

Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming, as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of the Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month we would like to introduce Rich Allum:

I've been a lover of tea for as long as I can remember, just not tea as I've come to know it in these last six months. As a child, long before the Leaf existed outside of a Yorkshire teabag, I would always enjoy the cups of tea my Mum would lovingly make for me. She would also always offer any and all of our guests tea as soon as they had made themselves comfortable, and looking back it's now clear to me that Tea is, and always has been, a symbol of heartfelt generosity. All over the world, an Englishman drinking tea is a stereotype and one that we're all proud of. Making tea for others is definitely a part of our culture, although I suspect most of us simply do it for no other reason than to be polite; the connection goes no deeper. Tea, whether we're aware of it or not, represents a spontaneous moment of togetherness—a *Time*. And Tea Time for me is sacred, more so now than ever.

During my early twenties I spent several years working in a chain of coffee shops where serving hot beverages became my livelihood. I fell in love with the atmosphere—the shop always felt alive with energy (no doubt caffeine-fuelled), and it was here that I developed a sense of love and enjoyment for being of service to others. It's no wonder that, almost a decade later, long after leaving that line of work, I still dream of owning my own teashop. For now, I run the stockroom in a family-run locksmith supplies firm, where thankfully there's still some time for tea. A few years ago, when the business was much smaller, I would have the chance to make dozens of cups each and every day for myself and the other employees, enjoying the five minutes of solitude whilst waiting for the kettle to boil, along with the smiles of gratitude as I would hand them out. Sadly, I'm a little too busy these days, so I have to settle for serving them all just once a day in the afternoon. It may not be a bowl of aged sheng puerh, but to a certain extent that doesn't matter; my intention remains the same regardless of the tea or the teaware and that sense of enjoyment and fulfillment is still ever-present. (Truth be told, I do relish the opportunity to share my newfound love of different teas with others whenever possible!)

It was in October 2014 when Prabhasvara visited the Nottingham Buddhist Centre to perform a tea ceremony and talk about his life of Tea that my partner Becky and I found an amazing connection



to both Tea and to each other. And that has changed our lives immeasurably. As I sit here now in Shen Su's room at the Tea Sage Hut in Taiwan, sipping a bowl of this month's tea, it's impossible for me to imagine a life without Her. I drink five bowls in silence each and every morning before meditation and I have never felt such a profound sense of peace and interconnectedness. I know so many others have said the same, but if you haven't yet begun this practice I sincerely urge you to start today, right now if you can! As Wu De often says, drink just three bowls of tea in silence at the start of your day for a whole week and see what a difference it can make to your life. I can say hand on heart that it's changed mine.

I have six more amazing days left at the Tea Sage Hut and another six days thereafter to explore more of Taiwan and its tea culture before returning home to Nottingham, England. If any of you ever find yourself nearby, please drop me an email and let's meet for a bowl or two. You can reach me at:

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