

The Resurgence Story

First published in May 1966, [Resurgence](#) is the longest-running environmental magazine in Britain, closely followed by the [Ecologist](#), which was founded in 1970. The titles merged in 2012.

As the late David Nicholson-Lord, former Environment editor of the *Independent on Sunday* wrote: “That Resurgence has survived so long, without millionaire backing and without turning itself into a consumer lifestyle accessory, with the advertising to match, tells a compelling story – not only of conviction, commitment and endurance but of need, role and relevance.”

Resurgence was founded in 1966 by John Papworth, a well-known peace campaigner with connections to the Committee of 100 and the Peace Pledge Union, but rapidly broadened its critique to encompass the nuclear nightmare generated by the Cold War, pollution, intensive farming and food production and the related political problems of centralisation, bigness and the growing separation of economics from ethics.

Its presiding spirits in those early days included E F Schumacher, the “renegade economist” who wrote *Small is Beautiful*, and Leopold Kohr, the less famous but much-admired author of the decentralist classic *The Breakdown of Nations*. Both wrote frequently for *Resurgence*, as did the self-sufficiency guru John Seymour, but despite these and many other (voluntary) contributions, the magazine faced constant financial problems and in the early 1970s almost went bankrupt. In 1973, John Papworth left to take up a post with the Government of Zambia and a number of “guest editors” brought out different issues of the magazine, until Satish Kumar became editor in 1973. Remaining with *Resurgence* for the 43 years since, Satish is now editor-in-chief of the magazine.

Satish is a far cry from a conventional magazine editor. The former religious novice from Rajasthan became a Jain novice at the age of nine, remained with the monkhood until he was 18, then ran away in search of relevance, became a campaigner for land reform and in the early 1960s, was fired with enthusiasm by the example of Bertrand Russell and became a champion for the cause of peace. At the age of 26, he was one of two peace campaigners who walked 8,000 miles from Delhi to Washington by way of Moscow, Paris and London in support of nuclear disarmament.

During Satish’s youth in India, he became imbued with the ideals of Gandhi and influential Indian peace worker, Vinoba Bhave. His editorship has marked a fusion of complementary critiques of Western developed society with the traditions of Indian spiritual teachings. From Schumacher, Papworth et al came an intellectual radicalism, with its roots in what Schumacher called “Buddhist Economics”. From Gandhi, Bhave, Jainism, Rajasthan – and Satish – came not only a profound collective experience of non-violence, but a sense of timeless traditions, of the interconnectedness of life, rooted in the inherent practical value of work, creativity and community.

From its original base in London, Satish and his partner June Mitchell - who was actively involved in the production and editing of *Resurgence* in earlier years - moved the magazine to Wales, where they founded a small land based community inspired by the ideals of ecological farming and practical self-sufficiency. Believing that to create a sustainable future, people needed to return to the land, Satish was eager for *Resurgence* to set an example. *Resurgence* later moved to Devon, where the magazine is now edited from Satish’s home in Hartland by a small team. Greg Neale, a former environment correspondent for the *Sunday Telegraph*, founding editor of *BBC History Magazine* and BBC TV historian, became the new editor of *Resurgence & Ecologist* in July 2014, with Satish assuming the role of editor-in-chief.

Since its early years, *Resurgence* has been at the forefront of environmental change. One of its landmark contributions was championing James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis, a theory that the earth is a living system, from which the principles of deep ecology evolved. From the late 60s, *Resurgence* was also a forerunning campaigner for renewable energy, advocating wind power and solar energy, years before they were taken seriously as a sustainable

alternative to conventional power sources. The magazine has also supported permaculture, agroforestry, organic food, cooperative living, conflict resolution, the Occupy movement and the actions of many more radical individuals and organisations.

Underpinning the efforts of *Resurgence* has been a series of connections, innovations and initiatives, from organisations that have either 'spun off' from *Resurgence*, or been initiated by Satish Kumar, to NGOs with which it has formed a campaigning alliance. The former include The Small School, Hartland, a successful example of human-scale education, and Schumacher College, the 'green university' founded in 1990 in the grounds of the Dartington Estate in south Devon and offering year-round residential courses in subjects ranging from green business to eco-philosophy.

Another 'companion' organisation was the Schumacher Society, which ran the highly popular annual Schumacher lectures in Bristol (1978-2013), a well-known fixture in the environmental calendar. Nearby at Dartington and part of the informal *Resurgence* network, is Green Books. *Resurgence* also has links with a wide range of NGOs including the New Economics Foundation, Oxfam and Friends of the Earth. The network kept spreading – with Schumacher lectures in Manchester (1996-2005), and the establishment of the Bija Vidyapeeth (School of the Seed) in north India's Doon Valley in 2001 - an international college for sustainable living, co-founded with Vandana Shiva, based on the Schumacher College model.

An alliance of especial note is, of course, *Resurgence's* merger with the *Ecologist*, since June 2012. *Resurgence* and *Ecologist* have always shared the same values. The *Ecologist* has spearheaded social, scientific and political ecology while *Resurgence* has pioneered cultural, artistic and spiritual ecology. Now united as one strong voice for the green movement, the new *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine continues to set the environmental agenda and pioneer a resilient, sustainable future. *Resurgence* and *the Ecologist* maintain independent websites (www.resurgence.org; www.ecologist.org), while the hallmark cutting-edge analysis of the *Ecologist* continues within the pages of *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine, published in print and online.

A vital element in the *Resurgence & Ecologist* extended family, however, is its readership. There are an estimated 30,000 readers, which, unlike with most magazines, form part of a genuine, albeit dispersed, community – developed not only from shared, and often profound, allegiances, but also from attending regular *Resurgence* events.

With the founding of The [Resurgence Trust](#) in 2006, members, readers, contributors, writers and editors have had the opportunity to get together at workshops, festivals and weekend retreats, including the annual Festival of Wellbeing in London, and the Summer Camp hosted by Green and Away in rural Worcestershire, an event designed to inspire readers to put the ideas of the magazine into action. In a relaxed and informal setting, talking eating and listening to music, the *Resurgence & Ecologist* family becomes flesh and blood and people discover they are not a solitary voice in a hostile world – bonds are forged, solidarities established and new friendships made. Those who take part often describe this event, as an inspiration. It is also good fun.

Becoming a [member](#) of the Resurgence Trust, the educational charity which publishes *Resurgence & Ecologist* (under the chairmanship of James Sainsbury OBE) offers annual subscription to the magazine, along with access to the digital archives and updates, and is the ideal way to actively engage with this growing community of informed and compassionate global citizens and play a part in co-creating a more sustainable, just and happy world.

That then, is the story of *Resurgence* – in its 50th year, a magazine whose time has come: what began as a fringe publication voicing the ideas of alternative thinkers, has become a mainstream voice for global civil society and the environmental movement which continues to pioneer ideas and resources for a greener, more resilient way of living on our planet.

At a time when people are waking up to the reality that economic wealth and consumerism are not enough, *Resurgence & Ecologist* demonstrates how sustainable happiness evolves from community and wellbeing, and shares its message for a brighter future: “We must learn to live close to nature.”

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