Ajahn Sumedho had been in England for a few years when a letter arrived from Thailand. Even though Luang Por Chah could read and write, he rarely did. In fact, he hardly wrote anything, and he never wrote letters. The message began with a note from a fellow Western monk. It said: “Well, Ajahn Sumedho, you are not going to believe this, but Luang Por decided he wanted to write you a letter, so he asked me to take his dictation.” The message from Ajahn Chah was very brief, and this is what it said:

“It still gives me goose bumps.

A few weeks later, Ajahn Chah had a stroke and became unable to speak, walk, or move. His verbal teaching career was over. This letter contained his final instructions. Ajahn Chah was well aware of all the tasks and difficulties involved in establishing a monastery, having done this many times himself. One would think that when he offered advice, it would be along the lines of “Do this, don’t do that, and always remember to ...” But no, none of that; this was not Ajahn Chah’s way. He simply said, “The Buddha-Dhamma is not to be found in moving forwards, nor in moving backwards, nor in standing still.”

~ Recounted by Ajahn Amaro ~
This past May marked 30 years since Ajahn Sumedho and Luang Por Chah arrived from Thailand to set up shop in the “Hampstead Vihara” on Haverstock Hill in London. Most of us know the story. Invited by the chairman of the English Sangha Trust to investigate the possibility of establishing a Sangha presence in Britain, Ajahn Chah left four bhikkhus behind: Ajahn Sumedho, Venerable Khemadhammo, Ven. Anando and Ven. Viradhammo – none of them much more than ten years in the robes. As was usual with Luang Por Chah, there was no certainty as to what to expect.

Despite a history of strife at the Trust, the new arrivals signalled a promising new era; and though the first years duly proved difficult, those growing pains turned into the blessings of Chithurst Buddhist Monastery and all that has since blossomed forth. The “Forest Sangha” community which this newsletter represents, with its roots in Ajahn Chah’s monasteries in Thailand and now spread across Europe and the globe, is a direct result of those tenuous first days on Haverstock Hill, full of uncertainty and promise. In honour of the occasion, on the following pages a few who were there around that time offer us glimpses of their experience.

A glimpse of experience is also what we get in From conflict to cure, which is – I assure you – just a snippet of the story of Sister Bodhipala’s long journey into robes. We hope you find such sharing useful. Sometimes the story of another person’s life has a way of touching our own, and the images of a life’s lessons can stick deeper in the heart’s memory when described in a personal tale.

The power of forgiveness. The power of meditation. The Dhamma in its various aspects, from cultivating compassion and serving others to renouncing the world of the senses – Sr. Bodhipala’s story has many lessons to teach a person who wishes to hear them.

Be sure to check the Grapevine, too, where you’ll find a bit more news from some of the monasteries in this issue, as that section continues steadily to expand.

May you all be happy and free,

Bhikkhu Jayanto

Notice:

North American Mailing List

If you receive the Forest Sangha Newsletter through the post in North America, this issue may be your last.

For many years now, the good folks at Abhayagiri Monastery have been printing, posting, and paying for the FSN to be distributed to those on our North American mailing list. At the time of going to press we are still considering the options, but it appears likely that this arrangement will make way to an encouragement for subscribers to download and print the FSN from our website: www.fsnewsletter.amaravati.org

If you live in N. America, please stay tuned, and join us in offering a great bundle of thanks to everyone involved in helping over the years to distribute the Forest Sangha Newsletter.

Email conventions online:
The online edition of the FSN uses a convention to protect email addresses from spam by rendering them in the following way: 
name@organization.com is written name at organization dot com.
You will need to alter ‘at’ and ’dot’ back to the original format.

Contributors

Ajahn Sumedho is abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery
Ajahn Amaro is co-abbot of Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery
Ajahn Vajiro is a senior monk at Amaravati
Ajahn Sundara is a senior nun at Amaravati
Sister Bodhipala is a senior nun at Amaravati
George Sharp was longtime chairman of the English Sangha Trust

Photographs

All photographs : Copyright is reserved. For more information, please contact the editor.
Cover : Ajahn Chah at the monks’ cells behind the Hampstead Vihara
Contact – FSN Editor, Amaravati ; email: editor at amaravati dot org
Glossary – see page 18
It’s 30 years since you came to England with Luang Por Chah. Why did you leave Thailand?

In 1975 the Americans left Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – French Indochina – became communist, and there was a ‘domino theory’ that everybody seemed to think would happen: that once those countries started falling the whole of South East Asia would go. There was a widespread fear that Thailand would be next. We had established Wat Pa Nanachat for westerners. I was the head monk and we had about 20 Western monks there at the time, and I remember thinking, “What’s going to happen to us if Thailand goes Communist?” So that was the catalyst that started me thinking about the possibilities of establishing a Buddhist monastery elsewhere. I’d never entertained such an idea, never wanted to leave – but because of this notion that Thailand would fall to the communists, this thought came into my mind.

Shortly after that I was invited home because my mother was very ill and they thought she might die, and it seemed to coincide with having that thought. So when I went back to see my mother and father I thought, well, if people are interested maybe we could set something up. I spent time with my parents in Southern California, and after my mother seemed to get better I went on with Ven. Varapanyo (Paul Breiter) to New York, and stayed with his parents. I went to Buddhist groups in Massachusetts, where Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein had just opened the Insight Meditation Society. It was clear that was not to be a monastic place. So nothing much happened in the States in respect to people being interested to start a monastery.

To get back to Thailand I had to go via London, and that’s where I met George Sharp. He was the chairman of the English Sangha Trust (EST) and he seemed very interested in me. I stayed at the Hampstead Vihara, which was closed; he opened it up for me. During the three days I was there he came every evening to talk to me. Then he asked if I would consider living in England, and I said, “Well, I can’t really answer that question, you’ll have to ask my teacher, Luang Por Chah, in Thailand.” And this he did; he came a few months later. Luang Por Chah and I were invited to England, and we arrived on May 6th, 1977.

And your idea was that, in case Thailand fell to the communists it would be a way of preserving this monastic tradition? Yes. And the thing that impressed me was that the English Sangha Trust had already been established 20 years before, in 1956, and though it had tried all kinds of things, it was essentially a trust set up to support Buddhist monks in England – so it was for the Sangha. There was a movement to try to make it more a trust for supporting lay teachers. But George Sharp had this very strong sense that the original purpose of the EST was to encourage Buddhist monks to come and live in England. Several years before, he’d met Tan Ajahn Maha Boowa and Ajahn Paññavaddho when they came to visit London. He consulted with them about how to bring good monks to start a proper Sangha presence in England, and Ajahn Maha Boowa recommended they just wait, don’t do anything, and see what happens. So George had closed the Hampstead Vihara until the right opportunity arose. He wasn’t prepared to put just anybody in there. I think he
saw me as a potential incumbent. Ajahn Chah was very successful in training westerners, and in inspiring Western men to become monks. Wat Pa Nanachat was really quite a work of genius at the time. There’s been nothing like it. That was Luang Por Chah’s idea.

**What did he think about the idea of moving out of Thailand?**
When I went back to Thailand I told him about it, and of course, he never signified one way or the other in situations like that. He seemed interested, but didn’t feel a great need to do anything with it. That’s why it was important for George Sharp to visit, so that Luang Por Chah could meet him. George was very open to any suggestions that Ajahn Chah had. He had no agenda of his own but he was interested in supporting Theravadan monks living under the Vinaya system in England. He’d seen so many failures in England over the previous 20 years; all good intentions to establish something but things just seemed to fall apart. They’d send some Englishmen to Thailand for a couple of years to get an ordination and when they came back they’d be thrown straight into a teaching situation or something they weren’t prepared for. They had no monastic experience except maybe a short time in a Bangkok temple. So what impressed George was that by that time I’d had quite a few years of training within the monastic system of Thailand and in the Thai forest tradition, so I wasn’t just a neophyte. Although, not in terms of the way we look at things now: when I came to England I had only ten vassas. I don’t think any ten vassa monk now would consider doing such an operation!
Ajahn Khemadammo came a couple of weeks before, and then Ajahn Chah and I came together, arriving on May 6th. Later, Ajanhs Anando and Viradhammo dropped in, because they had gone to visit their families in North America. During that time I suggested they stay, and Ajahn Chah agreed, so they stayed on with me and there were four of us.

Did Ajahn Chah make a decision at some point, that yes, OK, it would work? Well, when George Sharp came to see him in Thailand Ajahn Chah put him through a kind of test. He was looking at George, trying to figure out what sort of person he was. George had to eat the leftovers at the end of the line, out of old enamel bowls with chips in them and sitting on the cement floor near the dogs. George was a rather sophisticated Londoner, but Ajahn Chah put him in that position and he seemed to accept it. I didn’t hear him complain at all. Later on we had meetings and George made a formal invitation and Luang Por Chah accepted, agreeing that he and I would visit London the next May.

I was curious because Luang Por Chah was so highly regarded in Thailand, that I wondered how he would respond to being in a non-Buddhist country. There’s no question of right procedure in Thailand in terms of monastic protocol, but you can’t expect that in other countries. What impressed me during the time in England was how Luang Por responded to the situation. Nothing seemed to bother him. He was interested, he was curious. He watched people, to see how they did things. He wanted to know why they did it like this or that. He wasn’t threatened by anything. He seemed to just flow with the scene and be able to adapt skilfully to a culture and climate he’d never experienced before in his life; living in a country where he couldn’t understand what anyone was saying.

He could relate well to English people, even though he couldn’t speak a word of English; his natural warmth was enough. He was a very charismatic person in his own right whether he was in Thailand or in England, and he seemed to have pretty much the same effect on people, whoever they were.

Every morning we went out on almsround to Hampstead Heath. People would come, Thai people – and Tan Nam and his wife, that’s where we met them. They’ve been supporting us all these years. Generally, our reception was excellent. George Sharp’s idea was to develop a forest monastery. He felt that the Hampstead Vihara was a place that could not develop. It was associated with a lot of past failures and disappointment, so his idea was to sell it off in order to find some place in the countryside that would be suitable for a forest monastery. Luang Por Chah said to stay at the Hampstead Vihara first, to see what would happen. And it was good enough in the beginning. But the aim was always to move out of there, to sell it off and find a forest.
Did you feel confident that it would work? What were your feelings at that time after Luang Por Chah left? I didn’t know what was going to happen, and I wasn’t aware of the kinds of problems I was moving into, with the state of the English Sangha Trust. I was quite naïve really. But I appreciated George Sharp’s efforts and intentions, and the legal setup seemed so good: a trust fund that had been established for supporting the Sangha. George seemed to have a vision of this, rather than seeing us as meditation teachers, or just using us to spread Buddhism in Europe. I never got that impression from him; in fact he made it very clear that if I just came and practised meditation they’d support that without even any expectation of teaching. So right from the beginning it was made clear that I wasn’t going to be pushed around, or propelled by people to fulfil their demands and expectations. It seemed like quite a good place to start outside of Thailand. But when Luang Por Chah left – he was only there for a month – he made me promise not to come back for five years. He said, “You can’t come back to Thailand for five years.”

So he believed in the project at that point? He seemed to. He was quite supportive in every way. So I said I would do that, and I planned to stay.

Ajahn Vajiro

“Forest bhikkhus in London”, that’s what I heard. I was excited by the news. I bicycled from south of the river, up Haverstock Hill to number 131. A terraced house opposite the Haverstock Arms. The shrine room on the second floor was as big as could be made from one floor of the house. When Ajahn Chah was there the room was over-full, cramped and stuffy. The talks were long, and riveting. Tea was served in the basement afterwards.

I was particularly struck by the way the bhikkhus related to each other, and especially how they related to Ajahn Chah. There was a quality of care and attention which I found beautiful. I can remember thinking, “I’ll NEVER bow”, and within a few weeks of watching and listening, asking Ajahn Sumedho to teach me how to bow.

When I went to live at the Hampstead Vihara in early 1978, the place was physically cramped, crowded and chaotic. It was not unusual for six men to be sleeping in the shared anagarika and laymen’s room on the top floor. There were two WC’s in the main building, one shower, a tiny kitchen and the small basement room next to the kitchen served as the dana sala. What kept us there enduring the physical conditions was the quality of the Dhamma. The pujas were early in the morning and included a reflection nearly every day. And with the evening pujas, talks again were almost daily.

The main reflection was on uncertainty. There was a confidence that things would change and a trust that if the cultivation of paramis was sincere, the change would be blessed.
Actually born in Vietnam to a Vietnamese mother and Cambodian–French father in the borderless interior of French “Indochina”, twelve-year-old Renée made the heartwrenching decision to ask to leave her mother in Vietnam to join her paternal relatives for a new life in Cambodia.

“Can I go to Cambodia?”

Why did you ask to move? I failed the entrance exam for high school. At that time my aunt and her husband from Cambodia visited our family for the first time since I was born, and I asked to go back with her. I wanted a new start. I wanted higher education. I wanted to have hair curls – with them I would have the chance of a new life.

My family was poor compared to our relatives in Cambodia. My father was self-employed: he’d had a bicycle shop, then became a taxi driver. His parents had died when he was a child and he’d been sent to relatives in Vietnam, where he met my mother. My father was the bread winner, and my mother was in charge of making sure we were healthy, adequately fed, well-behaved and well educated. Every day he asked Mom: “How much do you need today?” She would say, for example, “I need fifteen dollars”, and that day he would run the taxi to earn only that amount, no more, no less. If he wanted something extra for himself, maybe he did one more trip.

My father’s Cambodian–French sister Emily had no children, and had asked my parents for permission to adopt my older sister when she was little. But somehow Aunt Emily didn’t come until my sister was 17; when she went to Cambodia she was soon married. So I was the one. Having just failed my exam, despairing, with no way out except leaving Vietnam, it was a perfect opportunity for me to ask to leave, as well as for my aunt to adopt me. I asked my mother if I could go. She was so hesitant. She had a really hard time making that decision. Finally her own mother helped her: “Let her go, so the two can help each other.” And Mom agreed to let me go. She was my hero: she was very strong to let me go for a bright future.

The night before I left, I slept next to her. We both cried. The next morning my father drove us to the bus...
station. I said goodbye, and watched him from the 
window until he disappeared. I felt so sad.

In Cambodia I had to go back to 1st grade, but 
within three years I'd passed the entrance exam for jun-
ior high school with honours. My adopted father was a 
captain in the army, and we moved quite often. Because 
of that, and since I was a bright student, my grand-
mother's sister suggested I continue school in Phnom 
Penh, and live with her daughter, my Aunt Sounareth. 
I felt that Cambodians were my group, and I was so 
happy. It took me about two years to speak the lan-
guage, which is entirely different from Vietnamese.

In Phnom Penh I was introduced to the aristocratic 
life, since Aunt Sounareth’s family was connected 
through marriage to the royal family. I kept my lifestyle 
simple; I wasn’t interested in joining the high class so-
cial scene. Deep in my heart, I felt only education could 
change me into a worthy and wealthy woman. I stud-
ied hard, and graduated with honours.

Was your family Buddhist? What was your relationship 
to religion? In Cambodia everyone assumed they were 
Buddhist because Cambodia is a Buddhist country – 
about 98% before 1975. Although my father’s side of 
the family were French and therefore Christian, I went 
to the Buddhist temples more than I went to church. 
Christians, Buddhists and Muslims lived in harmony.

Your husband played an important role in your life. How 
did you meet? We met in Battambang, during summer 
vacation. He was preparing for his baccalaureate and I 
was preparing for my entrance exam to the junior high 
school. There were so many exams that students had to 
pass! Only the cream of the crop remained, the others 
had to leave school at an early age if they couldn’t 
make it. He taught me mathematics. I was 14 years old 
and he was 21, an excellent student with a sweet voice. 
His father was a well-known monk. From that summer 
on, Sothi was my sweetheart.

He passed, and got a scholarship to study in Japan; I 
passed and finished junior high. He left me with love 
and an encouragement to continue school. We ex-
changed many letters during that time.

We married soon after he returned – seven years 
since we’d met. He worked as an engineer and taught 
at the vocational school before receiving a scholarship 
to work on his PhD in the United States. I followed a 
year later, in 1963, after the birth of our first son. We 
were in Athens, Ohio. While he was at school I took 
care of the boy and when I was at school he took care. 
We returned home in 1969 with two sons, another child 
on the way, and two degrees: a Doctorate in Education 
and a Bachelor’s in Mathematics.

In 1970 there was a coup d’état and Cambodia was 
declared a Republic. My husband was appointed rov-
ing ambassador to the African Continent, and later be-
came minister of education. I worked as director of ex-
ternal relations at the Ministry of Culture. My life was 
fully occupied, in social work and in politics – it was 
not as simple as I’d wished. With Sothi, my role was 
being not only his wife, but also his friend and mother. 
As his friend, I accompanied him to political meetings 
and he often invited my feedback. In the evenings, be-
fore I came home I read the newspapers and made a 
report for him, made dinner for friends, and enter-
tained visiting diplomats.

"Honey, you must leave."

Then things became very difficult in Cambodia. Yes – 
rockets fell in all the time as the Khmer Rouge got 
closer to taking the country. By then Sothi was deputy 
prime minister, in charge of three ministries. I took the 
opportunity that provided to help underprivileged 
children, women, and refugees who came to the city. 
Phnom Penh was overcrowded during that period.

When the Khmer Rouge were taking over, a letter of 
invitation from the US ambassador was distributed to 
members of the Cabinet, to evacuate with him in two 
days. But we were not included: the ambassador knew 
my husband would probably choose to stay if he was 
given much time to think about it. So we received an 
invitation by telephone only two hours before the 
evacuation. In a hurry, Sothi prepared our travel docu-
ments and I prepared the suitcases and children. On the 
way to the US Embassy, he asked us to drop him off at

Sister Bodhipala (front left), age 8, with maternal relatives in Vietnam.
the Prime Minister’s house first, and send the driver back to pick him up.

I was surprised when I got to the US embassy, to see so many people there trying to get in – it was chaos. We waited in the Embassy for a while, then boarded a huge helicopter. My driver came back with a small note saying: “Honey, you must leave. I will stay. When Cambodia is at peace we will see each other again.”

**You never saw him again, you just had that note?** I had that note: “Honey, you must leave.” He chose to stay, and I could not bear to discourage him. Let it be. He could not leave. I am proud of him. I left on the 12th of April, 1975.

There were hundreds of people in the submarine where they took us, and there I met the Minister of Education and the President. We were taken to Thailand, and those of us in politics went to the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok to wait for something to happen and see the news. I tried to call my husband from there. Many people urged me: “Why don’t you convince your husband there’s no way he can stay?”

I stayed in Thailand a couple of months. Then they took us to Camp Pendleton, in California. I had left Cambodia in April and by August I decided to stay in the US, for the children’s schooling. My second son was born when we were in Ohio so he was already a citizen. That would enable us to get out of the camp. I called a close friend from that time to find me my son’s birth certificate and as soon as I got that we got out. Some friends from the Summer Institute of Linguistics who my husband had helped to establish an English school in Cambodia came to know I was out, so they hurried there and asked, “What do you need?” I wanted to go back to school. They said, “OK, we will help you do that.” I went to Baltimore to stay with a close friend’s family. Then the Summer Institute friends and another from the US embassy each gave me offers. I had to choose which one – both of them came at the same time. One was, “I have a scholarship for you in North Dakota”, and one, “I have a job for you in Washington DC to teach the children of ambassadors. Only five or six to a class, so you can have your own children in there too.” I chose education. I went to North Dakota for the scholarship.

**A big change from Cambodia.** Oh, a big change. When people hear that they say “How in the world did you go there? Too cold!” But my suffering – it was too deep. I needed to have something challenging. Go back to school and try to find the hardest subject! I worked so hard because I did not want to have any space in my mind. If I had space I would go crazy with the suffering of losing him. “He’s gone. He’s gone.” I tried to let go. But when I worked at an easy job, I could not handle it. I had to ask for a hard one – to keep thinking all the time. I tried to substitute the suffering by working hard to fill the gap.

I came to realize it cannot be done that way. That’s where the meditation came in. You have to see the suffering: the meditation allows it to emerge and you can solve it right there. But at first I was afraid to try meditation. I thought, “If I get into meditation and don’t have a good teacher and I get disoriented, who is going to take care of my children?” So I had to be very careful. I just kept following the Buddhist philosophy of doing good things for other people, trusting that good will return to oneself. I could speak a few languages so I volunteered to help other refugees.

**I saw him eating carrots**

After earning an MA in Applied Mathematics from the University of North Dakota while raising her children on welfare, Renée/Bodhipala worked as a computer programmer, eventually becoming a senior economic forecaster for a pool of power companies. She divided her spare time between her children and helping the various refugee communities in North Dakota and Minneapolis, where she later moved after requesting a transfer to a place where she could help more people. When Cambodian refugees started pouring into camps in Thailand after Vietnam invaded and overthrew the Khmer Rouge, she spent her vacations going to help. She was introduced to the idea of doing meditation while on the way to Thailand in 1983, through a chance meeting at Seoul Air-

**With her children, Ravin, Sothira and Noren, in North Dakota, on completion of her Masters’ degree in 1977.**
port with Ven. Maha Ghosananda, an accomplished senior Cambodian monk also on his way to help at the camps.

I saw him sitting down eating carrots. He had them in his bag. I approached him: “Bhante, are you Cambodian?” After some conversation I asked him, “Bhante, how do you drop thought? Because whenever I have some issue I need to deal with, I think so much I cannot sleep.” He said, “Meditation!” So since then I’ve had meditation in mind. Then he went to the camps, I went to the camps, and we happened to be in the same hotel at Aranyaprathet. So we went in together.

The first Cambodians to come over the border had big stomachs and yellow hair from starvation. We walked together. He cried and I cried and we thought, how can we help? From that time on we worked together almost every year. Sometimes I went to the camp and some years I went to the United Nations in New York, to work with the Cambodian president in exile. I was involved so much in politics then; I even considered putting the children in boarding school so I could join the freedom fighters in the camps.

At that time I was suffering so much from the loss of my husband, from not knowing if he’s alive or dead, and because I could not stop hating the Khmer Rouge. I had in my mind that I needed to help, and I always did something for the Cambodians in the camps. But I could not do more, because my emotional obstruction was the Khmer Rouge. When I wanted to do something it was as if they were in front of me so I could not go further. I could see the children of the Khmer Rouge in the Khmer Rouge refugee camp. They were so pure, so clean – not murderers. Not my enemy. Their parents were my enemy. I could not forgive them. It’s poison. You cannot think any more.

Because of the suffering I had, some friends in Minnesota who worked for an organization called Moral Rearmament, which was created after the Second World War to reconcile European countries, invited me to attend a gathering. They had many films, and one of them was Love for Tomorrow, the story of Irène Laure, a well-known French Socialist who was part of the Resistance during the Second World War, and her son was tortured by the Germans. Moral Rearmament had invited her to their place in Caux, Switzerland to talk with German women. She refused: “How can I make friends with them? They are the ones who hurt my family.” Then, after some reflection she changed her mind. She got the chance to meet those people, and she was able to forgive them. Later on the wound was healed, so she started to build a bridge between France and Germany for the younger generation.

I saw that film. Then it struck me: “She can forgive the Germans. I think I can forgive the Khmer Rouge.” It was the first perception of forgiveness. But it came and it went. A friend there saw me. He said, “Would you like to meet that lady?” I said, “Oh, I’d like to meet her.” So they made it possible for me to go to Caux. They paid for extra vacation time for me and gave me a ticket. I went there for 2 weeks.

Quiet is the key

Irène Laure was there. She was 84 years old. One day at 3 o’clock in the afternoon they took me to have tea with her in the living room. After some time I said, “Madame Irène Laure, what is the key for you to be able to forgive the Germans?” She said, “The key for me is having Quiet Time.” I asked myself: “What is Quiet Time?” I had a cup of tea with her, and then we finished.

Afterwards I asked David Channer, who became my good friend at Moral Rearmament, “David, what is Quiet Time?” And he said, “Are you Buddhist?” “Yes.” “That’s meditation.”

That night I asked my friend who took me there to teach me what Quiet Time was. I knew they were Christian so I’d brought some Buddhist chanting texts, and she told me, “Take a passage from there and memorize or retain the thought from that. Then stay quiet, and when a thought about the issue comes, you write it down.” The difference between that and our meditation is they have a topic to work on. We do not, we just clear the mind by observing its activity.

I did that for a couple of days; I learned to do Quiet Time, learned to listen to an inner voice. Then I took part in a workshop called From Conflict to Cure, and the forgiveness came in. I saw the forgiveness there and forgave the Khmer Rouge.

They asked if I would make a small presentation to everybody, about forgiveness. I accepted. The night
before, I poured over and over it again: “Khmer Rouge, I forgive you.” I wrote it down – I couldn’t sleep the whole night because it bothered me so much. I just wrote, “Khmer Rouge, I forgive you for what you have done.” Then I’d crumple and throw it away, many times. Until the end of the night came and I wrote, “Time’s run out.” And I hurt, my heart hurt so much. And then, from doing that, I saw that the Khmer Rouge – they were not hurting; I’m the one who cannot sleep, I’m the one with a prisoner inside me. If I can let that out I can do many things, and I needed to help my country.

That day I had to speak to the audience. My mind accepted, “I have to forgive them. There’s no other solution.” And up from my heart it came: “Khmer Rouge, I’m going to forgive you for what you have done. And in turn, I ask you to forgive me too for my hatred of you.” Both ways.

My turn to speak came. I was up in front of many people but my voice was not shaking, my heart beat normally. I said: “I am here in front of you, my friends. I would like you all to know today that I am freeing the prisoner from my heart. I will forgive the Khmer Rouge for what they have done to my country. And I will ask them to forgive me too for my hatred of you.”

Wow! Very powerful. People cried. I did not cry. Then … it was so quiet. You could hear a pin drop. I asked the MC, “Please allow me one more minute to express my feeling right now.” I said, “I thank you so much for taking away my burden.” I felt so warm and so light I could fly.

“If you ask me, I would kill them.”

When I came home my son challenged me. He was about 20. “What did you do at Caux, Mom?” “Well, Mom decided to forgive the Khmer Rouge.” Wah!! He jumped! He said, “What in the world – I’m sorry to say this Mom: are you crazy? Are you going to tell those people – the fathers, the mothers of children they killed in front of their eyes, tossing them up to catch with the bayonet? And you tell them to forgive? No way.”

I was calm. “Son, what is your solution? Mom tried to solve it that way. You don’t need to solve it but what is your solution?” “If you ask me, I would kill them.” “You’d kill who?” “Them.” “Who?” “Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge leader.” “But he’s not alone.” “Next to him, next to him, next to him …” So many “next, next …” And I said, “Right now you are a good person. You haven’t done anything yet. Only in your thoughts: how many people have you killed just now?” He started counting, then he said, “I don’t know what you’re doing, Mom.” But he changed. A few years later he came back from the Peace Corps where he served in Central Africa for three years, and he adored his Mom. He said, “Mom, you are right. You are right.”

Through that, when you can forgive people for the big things, then any conflict you have with others drops by itself. Even my children, I asked them to forgive me. We used that like a message for the whole family. It helped so much. And with old friends – I had felt I could cut people off sometimes. Even the president of the freedom fighters and others in politics I had fallen out with. I asked them all for forgiveness.

I will be your ambassador

In 1987, I was selected by Moral Rearmament to go to Sri Lanka to do reconciliation work with the Sinhalese and Tamils. Until then I had known my Buddhist roots, but not been so connected to them. This was the moment my faith came back to me. We went to Kandy and they took us inside the Temple of the Tooth. I made a vow in front of Lord Buddha. “Lord Buddha, your daughter’s here. Please let her know that you are here.” And the minute I said that I got goose bumps. And piti (rapture) started. I cried. “Lord Buddha, come now and I will be your ambassador. Please empty from me everything that stands for bad things, bad thoughts, ill will – anything – please take it out and substitute it with the Dhamma.”

When I arrived back, a meditation teacher was right there in Minneapolis. A friend called and said, “We have a very good meditation teacher here. Would you like to see him?” His name was Venerable Hem Hom; he was very popular in Cambodia. I did a retreat. It was so powerful. It took me five days to see the phenomena happening in me. I recognized right away that the only way I could really help Cambodian people is through meditation – it’s so powerful that you can use it to lighten the suffering. Through that I knew it does not depend at all on the outside – it’s you who can do it by yourself, you don’t need anything. Simple as that.
What kind of meditation did he teach? I did not know until I came here that the method he taught was the Mahasi technique. Between the time I met him and when I joined the UN in 1991, I made a big transition: to completely forgive the Khmer Rouge. That freed me from the load I had been carrying – I felt my energy come up like it removed a heavy block. It took me two years from the point I declared to the whole assembly in Caux, to be completely healed. I created a project called the Cambodian Children’s Education Fund, with the intention to take that forgiveness message to all the camps, to help the Khmer Rouge refugees as well as the other factions. I wanted to bring reconciliation to Cambodia and to reconcile the teachers first, so the teachers can teach the children. I got funding from the US and some other governments. The idea was to prepare the ground for the people before they went back to Cambodia when Vietnam pulled out. While they were in the camps they could all be brought to one place. I reconciled the Khmer Rouge and the non-Khmer Rouge together. My wound was healed when I was with them.

Before I went in the first time, nobody could go to the Khmer Rouge camp. I had a connection with a Senator in Minnesota, Senator Boschwitz, and through US support we went there with the permission of the Thai Government. We were even allowed to take the refugees we worked with out of the camps, to meet each other in our workshops – with my life as collateral: if they run away, I go to prison.

Together we will rebuild

I went from camp to camp. We rented cars to transport them out. I was scared. I had to ride with the Khmer Rouge, when the other members of my group rode with the non-Khmer Rouge. I didn’t think they would dare to do anything; at least I had a friend in the driver. The workshop was in a government hotel in Bangkok.

How did it go? Could they trust each other? The workshop went well. There were about seventy people, including four Cambodian factions. At our first meeting there were about forty teachers sitting in a horseshoe. The leader of the Khmer Rouge group opened by saying, “Today is the first time for ten years anybody has come to help our people in regards to education. So we welcome you, Cambodian Children Education Fund, for bringing this kind of help, which is what we need most. I would like you to help us design a curriculum for our children. The Cambodian children have to be prepared to fight until the end, to have our country free from foreigners. Especially our neighbour.”

He continued like that, and I cut him off. I raised my hand. I said, “Brother, I’m sorry to cut you right there, but I cannot continue to listen. Those children are very clean. We are teaching you so you can teach the children. Don’t give our pain to them. It’s too much. And I would like you to hear my message. You have done so much bad to our country as Khmer Rouge. I hated you, I really hated you, and I know now that hatred is wrong. How do I know? It harmed my body. My intelligence was bogged down. The hatred was so strong I wanted to cut you into pieces. It threw me for 10 years. I realize that. Now I ask you to forgive me for my hatred of you. To let me clean myself.”

After I asked them that, I said, “And in turn – I also forgive you for what you have done. To my family: my husband, whom I loved so much, is gone. And to my relatives. And for making the whole country upside-down, inside-out. I forgive you. The past is past. From now on we start together. Pure.”

We stopped there. When I was speaking I had eye contact with each one of them. Some of them cried, and some of them were just cold. And afterwards some ladies came and hugged me. They said, “I hope the Cambodians from now on can forgive us, like you, so we can live together.” I said, “Yes. You do your part. I will do my part. Together we will rebuild Cambodia.”

Through that, then we could move on and ask them what they needed to help with education. And they all said they needed leadership, that that’s why the country was in a mess. So we built a leadership programme for them. Every year we went to the camp to help set it up, because I didn’t believe you could write a curriculum in the United States and try to implement that in Cambodia. You have to do it at the place.
With open ears and eyes

When the 1991 ‘Paris Agreement’ laid the framework for Vietnamese withdrawal and Cambodia to become a multi-party democracy under a constitutional monarch, Renée Bodhipala was invited to join the UN mission, UNTAC, charged with overseeing the transition. She resigned from her job in Minnesota and worked as an elections officer, translator, computer technician and administrator – as well as a radio broadcaster, hoping that if her husband was still alive he might hear her voice.

Did you ever hear anything about your husband? No. It was so hard to look because he was so famous. You don’t know where your questions will land, with an enemy or a friend. I didn’t dare give his name to the Red Cross, who searched for missing people. But deep in my heart I was searching for him, with open ears and eyes.

During the preparation for the elections I volunteered to be a translator for operations all over the country, hoping I might get news of him. I went with the UN staff and worked with the KGB, CIA, most of the intelligence groups, translating the interviews of the Khmer Rouge people. Sometimes it was accounts of terrible murders. At the end of the day they debriefed us: we were not to think any more about that. “You will be in danger if you remember that.”

We would also make surprise inspections of the polling stations looking for fraud. It was dangerous; sometimes they killed the political workers two or three hours before we arrived, or just burned the evidence. We would come in by air, water and land, with no warning. I did many things for the country. I set up a computer system to manage the military and government payrolls in order to prevent corruption. It was so rewarding, that I could do something to help my country during that time.

Now, being a nun, this is the best period of my life. I never thought I would become a nun when the country fell apart. Even when my teacher, Hem Hom, was sick in 1994 and he asked me in the hospital, “I want you to be ordained. What percentage prevents you from doing that?” I told him I still had responsibilities, that maybe the obstacle was at 15%. My mind already was 85% wanting to become a nun.

I remained in Cambodia after UNTAC left, to work without salary in various areas. I joined my friend, Nat Nary, a senior nun at a monastery in Battambang where the abbot was an excellent meditation teacher, and implemented a project called Mental Health Counselling from there, because I knew the substance of meditation. At that time Cambodia did not have any mental health hospitals; they were destroyed during the war. The idea was to integrate psychological care with meditation in a place where a good teacher was there to help. Many people with mental problems came to the monastery to get help from the abbot and Nat Nary. A system of handling the patients was created, and about twelve monks and nuns were trained as counsellors to help the Abbot take more patients.

In 1996, I was invited by Ven. Maha Ghosananda on a pilgrimage to India. Two or three weeks before our departure I thought, “Now, I’m going to see the Lord Buddha. What is the best thing that I can offer him?” I decided to offer my hair: to become a nun, to submit the whole thing to the Lord Buddha. So when I came to Amaravati I was already in white.
That was in ‘97, after there had been a coup d’état in Cambodia. I was so disappointed. I got an invitation from the United States to have a meeting with the Moral Rearmament group. On the way back to Cambodia I stopped at Caux, and David Channer invited me to visit Amaravati. After two months, there was a thought to invite Luang Por Sumedho to Cambodia. Luang Por accepted the invitation without any doubt but I had doubts about security; I was scared they might arrest me at the airport because I was so involved in politics. I listened to the Voice of America news for information, but after some time my fear was replaced by a feeling of Dhamma protection from Luang Por’s presence. So I dared to go to Cambodia on my own, ahead of the others, to prepare the ground for his visit.

What was it like coming to live at Amaravati? I felt so comfortable here. Right away I met Ajahn Thaniya and said I wanted to be in brown robes. But you cannot do it like that. Yes, it was sometimes difficult. I was used to a different culture, different social status; suddenly I was in the kitchen and cleaning the bathrooms and everything. But my faith was so strong that I could do anything. And any problems living with different people could be easily forgotten, because my suffering from losing the loved one had been so deep that anything else was just on the surface, and I could bear it. If you see in front of your eyes that he’s dead you can move on, but when you don’t know, how do you handle that? It’s a tough one. But now – it’s all gone. Living with others here, the more you practise the more you become sensitive, and if I see somebody does not have a good mood towards me, I ask, “Did I hurt your feelings?” I correct it right there, as soon as it happens: “I didn’t mean that.”

I had to adjust, also. I was assigned at first to do the flower arrangements. It was very hard to do what the nuns wanted me to do according to the time given, only in the morning work period. – I used more time because I was not used to it. They told me you’re not supposed to do that, the afternoon is your time to meditate. It bothered my meditation. When I sat, the flowers kept coming into my head. What colour flowers and leaves ... where will I put them ... and so on. Finally, I used “flower” as my mantra. Rather than Buddha, just flower, flower, flower – and it worked! My mind became quiet. So I used that when I had anything to do: I kept changing my mantra according to the business of the mind. The mind hooks onto something, and to stop it I just put that thing in as a mantra and the mind has no time for distraction.

Did you use the mantra with your attention on the body or breath at the same time, or just the word? I had been trained to use a word in connection with the in and out breath, and also notice anything happening through the six sense doors. I kept creating my own mantra, dealing with the problems that happen in the mind, until there were no more thoughts. Then after a couple of months of practising here, the sound of silence became my meditation object. So beautiful. At first it was hard to understand, but then I saw it goes very deep.

And you’ve been using the sound of silence ever since? Since then I’ve known it’s a very powerful tool. I use it unless I get distracted; when problems happen, I switch back to using a mantra.

I taught my mother to use the sound of silence, too. Before she died, a couple of problems between us were resolved. The first was that I had stopped communication with my mother and the rest of the family in Vietnam for a long time. They lived with the suffering of not knowing where I was, alive or dead. The second was to let my mother assume that she was not a good mother by giving me away when I was so young.

Before I made contact with my mother and father in Vietnam in 1993, I had not tried to, because I hated the communists and I was also afraid that writing to them from America would bring them danger. But my mother thought I did not contact her because I hated her for giving me away as a child. She did not know she was my hero. I told her, “Mom, you did not give me away...
I’m the one who asked you. You should not feel bad, because I turned out to be a successful woman. I thank you for accepting my request to leave.” So before she died I asked her forgiveness.

The first time I went back I saw they had a hut. At that age, after spending so many years raising nine children, they still lived in a hut where the sky was the roof. I felt so sad. I built a house for her. A brick mansion. It was the biggest thing I ever did in my life. I didn’t own a house myself, but I spent my money to build one for them.

My parents were so proud. Everyone in the village said, “A daughter did that? How do you raise a daughter that she can do that for you?”

My meditation got better and better. I was free from the regret of not doing things. You do what you can do. During my father’s funeral everybody stayed in that big house. They never had such a place before.

“You have to be conscious, you know.”

Your mother passed away just a few months ago. You taught her meditation? Yes. I had rejected my Vietnamese side, and the Dhamma really helped me see through that. I wanted to share it with my mother. I thought, “I owe Mom. Because she’s my first teacher. What can I do to help her?” Two years before her death I taught her meditation. She was so pleased talking about food, about my presence there, listening to old stories. I decided: “I better do something now. I’m not coming here to talk about food.”

So I went into her bed in the early morning. “Mom, I’d like to share something with you. Since I’ve been ordained, this is what I study. And this is how I prepare my life for death. Do you want to be with the Lord Buddha?” “Yes! I want to be.” I said, “Momma, can you hear any sound?” I did not explain much. She said, “Yes, I hear the dog barking, insect noise …” I kept saying, “No, no, no.” There was one last sound that she heard. “Is this the sound of crickets? It has a continuous flow.”

I said, “That’s it Mom. That is it. Listen again.” She listened. “Wow – it’s continuous. It’s so sad, though. It’s monotonous.” “I think at the beginning it’s sad, Mom, but the longer you stay with that, the better you are. It’s much better for you than listening to soap operas.”

The next day she was excited – she even taught my sister: “Oh, I want to tell you. You know, to listen to that sound you have to be conscious. Otherwise you cannot hear it. Listen! You have to be conscious, you know.” I taught her to keep the five precepts, and later on to use the mantra Sugato.

When she passed away, all her family were there. It was very quiet. She just closed her eyes, and that was it. I had everyone chant the mantra she had been using: “Sugato, Sugato, Sugato”, the whole room filled with Sugato. Everyone was alert, and that’s the way she died.

It was good being back – also in Cambodia last year. I spent the vassa at the meditation monastery where I started. Before I came here, my goal was to share meditation with the Cambodian people to help them lighten their suffering. So I went back to check how it’s going there now. It was the first time in nine years I was away from Amaravati for so long, almost four months. I felt so comfortable here, but I knew that this was something I must do.

Going back to see my friends still working there, I can help them more now than when I was a lay person. Then I didn’t have any new ideas to offer, but through this practice I can offer something new. They may think I am selfish, but if I am not at peace right here, how can I give peace to another person? I have to make peace in myself first. And in my case, this way I am also safer than if I did anything else. I’m a nun, so people can see I don’t want anything from anybody. My name was famous because my husband was very popular, so people can think I could play an important role in government. They’re afraid I could take that piece of pie from them – which I don’t want. So this is the best way.

So your way of working to help the Cambodian people now is purely through practising Dhamma. Purely Dhamma. And not only Cambodian people. Anybody that comes into my path, I just help them.

It’s good for me now, as a nun at Amaravati. This is a very good place, conducive to the practice. I have so much joy living here.
**AMARAVATI**

**Kathina — Sunday, November 11th**

Almsround begins at 10:30 am

Once again this year the Royal Kathina Robe will be graciously offered by the King of Thailand through a representative.

This year’s Kathina ceremony and Kathina cloth will be sponsored and offered by Namtip Milligan and Linda Liew. Particularly, this Kathina will be offered to mark the 80th birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

To join the offering or for further information on the day, please contact Alison Moore:

- **email:** amala at petalmoore dot net
- **telephone:** (0144) 286 5519

**Temple heating replacement**

The work to replace the heating system in the Temple should take place over the summer. In the meantime the building is again in use, and we plan for the project to be completed in time for our Kathina ceremony on 11th November.

**Site caretaker needed**

A space has arisen for a lay resident at Amaravati: if you have reasonable maintenance skills and an interest to live and practise with the monastic community as site caretaker for at least a year, please apply to the Amaravati Secretary.

**Retreat Centre manager needed**

A space for a Household/Maintenance Manager has arisen at the Retreat Centre. DIY and maintenance skills would be preferred, but all applications will be considered. We are looking for a minimum of one year’s commitment. Please express your interest in writing to the Retreat Centre.

**Family events**

Booking forms and further information about all family events can be downloaded from [www.family.amaravati.org](http://www.family.amaravati.org)

**Family Summer Camp: August 18–27th**  
For booking information contact:  
Tim Hagyard, 103 Tamworth Road, Hertford  
SG13 7DN  
email: tim.hagyard at ntlworld dot com  
telephone: (0199) 230 2643

**Young Persons Retreat: October 5–7th**  

**Creative Weekend: Dec. 14–16th**  

**Amaravati lay events 2007**

Amaravati Lay Buddhist Association:  
These events provide an opportunity to practise together and explore themes relevant to daily life. They include silent and guided meditation, yoga, discussion and study groups, and other activities. Events are led by experienced lay-teachers. All are welcome.

**Days of Practice**  
– no need to book  
9.45am for 10–5pm (Please bring food to share)

**Retreats**  
– advanced booking essential  
5.30 pm Fri – 4 pm for the last day.

July 6–10th – five-day retreat – ‘Living Daily Life as an Opening for Reflection’  
Sat Aug 11th – Day of Practice – Patience  
Sep 21–23rd – weekend retreat – Honesty  
Sat Oct 27th – Day of Practice – Determination

Sat Nov 10th – Day of Practice – Kindness  
Sat Dec 1st – Day of Practice – Equanimity

Please check for late programme changes on our website: [www.buddhacommunity.org](http://www.buddhacommunity.org) (retreat booking forms are available there).

**Weekend retreat for lay women**

Organized by Buddhist Women’s Network  
Oct 19–21st – ‘Creativity in Dhamma’  
At Ferrar House Retreat Centre,  
Little Gidding, Cambridgeshire.

For information contact: jennijepson at yahoo dot co.uk

---

**Gratitude to Parents Day**

**Amaravati**

**Sunday October 7th 2007**  
— everyone welcome —

11 am – Offering alms & Paritta chanting  
2 pm – Dhamma Talk by Ajahn Sumedho in the Temple, then tea and discussion.

**Sunday Dhamma Talks**

at Amaravati

Sundays in the Sala, 2 pm – 4 pm  
– refreshments will be served –

July 22nd – Ajahn Sumedho  
Here we go again: letting go of repetitive patterns

July 29th – Sangha Member  
Bringing joy to the practice

August 5th – Sangha Member  
Strategies for loosening attachments

August 12th – Ajahn Sumedho  
Silence of the immeasurable

August 19th – Ajahn Sumedho  
Doubt, fear and letting go

August 26th – Ajahn Sumedho  
Freedom from politics

September 2nd – Ajahn Sumedho  
Authenticity vs. inauthenticity – appearance vs. reality

September 9th – Sangha Member  
Renunciation within society

September 16th – Sangha Member  
Patience and tolerance

September 23rd – Ajahn Sumedho  
Making a fortune

September 30th – Ajahn Sumedho  
Caring for the earth

October 7th – Ajahn Sumedho  
Gratitude to parents

October 14th – Ajahn Sumedho  
Where is the end of this path?
ARUNA RATANAGIRI

News from Hamnham:

CLOACA MAXIMA

The original Cloaca Maxima (Latin for Greatest Sewer) was built around 600BC by the King of Rome, Lucius Tarquinus Priscus. Cloaca Maxima is also how one of the generous financial contributors referred to the marvelous sewerage system now installed on Hamnham Hill, in this case built by Bill Fahy, Farad Maffoon and David Ord. Admittedly ours is more modest in size yet there have been some 'great' aspects to it.

I don’t want to dwell here though on the difficulties we have had in the process of getting to this point, rather to share the great happiness that is now arising. Generally, one would probably not imagine a waste water treatment system being the cause for the arising of great happiness. However, it is. At the most basic level it is a huge relief to be able to perform one’s ablutions without feeling anxious about where the water is flowing; happiness also for the enormous amount of support that has been offered (and is still coming) to deal with an issue that threatened the very existence of the monastery; and happiness for all those who will now enjoy the accommodation available at Kusala Retreat House (formerly known as No. 5 Hamnham Hill Cottages). It has been a long time coming, but any clouds of doubt which from time to time cast shadows over this beautiful Northumbrian hillside have past and Hamnham is even more beautiful.

Not that a sophisticated processing plant, reed beds, UV filter and recycling water pumps can resolve all life’s sufferings, but dealing adequately with the basic business of food going in and out makes the rest of it more workable. Besides having significantly improved guest accommodation, we will now be able to offer more retreats. Already Ajahn Anandabodhi has accepted an invitation to come and enjoy it.

Still to come is the process of transferring the workshop to the new shed down the back of the property. When this has taken place the shrine room will be ready for completion. And meanwhile we await the arrival of that ‘just right’ person who hopefully is going to help manage Kusala Retreat House. It will be their job to take care of the day to day running of the place; amongst other things booking guests in and out, changing light bulbs, seeing no one interferes with the heating settings, and reminding people to not put anything unsuitable down the drains. In Rome 2600 years ago they would sometimes dispose of bodies of the deceased that way – even Saint Sebastian apparently went down the Great Tube. Our guests will be mindful I am sure, quietly appreciating these wonderful facilities for deepening practice. May we express anumodana to all those who have helped.

Do come and enjoy it.
~ Ajahn Munindo

Caretaker needed

At Aruna Ratanagiri we are looking for a new caretaker. Applicants need to be male, fluent in English, comfortably familiar with Theravada Buddhist monastic practice, and able with general repair work. Also, they will need to have a clean driver’s licence and be able to commit for at least one year. The caretaker will receive without charge: a single room, two meals a day, the opportunity to participate in retreats and the opportunity to participate in daily meditations.

Email us from our contact page on www.ratanagiri.org.uk or phone us on (0166) 188 1612.

KUSALA RETREAT HOUSE at Aruna Ratanagiri. Nearing completion, it now offers expanded accommodation and the facility to hold more retreats.

CITTAVIVEKA

News from Chithurst:

Cittaviveka enters its 28th vassa with a full occupancy of monks, nuns, samaneras, and male and female anagarikas. As usual, the vassa is a time for retreat and for examination of the principles of training, and it is suitably preceded by a monks’ ordination ceremony on July 15th, the first at this monastery for several years. This vassa also happens to be the 25th since the first group of four women made a commitment to the ten precepts here and thus began the order of siladhara. Accordingly, there will be a commemoration of this event after the vassa on November 3rd.

Things have moved along for the nuns in many respects since then, most recently through the acquisition of Rocana Vihara. This has allowed for growth and development in the nuns’ community as a whole. You are welcome to come and see for yourself on July 28th: the cottage doors will be open in the afternoon and there will be 'tea on the lawn'.

There will be an opportunity for three laymen to spend up to a month working with the Sangha in Hammer Wood as part of the ongoing reforestation and management program. Please write to ‘Forest Work’, Cittaviveka for details.

This year’s Kathina will be held on November 4th and is being organized by Dr Indra Angunawela, tel: 01202 738 132 and Ramani Yapa, tel: 0208 537 9320

For details, news and more, please visit our website: www.cittaviveka.org
2007 Kathinas

ARUNA RATANAGIRI
Sunday, 28th October

CITTAVIVEKA
Sunday, 4th November

AMARAVATI
Sunday, 11th November

HARTRIDGE
TO BE ANNOUNCED

BODHINYANARAMA
News from Wellington:

Autumn has been very kind this year so we have been blessed with many fine, warm days as we edge towards mid-winter.

With the changing seasons we also have a changing community. Ajahn Ariyasilo is moving on, first to Vimutti Monastery in Auckland while Ajahn Chan-dako is away, and then to the Buddhist Society of Victoria in Melbourne for the Rains Retreat. Meanwhile Bhante Jinalankara has started his much-deserved self-retreat in a rented facility only 20 minutes drive from the monastery. We will be seeing him regularly for every Patimokkha recitation.

In time for the vassa we will be joined by Ajahn Uttamo from Santacittarama, and from time to time we are visited by Tan Gavesako who is residing in a new Thai monastery in Napier on the east coast.

The New Kitchen Project is slowly gathering momentum and, after a slow start, the weekend retreats are becoming much more appreciated by our wider community of supporters.

Since the Rains Retreat corresponds to winter in the southern hemisphere we look forward to a quieter, more contemplative retreat time.

UK BUDDHIST SANGHA
The Theravada Buddhist Sangha in the UK – TBSUK

Ajahn Vajiro attended the second meeting of the TBSUK on May 2nd. The meeting was kindly hosted by Ven. See-lawimala and the community at the London Buddhist Vihara, Chiswick.

The next meeting is due in September, at a venue yet to be decided.

HARTRIDGE
News from Devon:

Ajahn Jutindharo arrived in mid-May as the new senior monk, and spring and summer have seen quite a few visiting Sangha members, with Ajahn Suriyo returning for a few days at the time of our Wesak celebration. In April we welcomed a new anagarika – Paramito – into the community, and for the vassa we will be joined by Ven. Mahapanyo, from Santacittarama in Italy.

There will be a Kathina this year, the date yet to be fixed. Please see next issue or call the monastery for details.

Glossary — Pali and foreign terms used in this issue of the Forest Sangha Newsletter not explained elsewhere

Please note: Due to typographical limitations, Pali diacritics have been omitted throughout. Below are brief descriptions of how these words are being used in this issue of the FSN; they are not full definitions. Often used, they have generally not been italicized.

Ajahn: (Thai) Senior monk or nun; literally ‘teacher’. Used for those with ten vassas or more, regardless of their role in the community.
anagarika: A male or female postulant in the preliminary noviciate stage.
bhikkhu: A Buddhist monk.
bhante: Venerable sir; often used when addressing a Buddhist monk.
Buddha: Awakened One; the perfectly enlightened historical teacher of the Dhamma.
Dhamma: The Truth; the teaching of the Buddha.

Luang Por: (Thai) A title of affectionate respect (lit. “Venerable Father”).
parami: Perfection of the character; A group of ten virtuous qualities.
Sangha: The community of ordained Buddhist monks and nuns.
siladhara: A Buddhist nun from the community of Luang Por Sumedho.
Theravada: The school of Buddhism mainly practised in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos and Cambodia.
vassa: The three-month summer “Rains Retreat”; a mark of how many years (“vassas”) a monk or nun has been in robes.
Vinaya: The monastic discipline.
ENGLAND

Bath Bill & Carol Huxley (0122) 531 4500
Bedford David Stubbs (0123) 472 0892
Berkshire Anthea West (0118) 979 8101
Brighton Nimmala (0127) 372 3378
Sam Halter (0788) 882 1524
Bristol Lisa Daix (0117) 935 0272
Cambridge Dan Jones (0122) 324 6257
Canterbury Charles Watters (0122) 746 3342
Carlisle Jean Nelson (0122) 854 3491
Chichester Tony Halter (0124) 367 2126
Cookham, nr. Maidenhead (0162) 881 0083

Hemel Hempstead Bodhinyana Group: Chris Ward (0144) 289 0034
Kendal Fellside Centre, Low Fellside: Sumedha (0153) 972 9793
Leeds Area Daniela Loeb (0113) 279 1375
Anne Grimshaw (0127) 469 1447
Liverpool Ursula Haeckel (0151) 427 6668
London Hampstead, 1 Hillside (Rm. 6) London NW5, (Entrance in Highgate Rd): Caroline Randall (0208) 348 0537
Ann Booth (0207) 485 0505

London Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1 (0207) 834 5858
London-Notting Hill Jeffery Craig (0207) 221 9330
Leigh-on-sea Liamanda Webb (0126) 865 4923
Newcastle Ian Plagaro-Neill (0191) 469 2778
Newent-Gloucs. John Teire (0153) 182 1902
email: john.teire at virgin dot com
Norwich Robert Coggan (0195) 345 1741
Penzance Lee (0173) 676 2135
Portsmouth Medhavi (0239) 273 2280
Redruth Vanessa (0120) 921 4031
Sheffield Greg Bradshaw (0114) 262 1559
email: greg.bradshaw at btclick dot com
South Dorset Barbara Cohen (Sati-sati) (0130) 578 6821
Southampton Robert Elliot (0238) 061 2838
Steyning, Sussex Jayanti (0190) 381 2130
Stroud John Groves (0796) 777 7742
Surrey-Woking Rocana (0148) 376 1398
Taunton Annie Fisher (0127) 845 7245
Teeside John Doyle (0164) 258 7274
Tonnes James Whelan (0180) 386 5667

OUTSIDE ENGLAND

Co. Clare, Ireland: Sunyata Centre (+353) 61 367 073
Cork, Ireland Paddy Boyle (+353) 214 622 964
Dublin Rupert Westrup (+353) 01 280 2832
Edinburgh Neil Howell (0131) 226 5044
Glasgow James Scott (0141) 637 9731
Machynlleth, Wales Angela Llewellyn (0165) 051 1350
Pembrokeshire, S. Wales Peter & Barbara (Subhadra) Jackson (0123) 982 0790
A Coruna, Spain David Williams (+34) (981) 432 718

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS AND PRACTICE VENUES

AMARAVATI RETREATS

 Retreat Schedule 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>13–17 July</td>
<td>5 Days</td>
<td>Ajahn Sundara*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>28 July–9 Aug.</td>
<td>13 Days</td>
<td>Luang Por Sumedho**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>7–16 September</td>
<td>10 Days</td>
<td>Luang Por Sumedho**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>28–30 September</td>
<td>5 Days</td>
<td>Ajahn Candasiri*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R11</td>
<td>12–14 October</td>
<td>Weekend</td>
<td>Ajahn Jayanto*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R12</td>
<td>19–21 October</td>
<td>Weekend</td>
<td>Ajahn Metta*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R13</td>
<td>2–6 November</td>
<td>5 Days</td>
<td>Ajahn Nyanarato*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R14</td>
<td>16–25 November</td>
<td>10 Days</td>
<td>Ajahn Sucitto*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R15</td>
<td>7–9 December</td>
<td>Weekend</td>
<td>Ajahn Anandabodhi*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R16</td>
<td>27–1 Jan 2008</td>
<td>6 Days</td>
<td>Ajahn Vimalo*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Full – waiting list open ** Full – waiting list closed

General Guidelines

All weekend retreats are suitable for beginners. It is advisable to do a weekend retreat before doing a longer retreat. Due to demand, people may join not more than three retreats a year.

Booking Procedure

Bookings are only accepted on receipt of a completed booking form, which can be obtained by:

- Downloading from the website
- Emailing the Retreat Centre
- Writing to the Retreat Centre.

Then either post or email the completed booking form. Please note that bookings cannot be made over the telephone.

- The Retreat Centre is dependent on donations alone to meet its running costs. No advance booking fee is required. Donations are invited at the end of the retreat.

Start and Finish Times

Registration is from 4 pm to 7 pm on the first day of the retreat. The orientation talk is at 7.15 pm. Weekend retreats end at 4 pm, longer retreats at lunchtime. Attendance is expected for the whole retreat.

Contact Information

Retreat Manager, Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP13BZ UK

Retreat Centre tel. no.: (01442) 843 239
Email: retreats at amaravati dot org
Website (for updated information): www.amaravati.org

INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION

AMARAVATI

Saturday Afternoon Classes 2 pm—4 pm

Meditation instruction for beginners, with an opportunity for questions and dialogue.

Classes are in the Bodhinyana Meditation Hall.

Feel free to come along — no booking is necessary.

Much more can be found on the various monastery and Dhamma websites linked at www.forestsangha.org
These days are traditionally given over to quiet reflection and meditation. Visitors are welcome: contact the individual monasteries for specifics, as routines vary.

Moon Phase

- HALF
- NEW
- HALF
- FULL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>7 (Sat)</th>
<th>14 (Sat)</th>
<th>22 (Sun)</th>
<th>29 (Sun)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>6 (Mon)</td>
<td>13 (Mon)</td>
<td>21 (Tue)</td>
<td>28 (Tue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>5 (Wed)</td>
<td>11 (Tue)</td>
<td>19 (Wed)</td>
<td>26 (Wed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>4 (Thu)</td>
<td>11 (Thu)</td>
<td>19 (Fri)</td>
<td>26 (Fri)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Asalha Puja
- Pavarana Day

If undelivered, please return to: AMARAVATI MONASTERY St. Margaret’s, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, HERTS. HP1 3BZ, England, U.K.

ASSOCIATED MONASTERIES

**BRITAIN**

- **Amaravati Monastery**
  - St Margaret’s, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP1 3BZ, England, U.K.
  - Office: Tel: +44 (0144) 284 2455
  - Fax: +44 (0144) 284 3721
  - Retreat Info: 284 3239
  - www.amaravati.org
  - Stewards: English Sangha Trust

- **Cittaviveka**
  - Chithurst Buddhist Monastery
  - Chithurst, Petersfield, Hampshire GU31 5EU
  - Tel: (0173) 081 4986
  - Fax: (0173) 081 7334
  - www.cittaviveka.org
  - Stewards: English Sangha Trust

- **ITALY**
  - **Santacittarama**
    - Località Brulla, 02030 Frasso Sabino (Rieti)
    - Tel: +39 (0765) 872 186
    - Fax: +39 (06) 233 238 629
    - www.santacittarama.org
    - Stewards: Santacittarama Association

- **SWITZERLAND**
  - **Dhammapala**
    - Buddhisches Kloster Am Waldrand, CH 3718 Kandersteg
    - Tel: +41 (033) 672 50 10
    - Fax: +41 (033) 672 628
    - www.dhammapala.ch
    - Stewards: Dhammapala Foundation

- **AUSTRALIA**
  - **Bodhiyana Monastery**
    - 26 Kingsbury Drive, Serpentine 6125 WA
    - Tel: +61 (08) 95 253 420
    - Fax: +61 (08) 95 253 420

  - **Bodhivana Monastery**
    - 780 Woods Point Road, East Warburton, Victoria 3799
    - Tel: +61 (0) 359 665 999
    - Fax: +61 (0) 359 665 998

  - **Dhammaloka**
    - Buddhist Centre (Perth)
    - 18-20 Nanson Way, Nollamara 6061 WA
    - Tel: +61 (08) 9345 1711
    - Fax: +61 (08) 9344 4220
    - www.dswa.org.au
    - Stewards: Buddhist Society of Western Australia

- **CANADA**
  - **Tisarana Buddhist Monastery**
    - 1356 Powers Road, RR #3, Perth, Ontario K7H 3C3
    - Tel: +61 (613) 264 8208
    - www.tisarana.ca
    - Stewards: Tisarana Buddhist Monastery

  - **Santi Forest Monastery**
    - Lot 6 Coalmines Road, PO Box 132 Bundanoon, 2578 NSW
    - Tel: +61 (02) 4883 6331
    - Fax: +61 (02) 8572 8286
    - Website: http://santioffice@gmail.com

- **THAILAND**
  - **Wat Pah Nanachat**
    - Bahn Bung Wai, Amphur Warin, Ubon Ratchathani 34310
    - www.watpahnanachat.org
    - To receive the Forest Sangha Newsletter in Thailand, please write to Amaravati.