, looking back now, was before Islam had become the aggressive fundamentalist force of the Middle East and the Fear of the West, and before there was much acceptance that Christianity also had an equally aggressive fundamentalist abrasive edge. I had met a Sufi ideology that said that all religions were One, and a longing for this One-ness was expressed through Love and Light and fleeting moment of Grace.

Study and immersion in the esoteric and practical aspects of this were central to our life at the Salisbury Centre. Study groups on J.G. Bennett, Christian mystics, Sufi poets and saints, as well as how to lead song and dance groups in the Studio, the Movements of EJ Gold, a follower I think of Ouspensky, Tai Chi, Yoga, and teachers and speakers invited from around the country and the world and passing through. It was hard work and a tough training in openness and self-restraint and experimentation. And some argument and exasperation at times in the normal run of things... Pir Vilayat Khan visited once I remember, a family friend of Michael Cox.

I travelled when I could to other communities: Sammi Ling, Findhorn further north, Lothlorien in the Borders, small groups of “ Alternatives” scattered around. I wrote about my visits for the Scotsman newspaper, earning a fee to pay for my stay, and hitch hiking from place to place to save money and talk to people who stopped to pick me up. I must have a guardian angel who spread wings around me at times, and a sense of purpose somehow reaching out into peoples ordinary

Gelda MacGregor

I was closely involved in the Salisbury centre from 1984 to 2003. Here are the bare basics:

My roles were originally as a garden volunteer, and one morning a week as a cleaner/tidy upper in the kitchen, in 1981-2.

Then from 1984-1986 I was the (paid) part time Programme Co-Ordinator, sharing the job with Terry Gower, who also offered NLP and meditations. I was never a resident, as I lived nearby...

From 1992-2003 I became a Trustee, where I experienced many intense meeting and changes of residents. Towards the end of this period, in 1999, I moved up to Findhorn...

My close involvement really began with my buying my first flat in Montague St, in 1980, in the south side and within easy walking distance of the centre. One of the former

residents, Helen (then Jackie) Kennedy lived below me, and introduced me to it. She later became a Trustee...

I clearly recall attending a lecture in December 1979, by Dr Winifred Rushforth, on "the evolution of the human hand" which I found both profound and fascinating. At the end of it, she informed us that she ran weekly dream groups, and was open to new attendees. My hand shot up and I joined! That was a hugely significant and life changing moment...

But in fact, I had already met Winifred, for in July 1977 I made my very first weekend visit to the Findhorn community. The first night I was there, I had a dream where a very old, wise woman was lecturing an engaged group about "A Blueprint for Survival". 2 years later, in December 1979, I met that woman in the flesh, but she was exactly how she had appeared in my dream!! How astonishing was that!

In Easter 1984 I returned to Findhorn with my partner, to do an Experience week, which was both inspiring and uplifting. At the end of the week we were all asked to consider and seek inspiration for "next steps", and I received a very strong inner guidance on the last day, was that I was NOT to try to live in or around Findhorn/Forres, but that my task was to be closely involved in working and running the Salisbury Centre community in Edinburgh, whose purpose as a Centre of Light within the Network of Light, was seen as closely allied to that of Findhorn. In May of 1984 I was suddenly made redundant from my family social work job in Dr Barnardos where a residential home closed, and almost immediately after that, the vacancy appeared in the Salisbury centre, though at a much reduced income!

At that time, Angus Marland was a Trustee, so we had many activities modelled on Findhorn, e.g. a weekly "Angel of Edinburgh and the Lothians" meditation. Chris Hall the sculptor was another trustee. From 1986-9 I ran weekly dream groups in the library, and again from 1991-5, having completed the Mandala Dreamwork training. Our core group included Magda Thompson, Terry, myself and Julie Armstrong who also had a Findhorn connection. We were preceded by Jane Chisholm and Tony Arcari. I was succeeded by Annerieke Dykhuis. Activities then included pottery, artwork, massage with Joanna Legard,, Tai Chi, Vipassana Meditation, and a Sufi group. And of course maintaining the organic garden...

For me the greatest highlight of my time there was in June 1986 when we held a "Resurgence Readers weekend" led by Rosalind Brackenbury and by the Indian Jain monk Satish Kumar and the famous English poet of nature, Kathleen Raine, on the occasion of her 70th birthday. This was followed by Satish setting off on a walking pilgrimage to Iona, joined by Terry Gower, and myself for a shorter distance!

Other events I strongly recall were a day workshop with Eileen Caddy and Dorothy Maclean from Findhorn, Sacred dance with Sydney McClintock, and Dhyani Wahoo's

weekly Sunray native American meditations. Jody Higgs and Jan Cameron ran yoga classes.

Helen Farvis

December 2020

The Salisbury Centre has been an important ongoing thread in my life, a thread of connection with like minded people, with a community, a thread that both inspires and aspires with and to the divine. Little did I expect on its first day on New Year's Eve of 1972 that almost 50 years later it would still be providing a unique contribution to the spiritual and psychological needs of our time.

Later, during the years spanning 1976 and 1977 I was a resident there and upon reflecting recently on that period I thought it might be both useful and interesting to lay down an account of those times for the Centre's archives.

At that time there was a settled community of residents who lived and worked there. There were usually 7 residents, each with their own bedroom (without heating!), and remaining spaces were shared with guests and the daily visitors. The studio and library were used for groups and workshops, the Wellspring room was a craft room, and the current Art room was a vibrant and busy pottery. There was one bathroom (no shower) and one downstairs toilet under the stairs with three additional toilets located adjacent to the pottery, a kitchen with an ancient cooker, and a laundry room where the old boiler constantly rumbled in its efforts to service all the needs of the building. At the top of the house in the low ceilinged attic room the twice daily meditations took place.

There was rhythm and structure to the day which was adhered to by all except the person whose one "day off" it was. One person in turn was designated as co-ordinator of the day. This involved: rousing residents at 7.30am and leading meditation at 8am and 6pm, preparing breakfast and lunch, answering the door to callers, answering the telephone, welcoming new visitors and showing them around, and ensuring rooms were ready for groups and workshops, and finally locking up at 10pm.

At breakfast the day's requirements were discussed, and delegated. These included daily house cleaning, room preparation for overnight guests, laundry, food shopping, delivering posters and leaflets for the forthcoming programme of events, cooking the evening meal, making bread, childcare for Dr Rushforth's dreamgroup for young mothers and more.

As well as these tasks everybody had their particular roles within the work of the Centre depending on their skills and interests: potter, craft teacher, treasurer, housekeeper, gardener, events co-ordinator etc. Work was largely full-time, and accommodation,

food, and a small amount of “pocket money” was more than sufficient recompense for the privilege of staying there and contributing to the work of the Centre. One person at that time worked outside the Centre and contributed income as well as taking their share of duties. In addition some of the residents were qualified to lead some groups e.g. yoga and massage.

After breakfast there was often a study group where spiritual teachings were studied and discussed. For example, Father Noel O'Donoghue who lectured in Divinity was a supporter and friend and gave teachings on the Christian mystics. Thereafter the rest of the day was taken up with individual tasks and roles, coming together at mealtimes and the twice daily meditations. Meditation was at the core of the Centre's work and the lives of its residents and it was expected that every resident was committed to this.

There was an extensive programme of groups and workshops, mainly organised by the events co-ordinator, who managed this process by a combination of “snail” mail and telephone. (The latter method was arduous as at that time there was only a public telephone in the hall requiring money!!!) Once the brochures and leaflets were printed they had to be delivered to venues all over Edinburgh and posted to people on the mailing list.

At that time there were few places providing the groups that are now commonplace everywhere: yoga, Tai Chi, meditation, massage, naturopathy, dreamgroups, painting groups, therapy groups of various types, all of which were very popular at the Centre. The twice daily meditations were also open to the public and were well attended. At weekends 2 day workshops were held by well known speakers and leaders. Subjects included: Transpersonal Psychology led by Ian Gordon-Brown and Barabara Summers, founders of the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology; Gestalt Therapy by Larry (Isha) Bloomberg, leading American Gestalt therapist who trained with Fritz Perls; the Heimler Scale; the Enneagram: the Kahuna philosophy; Vipassana meditation and many others.

Visiting speakers included: Pir Vilyat Khan, spiritual teacher and head of the Sufi Order in the West; Keith Critchlow, well known for his research into Sacred Geometry; Michele Odent, pioneer in natural childbirth; Reshad Field, spiritual teacher; Peter and Eileen Caddy, founders of the Findhorn Foundation; Roland Walls, founder of the Community of Transfiguration, and so many more.

As well as talks, groups and workshops, there were ongoing pottery and craft lessons. The pottery was particularly popular, especially with school children, and with the support of other local skilled potters lessons took place throughout the day and evening. The craft lessons consisted of weaving and spinning, with the Centre being lucky enough to have inherited some large weaving looms from the Davidson Clinic.

The Centre was self-sufficient financially in terms of its running costs, which included payment to speakers and workshop leaders, and residents' food and accommodation.

This was achieved from charges for workshops and classes, some room rentals as well as additional fundraising events. The latter included: a Christmas Fair where the Centre's pottery and crafts were sold, as well as home baking (the Centre's home made bread was particularly popular) with contributions from supporters (the friendly nuns from the convent further down Salisbury Road lent their trestle tables), a Summer Fair where homemade lunches and afternoon teas were made and sold to visitors, and a jumble sale where sacks of clothes were collected, sorted and sold.

It should be said that at that time there was not much financial thought given to the long term maintenance of the building nor of the current H and S directives, which rather sums up the climate of that time. These concerns, if they were thought of at all, were assumed to be the responsibility of the Trustees who were unfailingly supportive of the residents, despite the financial accountability if something went wrong.

If this account gives the impression of an idyllic, harmonious way of life, it has to be said that sometimes it was not. Occasionally there was conflict within the resident body but a commitment to a weekly evening meeting served mostly to address it. Unfortunately, one resident during this period was asked to leave. In addition, the lack of personal space and the volume of visitors was tiring. Visitors were welcome to share meals and often the evening meal consisted of up to 20 people crammed round the kitchen table. There were many overnight guests, some staying for a period of time, some who contributed greatly and others who did not. Some visitors had mental health issues and received support at the Centre in the form of a friendly ear, a cup of tea and some therapeutic work in the garden, but others had to be referred elsewhere as the Centre was not equipped to give them the support they required.

However, there were antidotes to the occasional pressures: an impromptu rock and roll class if the Studio was free, a party to which all were welcome, an occasional visit to a popular nightclub in Stockbridge after the Centre had closed to listen and dance to well known bands. Sacred dancing it was not!

The overwhelmingly majority of guests and visitors were a joy to meet and to exchange ideas with, people who were unfailingly committed and supportive of the Centre as it clearly held an important place in their hearts, in the same way it does today. The next door neighbours were a retired joiner and his sister, who lived in single storey cottage and were surprisingly friendly and tolerant despite the Centre's cat stealing their Christmas dinner, and their having to listen to the local Shri Rajneesh group performing their very loud weekly Dynamic Meditation in the Studio. The manageress of the Gold Medal (now the Salisbury Arms) often brought soup leftovers from the restaurant and in exchange we helped her out when she was short staffed.

At that time there was a close relationship with the Findhorn Foundation which allowed for an "exchange" of residents for a week or two to provide an experience of a different type of community. This also happened with the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales. These places and links with other Centres such as Beshara, Samye Ling and more,

served to form a cross fertilising network of ideas, speakers, visitors and spiritual perspectives.

This network has spread wider and further over the intervening years by subsequent residents, guests, and visitors, with many of them giving testimony as to how the Centre “changed their life”. Outwardly the form and operation of the centre has changed, ever accommodating to the needs of the times, but its core values remain as they were almost 50 years ago, that of a place where people of any faith or none can come together and share in the nurturing of their personal growth and spiritual life.

Helen Kennedy - past trustee and resident

Living at the Salisbury Centre

The back story:

When I reflect on my time at the Salisbury Centre I see it as a lost Eden, and I feel the grief of my time there passing. It was a time of healing and re-orientation for me and also a coming of age story.

I had recently returned from living and working abroad, teaching in Kenya and New Zealand. On my way home travelling overland through Indonesia I had a life experience which changed my perspective on life and profoundly altered its course. I felt more alive and open but also fragile and vulnerable. I needed time to assimilate and find my new direction. I had no idea how to do it and certainly no idea how my life would unfold.

The two things I wanted to find while I was back in the UK were a weaving course and somewhere to develop a better understanding of dreams. I had been inspired by the weaving I had seen in Indonesia and wanted learn the skill for myself. I also had been remembering many extraordinary dreams which puzzled me and fired my curiosity. I returned to Edinburgh where I had been brought up and where, at that time, my mother needed help moving house. I found a weaving course taking place at a weaving centre in the High Street (which closed soon after). While there, I saw a small rather scruffy notice advertising a Sufi Centre which was offering weaving facilities. I asked a few questions about it getting answers that seemed to say the Sufis were a rather off beat religious group who had community somewhere on the South side. I thought no more about it. It sounded a bit way out for me.

Meanwhile a friend of my brother, Simon, had moved to Edinburgh to do a postgraduate degree in ecology. He had joined a dream group led by Winnifred Rushforth, a Jungian therapist, and invited me to join as well. The group consisted of about five of us who met with Winnifred in her sitting room for about two hours one evening a week and shared our dreams. Winnifred always encouraged the dream teller to find meaning in the dreams for themselves while sharing her own experience and knowledge of dream images and interpretations. I was really excited about this work. It opened up a new understanding of the world and myself; one full of riches and mystery. At last I had found something I wanted to pursue with commitment.

I found a job working at the Sick Children's Hospital as a nursing assistant. I loved working with the babies and spent much of my time holding, feeding and changing babies, the best part of nursing, which the trained nurses were too busy to do.

Even so I was dealing with enormous changes in my life and direction. Coming back from two years abroad with so many new experiences and a sense of having changed so much personally made it difficult for me to fit into my old life and at the same time unable to find my new path. I was precipitated into an existential crisis. I decided to go into individual therapy with Winnifred Rushforth.

This was the beginning of three years of dream therapy with Winnifred. She was a great teacher supporting me to discover myself through my dreams and also sharing her knowledge and wisdom about psychotherapy and spirituality.

At this time Simon took me to visit a friend of his who lived at the Salisbury Centre which I discovered was the same Sufi Centre that had advertised weaving facilities. I enjoyed the meeting and liked what I saw of the Centre. Here were people who shared a similar perspective on life as I did. I began to attend yoga classes and gradually got to know the resident community. I was rather in awe of this very focussed and inspiring group of young people and enjoyed visiting.

A few months later in conversation with Winnifred she suggested that I move into the Salisbury Centre and join the resident community. I was very pleased and a bit daunted by the possibility. I really knew very little about it and I wasn't a Sufi. Would it be Ok for me to move there?

What I didn't know is that there had been a minor revolution going on at the Centre. It had been originally set up through a coming together of a group mainly of university students meeting to study Sufism and Winnifred, a Jungian analyst with strong Christian beliefs. Some of the Sufi group had been down to Swyre farm, a Sufi community in England, and had been inspired to set up a similar community in Edinburgh. A member of the group contacted Winnifred, who was interested in bringing together the psychological and the spiritual. It was a match made in heaven.

Winnifred was brilliant at raising funds through her contacts in Edinburgh and the Sufi group provided the inspiration and the work. The Salisbury Trust was set up as a charity and trustees were appointed to oversee the work of the trust. The trust deed was written laying out the intention of the trust to support the psychological, spiritual and creative growth of young people. The house at 2 Salisbury Road was bought after some complications and some members of the Sufi group moved in, working hard at cleaning painting and setting it up as a residential community. The Centre was named the Salisbury Centre Beshara making clear its affiliation with the Beshara Trust, a Sufi organisation dedicated to the advancement of education in the unity of all religions.

At first this worked well; the centre was eclectic, offering a variety of classes, setting up a pottery and a weaving room. Every day there were meditations morning and evening, study groups and meals provided for all who came. Then the founding residents of the Centre left to pursue their own directions and various new residents came. The Sufi Order had changed and become less open. The study groups focussed on the works of Sufi teachers particularly Ibn 'Arabi a 12th Century Sufi mystic. The trustees felt this was not fulfilling the purpose of the centre which was to be open to all spiritual paths. The Salisbury Centre dropped the title Beshara and affiliated with several Open Centres throughout the UK. The trustees set about bringing in new residents who would represent more of the diversity and openness that was intended. I was one of them, coming in with my interest in psychological growth. Michael Cox, a man in his forties, a photographer with a commitment to Sufism, and Colette Anstey, a school teacher from Coventry interested in Christian mysticism, were also invited. We met for the first time in the hall of the Salisbury Centre in July 1975.

It was an extraordinary time. The previous group of residents gradually left, handing over the running of the Centre to us. Gordon Menzies, a potter joined us and took over the pottery. Keith and Helen Farvis joined us that winter and Jenny King later that summer. Michael Cox ran the office and was very much the front man of the Centre. He had an air of responsibility and authority showing people round and explaining the purpose of the community. His presence contradicted the possibility of us being seen as a bunch of hippy drop-outs. He also developed the programme of classes and weekend workshops which became the interface with the wider city. Yoga, Ti Chi, and meditation were all really unknown in the city before the Centre introduced them. There were also a stream of children attending pottery and art classes. At weekends there were various types of therapy groups, Vipassana meditation workshops, massage workshops, voice workshops as well as Ti Chi and Yoga. On Friday nights we invited speakers to give talks on spirituality, psychotherapy, the arts and many other subjects. The programme grew and the offerings expanded.

Meanwhile the community continued its daily routine. One member of the community was responsible for the day, This meant making sure that all the meals were cooked and ready on time, the door was opened to visitors who shown round, the two daily meditations were led and any workshops, study groups and other activities happened on time. A bell was rung to announce the start of each event. As well as this each resident had a particular responsibility: the garden, the accounts, the housekeeping, the pottery, the weaving room. The Centre was open from 7.30 am to 10.00pm.

Meditation was core to the ethos of the centre. When I moved in I had never meditated before but I was assured that everyone was required to attend. One resident, a Sufi teacher undertook to teach me how to sit in meditation and so I did. I discovered that I loved the practice, sitting in deep silence in the attic meditation room with the other residents around. It was the way the community came together and I think held us all through the best and worst of times. Various spiritual teachers visited and led workshops, combining talks with periods of meditation. Rashad Feild, a Sufi teacher,

visited and led a weekend. Dhiravamsa and later Tew Bunnag led regular workshops teaching Vipassana meditation. Every Sunday evening followers of the Bagwan Sri Rajneesh would gather to practice dynamic meditation.

The finances of the Centre were always a concern. When I first joined the community I had a part time job at the sick Children's hospital, Keith had a full time job at the university and participated in the work at weekends. Jenny King was a naturopath and healer and soon ran a thriving practice from the Centre. We all paid towards our keep and the full time residents had 12GBP a week as pay.

We had one day off a week. The summer I moved in, one resident, a trained chef, organised us to run a brunch cafe every Sunday in Stockbridge. A friend of the centre owned the cafe and allowed us to run it, the Centre taking the profit. It must have been a bit of a loss for her because we made the most sumptuous filled pancakes and very generous cooked breakfasts. It was fun to do and exhausting as it was very busy with queues outside the door every Sunday morning. We organised a fete at a local stately home, courtesy of the owners. We ran jumble sales several times a year for which there would be queues of bargain hunters along the street before opening. We set up a stall at the Meadows Festival, selling pots and weaving and cuttings from the garden. We made enough profit one year to buy a greenhouse. It still stands in the lower garden.

The pottery was a major activity at the Centre. When I first arrived it was run by a gentle and quiet man, Brian McCombe who did his own work and gave classes to adults and children. Janet Adams worked with him, using the space for her own work and helping with classes. She later left and set up her own pottery and shop in the New Town. Paul Tebble was a teenager who came to classes and loved potting and working with Brian. Brian was his teacher and Paul was in most days after school and at weekends. He was often at meals and became part of the community although never officially a resident. He now has his own pottery near the Meadows. When Brian left to work in London Gordon Menzies took over the pottery. He ran it very competently and creatively for several years and then left to marry and set up his own pottery on Iona.

The weaving room was in the small room between the front door and the pottery [now the Wellspring Room]. It was run first by Nur Haughton and when she left to study conservation in London, I took over and later Helen Farvis. There were always one or two people working on the looms. We had two table looms and two larger uprights. A visit to the wool mills in the borders provided us with all the yarns we needed and a welcome day out.

The pottery and weaving room were hubs of energy and central to the centre's intention to foster creativity. It also provided a life practice for those on a spiritual path. I feel very sad that they are no longer part of the Centre's work.

The next year there were three more additions to the centre residents: Geoffrey Caplan, an Iyengar yoga practitioner who taught classes in the centre, Mary McKelvey, who

moved from a community in the North West of Scotland and Simon Boyes, an ecology graduate who took over the work in the garden.

The Salisbury Centre garden is divided in two by a big hedge. The Centre at that time only owned the half near the house. We had the use of the half beyond the hedge, previously, the tennis court, but now belonged to a member of the Synagogue community who had hoped to turn it into a car park for the synagogue. When planning permission was refused he very generously donated it to the Centre. Simon undertook to turn it into a vegetable garden. He was the ideal person for the job, working hard to make it productive and feed the centre residents and many visitors. One autumn we borrowed a trailer and filled it up with manure donated by a friend. We loaded it down so much it broke. What shame we felt when we returned it to the owner. However, the manure fertilised the arid ground well. The garden under Simon's directorship was a miracle of order, large beds with neat rows of brassicas, salad crops and root vegetables. In the autumn a friend who worked at the agricultural college, offered to let us have the potatoes they grew for research; so for several years we went out to Midlothian to dig up a field of potatoes. One potato from each plant went for research the rest we bagged, took home and stored in the cellar, providing the community with potatoes until the spring.

My memory of those years is idyllic and has probably been gilded with the passing of time. However, the summer of 1975, 1976 and 1977 were unusually good. The weather was warm and sunny. I remember meals outside and many events in the garden. Garden parties, events at the solstices, and open days. Sometimes we would all go off to a night club and dance all evening.

Various friends of the centre would hire the place for celebrations. Winnifred and friends ran a fund raising event for a therapy centre they were planning to set up. Every new year we held a Hogmanay party with food, wine and dancing, then before midnight we would go to the meditation room in the attic and bring the new year in, sitting in silence enveloped in blankets and the dark.

We had strong connections with the Findhorn community and an exchange programme was arranged. Findhorn residents were frequently visiting and would be round the table at mealtimes. The Centre residents would go up to Kinross to join in their programmes there.

We also had connections with Sempervivum, a loose knit organisation based in Edinburgh which ran workshops and events throughout the year offering growth groups and an Easter school. The Easter school was a conference, originally Jungian but was beginning to introduce all the different humanistic modalities which were emerging at that time. The participants could bring their children and a programme was provided for them. Many of the Sempervivum events were held at the Centre which offered a base for their activities and a place of overlap of the communities.

Residents' Meetings: Once a week we had meetings of the residents to discuss the running of the centre, tasks to be done and any issues that needed raising. These were not always easy, particularly when difficulties arose between residents. It was inevitable that everything would not run smoothly between people living and working so closely together. It could be painful and we were not skilled at that time in managing differences. When I look back it was surprising that we managed to get on fairly well most of the time. There was only one occasion when one member was asked to leave because he was not fulfilling his responsibilities and had withdrawn from the life of the community.

The trustees met with residents three times a year. There were few problems between trustees and residents while I was there. Sometimes a trustee had a negative report about a contact with the public and it was discussed. In general the trustees were supportive of the work and activities of the Centre. However there was one occasion when one of the Centre's patrons, an elderly bishop, had walked in to the library where a massage workshop was going on. All he could see was a room full of naked bodies lying down. He turned and fled. The next day he notified the trustees that he was withdrawing his patronage of the Centre. It took a lot of explaining to the trustees. The bishop never returned.

Father Noel, a Benedictine monk, was a much loved trustee who visited and came to meals frequently. He was the dean of one of the university residences nearby and was a benign and friendly presence to whom we could turn to for support. Winnifred was in the centre every week conducting a dream group for mothers while we ran a creche. She also lived nearby and could be consulted over difficult issues. Ludi Howe lived in the Borders where she ran her own centre. The residents made regular visit to that community and members of their community visited us. Anne MacAulay had been very involved in the setting up of the Centre but was moving back at this point and immersing herself on her work on stone circles, pythagorean and megalithic geometry. Johnny Cadzow was co-opted to the meetings in his role of accountant to the centre. He oversaw the accounts and gave generously of his time in supporting whichever resident was responsible for the finances. The trustees were a great source of support for the residents and of course, were ultimately responsible for the work of the Centre.

A major difficulty between trustees and residents blew up towards the end of my stay. I was invited to attend a meeting held in Winnifred's house with a group interested in setting up a therapy centre in Edinburgh. I was very interested in therapeutic work and wanted to support the project. However, during the meeting it became clear to me that the intention of the group was to take over number 2 Salisbury Road and turn it into this new psychotherapy clinic. I was aghast, as was an ex-resident also present who was interested in the project. We contacted the original founding group, former residents and many others involved. Together we let the trustees know how we felt about the possibility of the Centre becoming a psychotherapy clinic. The trustees eventually decided against the plan and the clinic group eventually set up the Wellspring Clinic, having used one of the Centre rooms for practitioners while they acquired a building.

It was at this time that I decided that it was time to move on and find my way outside the Centre. It was a tremendous wrench and definitely informed by the conflict with the trustees. I realised that I needed to establish the ethos of the centre in my own life but separately. The future for me was unknown but the time at the centre had given me a grounding in living a life according to my values and perspectives on the world. It was a wonderful time and I will always be grateful for the years, the learning and the friendships made then.

James Bennett – One of the founders

September 4th 2022

1) Which decade were you involved in the Salisbury Centre and in what capacity:

I was part of then initial group of people who collaborated together to found the Centre in 1972 and was in the first residents group from 1973 to 1974. Later I became a trustee until I left Edinburgh for the USA in 1982. Looking back, how I came to be involved in the process that led to the birthing of the Centre was a series of synchronistic events, as if I was being impelled by something beyond my conscious mind to place myself in circumstances that at the time I had no idea where the trail was leading or to what end.

I had left the University of Cambridge in 1971 with a degree in English Lit and without the faintest idea of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Having been an inmate of various total educational establishments (prep school and public school) since the age of 8, I was singularly unprepared for life in the real world. The only thread I can discern was an abiding interest in music, poetry and percussion and a fascination with altered states of consciousness, mystical experience and Jungian psychology. My one conscious part in the unfolding that involved people and places, was a willingness to let go, trust life and go with the flow, and follow my nose wherever it led, prompted by a surprise encounter with a book while spending time at my parent's house in Ireland during the summer of 1971 and wondering what on earth I was going to do next.

2) Memories:

I remember conversations between Daena, Jill and I that were basically free form brainstorming sessions regarding what a Centre would include if such a place were to become a reality. Meeting Winifred and her enthusiastic embrace of our ideas adding her own spins on our vision and allowed the vision to take shape. The support and encouragement of members of the Sufi group and sympathetic people in the Edinburgh community, some of whom added a necessary grounding experience of age and experience, and financial savvy, most of us were in our mid 20's at the time. The sense of disappointment and deflation when our original offer on the property fell through and then the utter joy and elation when it was put back on the market and our offer accepted. The night we moved in and the ever-renewed candle in the upper meditation room. Sitting in silent meditation. The energy in the building. Making bread and taking turns making meals for people to share. The rainbow panels up the front

stairs. Liberating the back part of the garden once we were able to obtain that as well, from the concrete blocks that had paved it. The regular meetings between residents and Trustees. Debates, disagreements and resolutions. The creation of the Trust deed. Mindfulness sessions with Tew Bunnag in the Studio and TaiChi too. Different speakers giving talks. The Pottery and the Weaving looms. Pat(Trish/Djemile) making candles and weaving. Dream groups with Winifred. And many more memories, mostly about the people.

Challenges:

There were definitely interpersonal stresses and tensions. Our come one, come all policy was at times challenging to deal with. We were not that adept at setting boundaries on ourselves or others because our policy was to welcome everyone no matter. This was on the hand wonderful, and on the other hand imbalanced and unsustainable. I believe we each got a day off a week which was important. At any time we might find ourselves dealing with some people who were undergoing spiritual emergencies or mental health crises and we were not equipped to deal with this. We supported each other as best we could and I think given the situation we handled things well and with compassion. I don't remember a formal check in process between the four of us initial residents as to how we were all doing. Keith did convene a meeting with the four of us because he sensed that tensions were rising and this cleared the air considerably. I remember the release of tears listening to Pachelbel Canon in D major.

Various changes in the sister organization that had been part of the inspiration for establishing the Salisbury Centre were extremely challenging to deal with for me personally as these involved outer splits between teachers and alliances that I didn't understand or necessarily welcome. Painful losses and realignments. The pivotal moment for me was when our sister centre in the south sent emissaries to guide us in the true path, guidance which included giving up working with dreams a part of our program and not eating garlic, something my quarter Italian heritage instinctively rebelled at! These directives were not it seems being announced by the new guiding teacher in the south, as when I asked directly, he told me that Jungian influenced dream work was a sound activity within our tradition. It seemed to me as if the group of people around the teacher at that time were misinterpreting intentions in arbitrary and authoritarian ways and looking back I would say that cult like elements were starting to emerge that made me uncomfortable. We in Edinburgh eventually declared our independence from that part of our wider network. It had always been our collective vision that the Salisbury Centre be open to all paths as was the original intent of the wider organization.

Part of the shadow aspect for me during this time was no doubt in my case a certain amount of what the late transpersonal psychologist John Welwood called "spiritual bypassing" to describe using spiritual ideas and practices as a way to avoid dealing with unresolved emotional issues and psychological wounds, our common humanity. I suspect I was not the only person engaged in this common pitfall of spiritual practice.

While the dream work with Winifred was a counterpoint to this, however I was not at that stage until a bit later in regular psychotherapy and there was a stream of thought around that said that spiritual practice in and of itself would heal these aspects of the human being and perhaps a part of me bought into this. My personal suffering led me back to seeing that spiritual practice and psychological work are two arms of the same process. This was after all always part of the original vision of the Centre we collectively held. In some ways this may have been a mercy, because I wasn't at that time ready to look deeper.

Final reflections:

My experience of being involved collaboratively with the founding of the Salisbury Centre remains one of the most significant in my life and changed my life forever. I am eternally grateful for the privilege of finding myself at that time with those people. Much learning took place during those years and this continues to unfold and resonate through the years. Through the people and spirit of place at that time, I stumbled into my lifetime chosen field of endeavor as a psychotherapist. I discovered what to do with my life while there and in the years in Edinburgh following. I noticed that I seemed to have a gift for listening to people and that they in turn seemed to be drawn to open up to me. Why not make a living doing this? It was also through meeting two people at the Centre in the early 1980's that I ended up feeling prompted to travel to the USA and the next chapter of my life, although I didn't know it at the time. The Centre as a place, an idea, as a grouping of like minded and varied people and as a source of energetic transformation is the foundational experience for all of this. I've been following the thread in the present moment ever since.

In love and gratitude.

Jill McKay

Maryland, USA

October, 2022

Thoughts on the Salisbury Centre at 50 Years.

I first wrote these thoughts in December 2012 after I had returned from the US to Edinburgh to meet with former Trustee Ludi How, and a small group of former and current residents. This was when the Salisbury Centre had reached an inflection point and a decision needed to be made about what to do next.

“Reculer pour mieux sauter.” Anyone who participated in a Winifred Dream Group will remember that phrase: We go back in order to better spring forward. We go back into our childhood so that we might live as an adult more fully in the present. We revisit our own, our parents' and our grandparents' traumas so that we might free ourselves, our children and our grandchildren from the fetters of the past and so that the future can be

renewed. When I heard from the current Trustees that the Centre had reached a turning point I knew that I needed to go back. I needed to pay my respects to the end of the initial impulse and help to clear the way for what is to come.

For many of us what drew us (and still draws us) to the Centre is the pain and suffering in our hearts, minds and bodies. We know that there is a better way and the Salisbury Centre is a lighthouse calling us to our true home, our true selves. When I returned in 2012 after a gap of 20+ years I was prepared for worse than I found. The physical building was showing signs of age and some neglect. The garden was overgrown, but still beautiful. Even so, at its heart the energy of Centre was alive and strong and still calling us home.

Circumstances were such that of the four original residents (James, Patricia (Djemela), Susan (Daena) and myself) only Daena and I were able to make the journey. We knew that we needed to keep an open heart and mind as we began the task of cleaning the building just as we had when we first acquired it. In 1972 we scrubbed every surface from top to bottom and threw out anything that was no longer needed, useful or helpful. We were clearing a space for the new to come in. We did not know what form the new would take, but what joy to perform the same act of trust and devotion in 2012!

I scrubbed and cleaned the Centre in 2012 because in 1972 I had learned from Peter Cady of Findhorn that “Work is Love in Action” and it (along with sitting meditation) was the best way I knew to show my love and respect for the physical and energetic being that is the Salisbury Centre. How wonderful that we were not alone in this work: many gave their time, love and energy to take care of the building and the garden. And countless more have continued ever since.

As people were working so hard, we needed to eat. And so our practice of sharing a midday meal together took form. Although it had been almost 40 years since I lived in the Centre, the daily meal seemed unchanged: the soup was the same, the conversations were the same, and mugs of tea were still being poured. The faces may be different, but the sense of community and commitment were unchanged.

We were also called to sit together in meditation every morning and evening just as we had in the first days. We remembered the original invocation and it felt right to begin in this way:

Toward the One

The perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty

The Only Being

United with all the Illuminated Souls

Who form the embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

Again, we were not alone. Many came to sit, and those meditations were rich and healing for us all.

For me, the Centre is a Being. It has an energy that transcends all of us. It is the energy of Love, Compassion, Truth and pure, clear Light. It shines through the prisms of our selves. This is one reason that the Invocation was important: it begins with a commitment to honor Love, Harmony and Beauty in all things. Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "At the centre of the Universe is a Heart beating with Love." That heart is present in the Centre and it manifests through every single person who comes here. It is a heart that offers comfort to the suffering, and it rejoices in our gladness. It grows deeper and stronger in the bonds of love and commitment that are forged in the Centre. Whether we find it easy or difficult to be together there is a flame burning in each of us that is the same, and it is the essence of the Salisbury Centre.

The lesson I took away from my time at the Salisbury Centre in 1972-5 and briefly in 2012 is that the Centre is here with open arms for each one of us. It is here to welcome, heal, nurture, and provide guidance. It is also here to challenge us – to shake us out of our fixed ideas and complacency. Above all, it is here for us to care for it and for each other with humility and reverence.

Winifred taught us: *"Take, Hold, and Give Again. This is the Law of Love."* It is a mantra for all of us whose lives have been touched by the Centre, no matter where life has taken us.

Winifred was open to new ideas and was not afraid to try new things if they would lead to greater healing and insight. The impulse that manifested the Centre in 1972 ended in 2012, and the Centre needed a time of rest and renewal. That time allowed the original impulse to manifest in a new way - the awareness that our spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing are not separate from our environment. I feel profoundly humbled when I see how the Centre currently embodies the insight that healing the Earth is intrinsic to our collective spiritual journey.

My deepest wish for the Centre is that it will continue to grow, evolve and be a refuge and a home for all who seek healing, love, wisdom and truth. In her book, 'Something is Happening' Winifred wrote:

"All religions postulate that caring is inherent in life, love of self, love of others, love that is ultimate reality. Many ages ago Moses taught the Jewish people that love, not fear, was the basis of existence when he said:

'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'"

How many lives have been transformed by walking through these doors? I truly believe that the Salisbury Centre is an embodiment of the energy of the everlasting arms.

Joyce Watson - school student

Hello Everyone,

It was a real pleasure to have a tour of the building and garden. What a very positive ambience the whole area has.

Edinburgh is fortunate in having somewhere so dedicated to the well-being of people. Whilst visiting, I mentioned I had been a pupil of Makerstoun Lodge School, which occupied the building until early 1960. Interest was shown in this, as the Centre will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in December. The following notes may help to give an impression of the place in late 1959 and early 1960.

I would start in the Autumn term, when I was 4 and left when I was 5, when the school closed. The kindergarten was where your library is. The teacher was a Miss Girdwood, a middle-aged lady who was quite strict. Her sister, also Miss Girdwood, taught the next class. Their room may have been where your kitchen is or further along the corridor. Our classroom had a piano and we would gather round it for prayers and hymns, at the start of our day. There was a blackboard and an abacus, near the window but behind our desks, which faced the wall where the fireplace is. At mid-morning break we were allowed into the garden, weather-permitting, including snow, which was fun. In the corridor, leading down into the garden, there were stacked pigeon-holes for our shoes.

We wore plimsoles inside the school and outdoor shoes in the garden. The garden seemed to extend as far as the hedge. I don't think the school had the garden area on the other side. The trees are the same ones we used to play around. I don't remember the well. It may have been the one that supplied the house when it was first built, before the introduction of a mains supply. During the school's occupation, it is possible the well was screened off to prevent pupils from falling in. Kindergarten pupils were only in school until lunchtime, so our experience of the building was quite limited. I don't remember any of the other teachers or the head mistress. At no time were we upstairs, although there would have been two classrooms above your library and the kitchen. More would have occupied other rooms. I can remember a staircase, which had a glass enclosure for staff on its first-floor landing. We could see it from the foot of the stair. Someone very kindly showed me a staircase further along, when I visited. It seems the building has been altered slightly and the original main staircase removed. It may not be too much a stretch of imagination to say that the etched and stained glass window, overlooking the garden, would have let light into it.

Not all pupils lived in Edinburgh. My mother would bring me on the bus from Gilmerton on the 3 or 8 Edinburgh Corporation buses. She came back for me at lunchtime. Sometimes if my father had business in Edinburgh, he would drop me off at the top of Salisbury Road and I would walk down.

This is about all I can remember. Attached are two photos, one to show what the uniform was like and other is of the badge, pinned to my beret.

Hoping this will be of some interest.

Kindest regards

Keith Farvis

December 2022

Lessons from the Salisbury Centre

This is a note of some of the learnings that have happened to me through my involvement with the Salisbury Centre

Beginnings – background:

In the opening years of the 1970s, I had been asked by the Sufi teacher, Reshad Field, to run, along with Sue “Daena” Turner, a Sufi meditation group based on the teachings of Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan and his father Hazrat Inayat Khan, who brought the Sufi teaching to the West in the early 20th century and established the Sufi Order.

We had weekly meditation meetings in the Catholic Chaplaincy Centre in George Square, we put on public lectures and other events. The group attracted many people who were interested in meditation and mystical teachings. There was easy exchange with many other groups who were on their own spiritual path, here I think of the Bahai group, Transcendental Meditation, Buddhist and Christian groups. The bulk of the members were in their early 20s but we attracted the attention of more established people like Robert Ogilvie Crombie, who was an important influence in the Findhorn Foundation, Anne Macaulay who had a strong interest in Sacred Geometry and the mystical aspect of the Guitar and the god Apollo and Ludi and Bill How who had a long-standing interest in spiritual and esoteric practices. These people were very supportive to us.

Three members of the Sufi group; Sue “Daena” Turner, Jill Evans and James Bennett had joined Winifred Rushforth’s dream groups and were interested in her psychoanalytic work. I had not immediately followed them in this direction but continued to focus on the work of the Sufi group.

As we know, their story led to the establishment of the Salisbury Centre along with Anne Macaulay, Ludi and Bill How in the founding trustee group. This was very exciting and the Sufi group was very active in the preparation of the centre for its opening. Once opened, the group moved their meetings to the Centre and had regular meditation, zhikr (devotional chanting), study groups and other meetings there. There was so much Sufi based activity there that some people regarded it as a Sufi Centre and at one point it was known as Beshara Edinburgh (after the Beshara Centre in the borders). However,

that is not how I saw it. I was very clear that the Salisbury Centre was the expression of a new impulse which emerged out of several influences, but clearly having an impetus of its own, it was not a continuation of the impulse that established the Sufi group.

Trusting inner “knowing”:

The purchase of the building at 2 Salisbury Road had a major setback. It was on the market in 1972 and a newly established Salisbury Trust put in a bid to purchase it but their bid failed, instead it was purchased by an Edinburgh philanthropist, [Meyer Oppenheim](#). I vividly remember walking past the building after that and feeling confused because I somehow I “knew” that this was the building the Centre was going to be in, so I could not understand how it could be owned by someone else. It was a curious very conscious experience of “knowing” one thing whilst the outer reality seemed to indicate something different. I was therefore not surprised when the building was put back on the market a few months later and this time purchased by the Salisbury Trust (once they had raised more finances).

The Centre proved to be a wonderful space for the Sufi group to meet in and many of the public talks there featured people associated with the Sufi group; Reshad Field, Pir Vilayat Khan, Anne Macaulay, Ludi How, alongside teachers from many other traditions.

Service – the satisfaction of giving one’s all:

My own connection with the Centre changed over time. In 1976, with Helen, my wife, we became residents for 2 years, which was a rich, challenging and a very rewarding experience. At that time, since the door of the Centre was open to all comers from 8 in the morning to 10 at night, most residents got burnt out after 18 months to 2 years. There was a sense of giving one’s all and receiving a deep learning in return. That was certainly my experience. There is also a sense that once one has fulfilled a role in the Centre, the Centre moves on to the next “present moment” and the role you had held is re-absorbed into the next group, in that was also a great personal learning.

Experience of sheer joy:

In 1991 I taught a 6 month introductory course in Polarity Therapy in the Salisbury Centre. One day whilst the class were doing practical work in the studio, I experienced a conscious moment of sheer joy, complete satisfaction, realising that I was teaching something I loved in the place that I loved.

Care for trustees after 39 years:

A few years after being a centre resident I became a Trustee for a couple of years. At that time, to be a trustee one was personally liable for any financial catastrophe that might occur to the Centre.

In 2010 I was to be involved with the Trustee body again and I was grateful to be able help the Centre organisation move from being a Charitable Trust to become an early Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) which, among other things,

brought with it limited liability protection for the Trustees. This changeover took place at midnight turning into 1st January 2012, the 39th anniversary of the Centre.

Personal responsibility:

During this time of being of assisting the trustees, who were few in number at the time, there was a short period when the other trustees were on holiday and I was the only person in that role and felt a huge responsibility for the Centre's wellbeing. I experienced what I had seen happen to several other people before. I felt personally and solely responsible for the care of the Centre. I experienced this as an enormous weight that felt more than one person can bear. This is a huge lesson in not taking personal responsibility for the Centre and in trusting in the wisdom that feels inherent in the Centre. This is most easily done by a group who can allow a variety of voices to be expressed.

The Salisbury Centre and Edinburgh:

The Salisbury Centre is a remarkable place and Edinburgh is very fortunate to have it located here.

It has a significant presence in the city. For example, in 2012, when there was a real possibility that the Centre might close, several people told me how sad they would be if that happened and that it would be sorely missed. It turned out that these people had not even been to the Centre, but they did have a sense of how significant the Centre was to the life of the city.

How the stories of history evolve:

Over the years I had watched with some amusement the story of the beginnings of the centre changing like "chinese whispers" to become a simpler, but much more romantic story. Facts and truth are important to me and so in 2016 I arranged for an "[authoritative version](#)" of the history to be published on the Centre website, based on the input of, and agreed by, the centre founders and the two original trustees who were still alive.

Gratitude and hope:

I have deep respect for the Salisbury Centre and what it stands for. I feel awe when I appreciate the role it has played in countless people's lives, helping them to reorient their lives, find a spiritual path, deepen their practice, develop greater self-knowledge or heal in other ways. This has been happening for 50 years and I sincerely hope that the presence of the Centre will continue long into the future.

Kim Wolfe Murray

2000 Meditation course leader – Alchemy of the heart

2015 – 2016 Trustee

2016 – 2019 Chair

Recollections of the Salisbury Centre

As a child growing up in the Scottish Borders I remember overhearing a close family friend talking about attending a dream therapy group. At the time I remember thinking what a strange idea this was but it stuck in the memory.

A few years later going to school in Edinburgh I became a “troubled” teenager. Although my life had hardly been plain sailing, seemingly out of the blue a black cloud of depression descended. A week later I found myself clawing my way out of this sudden manifestation of despair feeling glorious and ascendant. A week later I was back in the pits.

This pattern continued for what, at the time, seemed like forever. My academic path crumbled. I became alternately reclusive and extrovert. I found myself planning my life according to predictable cycles of lows and highs.

At this time, in the late seventies, there was far less awareness of mental health terminology but in retrospect it is obvious I was suffering from manic depression, or bipolar disorder. Eventually my mother, in desperation, took me to see a psychiatrist associated with The Royal Edinburgh Hospital. After hearing about my condition he peered over at me from behind his heavy wooden desk and said, “I think we may need to prescribe some medication”.

For whatever reason, I can’t really remember why, this never happened. My mother was a very instinctual person and perhaps she just couldn’t bring herself to allow that particular door to open. Instead it was suggested that I go and see the psychotherapist and founder of the Wellspring Trust, Dr Diana Bates, and daughter of Winifred Rushforth.

The sessions were quite abstract in the sense that there was a lot of questionnaires and the suggestion that I make a journal of my dreams to discuss at later appointments. In the end I only attended a handful of times but miraculously my mood swings began to decrease and I found that I was better able to cope when feeling depressed as well as managing to control the highs. Gradually my life began to align itself and after discovering Buddhist meditation ordained into the Thai Forest Tradition for 13 years.

When I returned to Edinburgh in 2000 the Salisbury Centre was a very different place than what it is today. I ran a meditation course there but wasn’t drawn to get more seriously involved at that time.

In 2014 I was married in the Salisbury Centre in a memorable interfaith ceremony under the blossom tree in April.

In 2015 I was asked by Cathie Wright to join as a Trustee. The Salisbury Centre was in a state of transition. The community had been disbanded and the centre had been on the brink of closing down. I was excited to be part of the rekindling of the core values of the centre and felt honoured to share this responsibility with three wise elders in the shape of Cathie, Helen Kennedy and Eileen Foulner.

During my 13 years as a monastic the community went through several phases of adaptation as we experimented with ways of making the tradition more accessible to the society at large and the training more appropriate to the Western psyche. I recognised that many of my experiences of community development and growth were relevant to the situation I found myself in as Trustee, and later Chair, of the SC. Although there were many twists and turns in the road I was grateful for the opportunity to be able to use this understanding within the context of a spiritually based centre in Edinburgh.

The Salisbury Centre of course has a completely different origin story with roots in Sufism, Jungian psychology and the healing power of creative action. However the principles of prayer and meditation, self development and the benefits of a heart centred community I perceive as universal. It was with this in mind that I threw myself into the task of re-establishing the central values of the SC during my time as a Trustee.

Since stepping down as chair I have moved back to my ancestral roots in the Borders but have been delighted to witness from afar the blossoming of the Salisbury Centre as a spiritual sanctuary, earth healer and gathering point for like minded individuals.

Maribeth Bunn Kaptchuk

2 October 2022

Cambridge, Massachusetts

In the autumn of 1975, I moved to Edinburgh from the United States to finish my undergraduate degree. I had dropped out of college when I was 19, looking for more than a “degree” and went to study at a wholly new educational program that recognized the late 20th century as a time of intellectual, spiritual, and planetary transformation. The Lindisfarne Association in New York introduced me to pioneers in ecology, the world’s esoteric religions, and emerging systems theory as it applied to the James Lovelock’s Gaia Hypothesis, Gregory Bateson’s ideas in epistemology, and new ideas of self-organizing systems in biology influenced by Buddhist teachings.

While profoundly enriched and stimulated with the Lindisfarne courses and conferences, I knew after a year that to best contribute to its vision and goals I would actually need to finish my B.A. degree. So at 21, I decided to study Classical Greek and Sanskrit at Edinburgh University, seeking to understand the complex ways that languages create culture and influence our psychological, political and

spiritual perceptions.

While at Lindisfarne, I had been introduced to Peter and Eileen Caddy, co-founders of Findhorn in Scotland as well as David Spangler who influenced the growth and educational goals of that organization. One of them suggested that I visit the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh as a spiritual refuge during my studies.

A spiritual refuge, it was indeed! In that first academic year I was not only trying to get my footing in a very new cultural environment, I had taken on two totally foreign languages in an academic milieu that couldn't be more unlike an American college. I would often come by mid-day to Salisbury Road, ring the bell and hightail it up to the top floor for the solace of the meditation room. Little by little I came for programs at the Centre and met Ruhani, his wife Helen, James Bennett and others. I felt very at home in the sanctuary of the Salisbury Centre.

The following autumn, 1976, I returned for another year of study at Edinburgh, but this time I was invited to rent a room at the Centre as a part-time member while I continued my studies. But that academic year was a disaster. I was the only student for Sanskrit II. Dr Michael Coulson hung himself in the very office the same day where we met for the first time that term. My father had been a suicide. I was emotionally overwhelmed by the news as it intersected with my own karma. By mid-winter, I dropped out from the academic year and made the Salisbury Centre my better karmic reason for being in Scotland.

What a wonderful community family we had that year: Jenny from Australia, Colette from Coventry, Helen Kennedy (then known as Jackie) from Edinburgh, Rakim, Michael Cox and potter and painter Gordon Menzies from Glasgow. We were blessed to participate in a Dream Group facilitated by the inimitable Dr. Winifred Rushforth, then well into her 90's but as bright of mind and spirit as any of her young acolytes.

That year a bunch of us from the Centre saw in Hogmanay on the Isle of Skye. Breathtaking views and hikes, gathering mussels on the beach, probably a little too much Scotch but a truly wonderful retreat from the city and the daily activities of visitors and programs on Salisbury Street.

It was resident Michael Cox, older than the rest of us and much a man of the world, who maintained laughter and silliness aplenty to help balance *my* spiritual sincerity. Michael happened to have been a personal friend with Pir Vilayat Khan, with whom he had travelled to India on, I think, several occasions. I had been introduced to Sufism by Ira Shems Friedlander at Lindisfarne in the U.S. and through him to the teachings of Pir Vilayat Khan and his father the great Hazrat Inayat Khan. When Pir Vilayat Khan visited Edinburgh he stayed at the Centre and Michael asked if I wished to be initiated. I was honored to meet with Pir Vilayat in a private setting and accepted initiation from him right there in Michael's room at the Salisbury Centre.

I returned to New York in 1977 and continued working with the Lindisfarne Association. By that time we had established a teaching base in Manhattan, running programs, concerts, lectures in an urban communal living environment, much in spirit like the Salisbury Centre but with all the intensity of New York City. I returned to Edinburgh in 1978, *determined* to complete that degree at the university. And this time I was blessed to live with Helen Kennedy in her new flat on Montague Street, only a short walking distance from the Centre. Helen was still quite active at the Centre that year while I popped in and out. There was a new crop of residents and new programs.

I finally did it. I took my degree in 1979, returned to the U.S., headed to Berkeley expecting to do a graduate program in South Asian Studies there but broke out in hives as I met with department members to see where I stood on the wait list for a study fellowship. The message was loud and clear. My work was not to be found in an academic environment. I continued to work with Lindisfarne until 1986 when I received my Master's Degree in Acupuncture. The wisdom of contemplative traditions and practices that I learned at Lindisfarne and the Salisbury Centre underpins and strengthens everything that I do with a patient in the clinic.

Now 36 years as practitioner of East Asian medicine, I know it is not just the technologies or formulae of the medicine that enhance well-being. It is also our aspirations and listening to that still small voice that transforms everything.

Simon Boyes

The Salisbury Centre 1977: a Brilliant Preparation for Life!

One of the best years of my life was 1977, when I was 25 years old. I spent the year as one of the 8 Salisbury Centre residents. I was the gardener, and also organised the Thursday evening programme of talks, and weekend events and workshops. I learnt so much from wiser souls than I was, joining Winifred Rushforth's dream analysis group, and participating in yoga and daily meditations. But for me, the most lasting legacy came from the impromptu groups that came together each evening around the dinner table. In addition to us residents, every day would bring in a few folk from outside, either regular visitors or first-timers. Many of them would book in on the phone or nervously knock on the door. Some were seeking space in the meditation room or library. Others came for yoga or pottery or candle-making, and stayed to eat with us. Others were struggling and needed reassurance and a safe space to be. We would sit together, share food and conversation, and at some level make a connection with each other.

This connecting with others - many previously unknown to me - became the focus of my working life. I was lucky enough to spend 40 years in a dream job that took me to all parts of the world. In the year I left the Salisbury Centre, I became a wildlife tour leader, specialising in bird-watching. (I had learnt my British birds as a teenager). Typically I

would meet my group (maybe 5, or 10, or 15 enthusiasts) at Heathrow. During the week or two or three that we were together, I aimed to make a team out of the disparate folk for whom I was responsible. I gently tried to teach them field skills, finding and identifying the wildlife that they hoped to see. I made sure that all of them felt included and always paid special attention to the ones who travelled on their own, especially if they were shy and introverted. Many booked up for repeat trips. Meal times were so important for my team-building endeavours - I never forgot those Salisbury Centre evenings. Without knowing it at the time, they were the perfect preparation. The main reason I was able to keep at this work so long was that the people were always an even higher priority than the wildlife! During those years travel was much easier and wildlife more abundant. There was no guilt about flying - the idea of carbon-offsetting only started to creep in as I neared retirement.

Thank you so much, Salisbury Centre, for all the gifts you gave me.