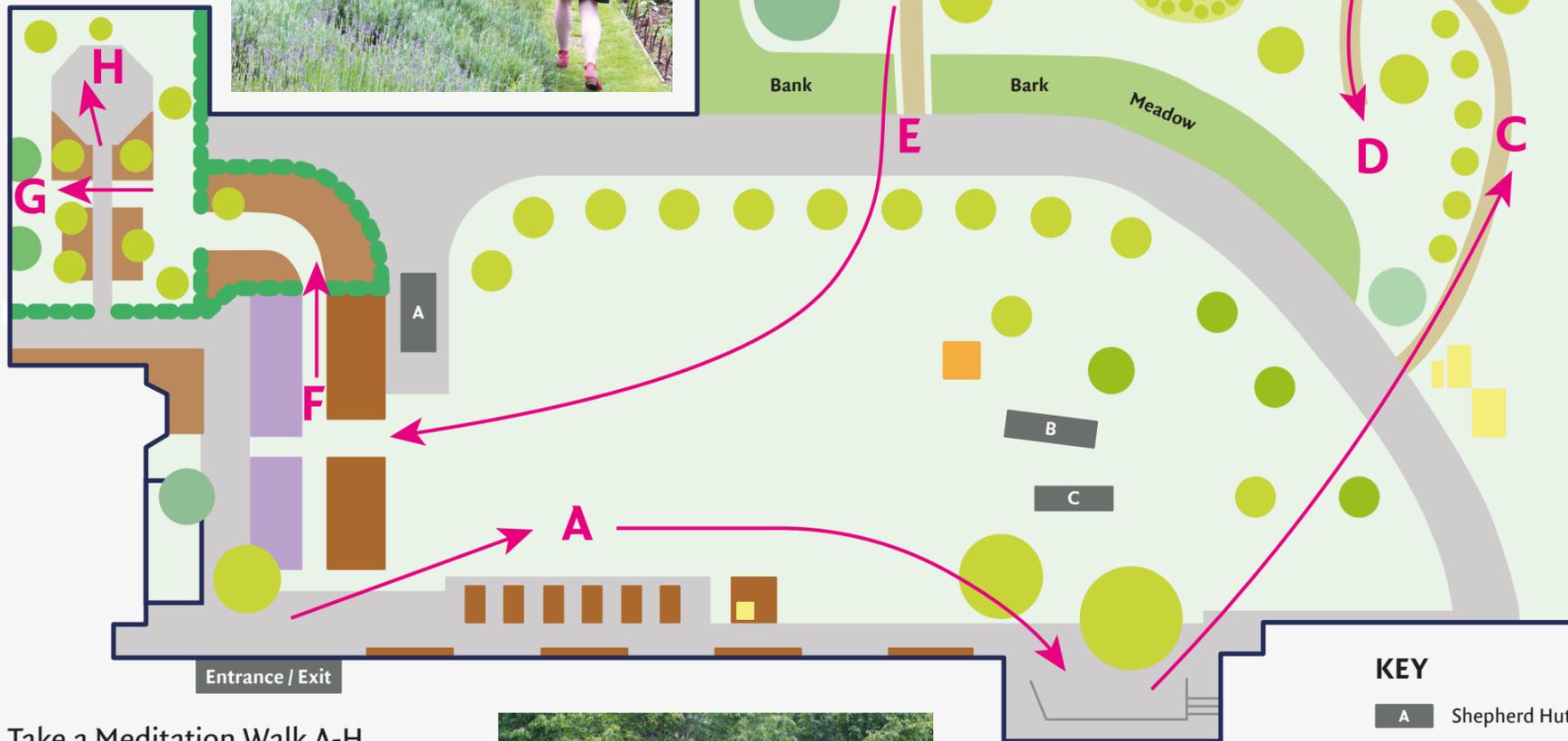


TAKE A MEDITATION WALK



- KEY**
- A Shepherd Hut
 - B Tractor
 - C Chicken Hut
 - Gazebo
 - Tree
 - Path / Gravel
 - Woodland
 - Hedge
 - Lavendar
 - Plant beds
 - Veg beds

Take a Meditation Walk A-H around the gardens. Walk slowly and feel the ground under your feet, the changes in surface from grass, to gravel, to mulch, to inclined slopes. Experience the changes in sound and air moving through open spaces to sheltered. Smell the changing fragrances of soil and plants.



Finish in the Herb Garden G/H, close your eyes and do simple breathing: 4 counts in, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4, like a wheel rotating, smoothly without pause.



MUSEUM PEACE

A Free Guide To Mindfulness at The MERL for all



Created by Saranjit Birdi

MUSEUM PEACE



Whenever I enter a museum, a library, a place of worship, I am struck by the silence and sense of reverence. In the peace of this silence, objects, images and ideas seem to have an aura one cannot quite grasp. I become aware that everything here is a part of everyone's story.

At The MERL, two particular objects fascinated me – the wheel and the plough. They have served us as simple and powerful tools. However, they can also serve as metaphors towards 'mindfulness'.

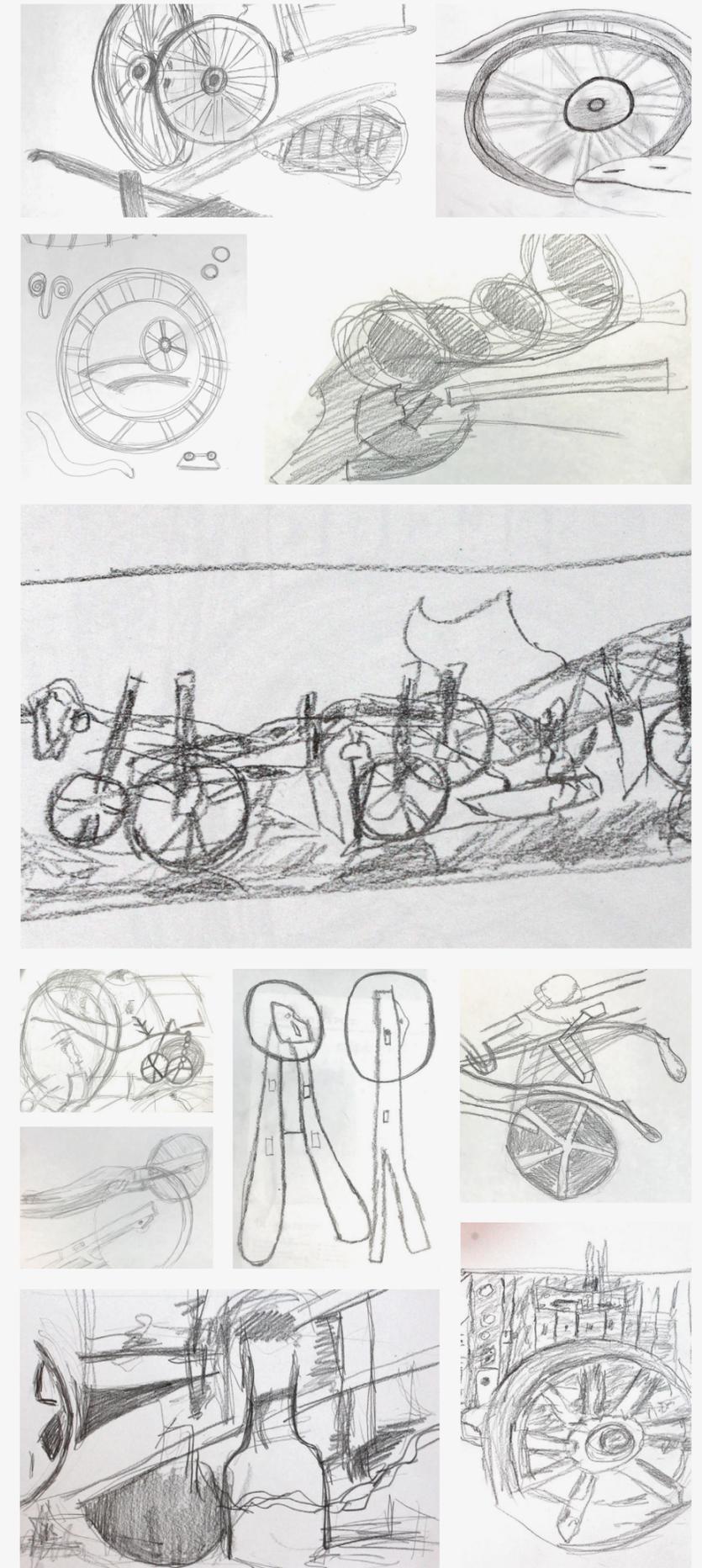


The modern concept of Mindfulness has its origins in ancient systems of meditation and mind-body exercise derived from Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist practice. Mindfulness simply means quietening the clatter in the mind by focusing attention on one thing. That thing can be an object, an image, an idea, a phrase...or simply your breathing.

I have been practicing mind-body exercise since the age of fourteen and it has helped me deal with trauma of bullying at school, focus in times of stress at work, and creatively as an artist. It has been shown scientifically that mindfulness practice can actually affect the structure of the brain and keep it healthier through the ageing process. I have been teaching mind-body exercise for several decades now and encourage everyone to try it.

So, I invite you to start mindfulness through three simple activities at The MERL – drawing, walking and breathing.

1. Drawing the Wheel and Plough – walk around the museum and draw the wheels and ploughs in the collection. Enjoy the act of making marks on the paper rather than trying to attain a perfect drawing. Enjoy the tranquillity of the space. There are some wonderful examples on this page created by participants in my mindfulness workshop at The MERL from Alana House and the Compass Recovery College.
2. A Meditation Walk – on the other side of this page you will find a walking route through the garden. Go slowly and feel the ground under your feet.
3. At the end of the walk do the simple breathing exercise for two to five minutes in the peace of the Herb Garden. Close your eyes and as you breathe, think of the continuous cycle of the wheel. Visualise the plough, breaking up mind blocks that have held you back, re-invigorating the 'soil' and making it fertile.



With thanks to the clients of Alana House, students of Compass Recovery College and to Phillippa Heath and Mathew Binks (photography)



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