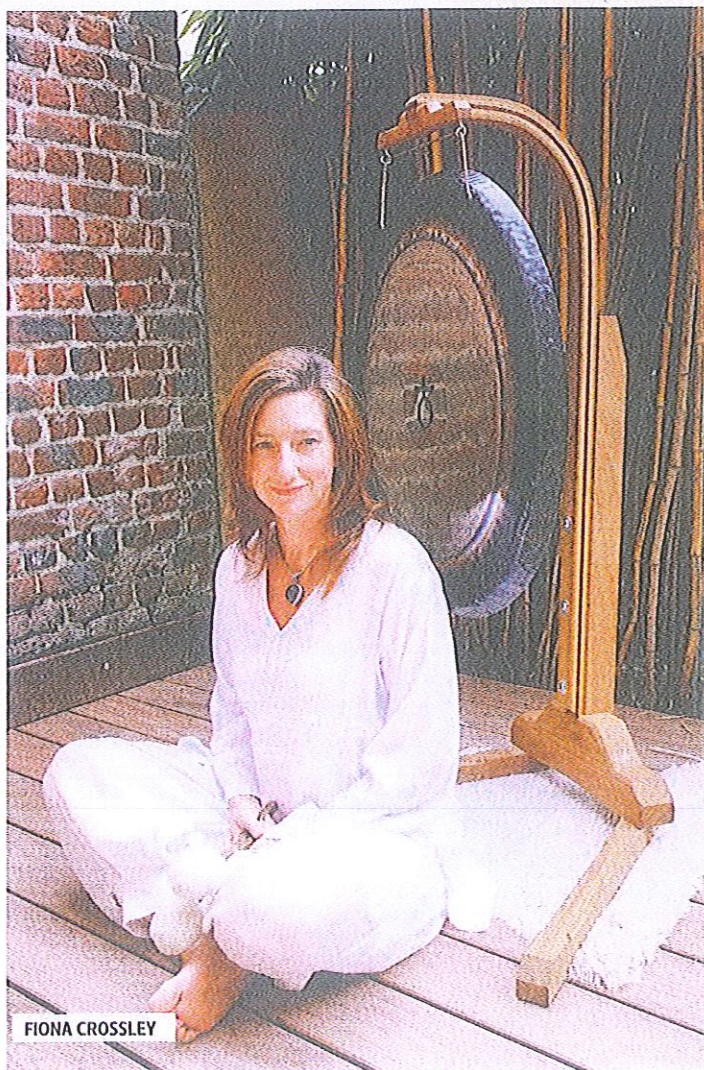


audience. "I love teaching yoga because I strongly believe in it," he says. "It has huge benefits that can seem subtle at first, and I enjoy bringing this knowledge to people."

• Sarah Crew

*For more places to practise yoga, see the Free time section at the back of the magazine*



FIONA CROSSLEY

## Bath time

The sound of two giant gongs reverberates around the room. It's an all-encompassing sound that fills the space and enters your mind and body, and I understand now why the session about to begin is called a gong bath. This is my first experience of both the resonance and kundalini yoga, a chant and meditation form, which focuses on breath and sound.

It's the start of a two-hour Friday evening session near Montgomery; a plunge into deep relaxation that's a perfect end to the working week. There are newbies like me as well as habitués in the class, all welcomed by teacher Fiona Crossley, a Canadian with British parents who grew up in Northern Ireland. For the first hour of the session we perform gentle yoga stretches including sun salutations, plus a more strenuous abdominal workout, interspersed by kundalini breathing and some chants.

Then, thoroughly warmed up, we lie on our mats under a blanket or two to counteract falling body temperatures, wearing eye masks, ready for our gong bath. Our instructions include snoring etiquette, so we know we're in for a relaxing time. Crossley places a cushion under my knees to ensure back comfort before she takes her place behind the gongs in the centre of the room. She beats out a series of rhythms as we slip into varying states of unconsciousness. Sometime later, an alteration in the sound gently brings me around. Still drifting, I'm enjoying the primeval vibrations and incapable of judging how long we were out for. Reluctantly, we ease ourselves up from the floor. There's a perceptible change in the atmosphere as everyone prepares to return home, a little groggily. I'm feeling lighter, finely tuned to both my relaxed limbs and calmer mind; the calmness, I'm happy to report, continued all weekend.

Gong bathing is a very individual experience, says Crossley, who teaches at Aspria gym as well as her own group classes. "A gong creates a magical journey for the body, mind and soul," she says. "Both rejuvenating and cleansing, the gong will allow your body to naturally tune in and create a resonance with the sound. Energetically, emotionally, spiritually, and physically, it will penetrate every cell and fibre of your body."

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