

# LOOKING AHEAD

No 21



## News from Amaravati – Spring 2015

### Looking Back, Looking Ahead, Looking Here

Ajahn Amaro writes: We are all getting older. Even during the short time it has taken to read these words, the wheels of birth and death have not paused; they spin on ceaselessly. However, the remembered past with its resonances, and all possible futures, meet here in the ever-present present.

*Just as a mighty mountain range,  
scraping the sky with rocky crags,  
might advance from the four  
directions crushing everything  
before it –*

*so too do old age and death  
trample all living beings.*

*Nobles, priests, merchants,  
workers, outcastes, scavengers ...  
none of them can escape,  
everyone gets laid low.*

S 3.25

The earth has already made thirty laps around the sun since the preparations began for the Grand Opening of Amaravati, in the spring of 1985. To acknowledge this milestone in the development of the monastery we have invited a number of the members of the four-fold community who were involved in those earliest days to gather at our Visākha Pūjā celebration, on May 31 this year (*see p. 2 for details*). The ceremonies of the Opening took place over three days (24-26 May, 1985); many revered Elders led the events and many distinguished visitors were amongst the hundreds of people who gathered over the period. The event planned for 2015 will be a more humble affair but hopefully more intimate, focusing on the reminiscences of both lay-people and monastics who were part of the nitty-gritty of ‘opening the doors to the Deathless’ and getting the place up and running. We also plan to have another showing of the small exhibition that was made for the Kathina of the last thirty years of Amaravati, together with a display about plans for the next thirty years and beyond.

The Buddha encouraged us not only to reflect upon the causes of things but also their results. Our birth has led to our inevitable ageing and, as he points out in the quotation, ‘old age and death trample all living beings.’ As we look back to the past we must also look to the future, recognizing that physical impermanence is an essential part of what lies ahead.

The Amaravati community has taken this fact to heart: on the large scale in terms of the fabric of the monastery with the long term plan to renovate the whole site with energy-efficient and purpose-built structures; and on the human scale by attending to the physical needs of ageing monastics through the first building that we propose to construct being a Monks’ Nursing Facility/Kuti for Luang Por Sumedho.

Over the last couple of years plans have been developed for this ‘Nursing Kuti’ and, after three versions of drawings were submitted to the local Planning Authority, we were delighted that permission for us to build was granted in March of this year. Although Luang Por Sumedho is happily retired and currently settled in Thailand, along with providing a nursing facility for the resident monks as they sicken and age, we also aim for this building to be a place where Luang Por Sumedho can comfortably stay at any time he chooses to be in England. Now that he has reached the grand age of eighty there are certain amenities that will make things more convenient for him, and a number of design choices have been made with that in mind. The facility will be usable by other sick or aged monks when Luang Por is not in residence but we wanted to do the best we could in providing for his needs while he is still with us in the world.

The new building is to be situated close to the ‘showman’s wagon’ kuti, beside the monks’ vihāra – a place where Luang Por Sumedho lived for about five years while the Temple was being constructed. The current expectation is that we will break ground in October and that the build period will be about six months long. If all goes as we would like, it would be completed and ready to use by the end of April 2016. Of course, as Luang Por often points out, ‘The future is a mystery’ but this is the prospect as it looks today.

(*cont. p. 2*)

In terms of the long-term master plan for the Amaravati site, the next part of the process would be to pause for a while and draw up plans for the second phase of reconstruction. The area we have in mind to develop next is the nuns' area and the service yard behind the Sālā. This is a big, logistically complex, expensive undertaking, so there will probably be a gap of a few years while plans and resources come together. We will wait and see how things unfold with the Nursing Kuti before we start to fix any dates or cost estimates as these will only become clear with experience.

The long-term plan is concerned with the possible future development of the physical structures of Amaravati, but it is important to remember that the most significant element of what makes a monastery is the people NOT the buildings. It might be all very well to have ideally formed, eco-friendly amenities but if there are not women and men who are inspired by the Dhamma, and who wish to enter into training and to practice here, what will it all be worth? Thus the issue of 'planning for the future' needs bear in mind that the Eight Precept anagārikas and anagārikās of today, provided that there is the appropriate commitment and training, are going to be the Mahā-Theras and -Therīs of tomorrow.

As the current abbot of Amaravati I feel it is therefore my duty to keep this principle in mind and to ensure that the spiritual development of the four-fold community, of monastics and lay-people, remains the priority over material development. We need to realize the Deathless Realm internally so that the physical 'Deathless Realm' of Amaravati truly fulfills its vision and serves its purpose, for the benefit of every being.

And where is that Deathless Realm that should be the centre of attention of all these aspirants? To quote Luang Por Sumedho again: 'Yesterday is a memory, tomorrow is the unknown, now is the knowing' – it is in the awakened awareness, the knowing of this present reality that the Deathless Realm is realized. May all our considerations of past and future meet here, in that timeless present.

## News & Announcements



### Khun Ladda retiring

After several decades of devoted and energetic service, Khun Ladda is retiring from her role of helping to manage the monastery kitchen.

For more than twenty years Ladda has put forth tremendous effort in the practice of nourishing the resident monastic and lay communities, as well as thousands of visitors to Amaravati. Our bodies have literally been formed out of her kindness so the community wishes to express its gratitude to her for this contribution to the welfare of the Buddha-sāsana in this country.

With the greater freedom that this retirement will allow, Ladda aims to be spending more time with her grandchildren as well as on other Dhamma-related activities at Amaravati and other centres.

### Retreat Centre

The winter saw the completion of a project to convert six double rooms into twelve small singles. The work was led by Didier, the household manager and Martin, the site manager, with the help of a fantastic team of volunteers who worked tirelessly for coffee, biscuits, and Dhamma.

The Retreat Centre online booking system, which has been running since mid-October last year, is working well and is almost complete. You can use the system to book retreats, check the progress of your waiting list place if you are on a waiting list, or cancel your retreat booking should you need to do so. The section, 'Manage your Bookings', that allows you to change your e-mail address and personal details is still to be completed, but this should be available within the next month or two. Until then, please continue to e-mail us directly if you need to change your e-mail address. We would like to express our gratitude to everyone for adapting to this big change and helping to make it a success.

### Library Update

A team of volunteers have been busy over the winter completing the cataloguing and re-shelving of all the Thai-language books in the library. A big Sādhu! for their dedication. Next is to complete the electronic catalogue and start the barcode labelling work with a view to completing it by the end of the year.

Help in the library is very much appreciated, and it is a wonderful place to spend a few quiet hours, so any time you can help out, Juan, our librarian, will be there to welcome you!

### Festival Days

The Visākha Pūjā Festival will be held on May 31. The provisional schedule is:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 10.15 a.m. | Paritta Chanting in the temple  |
| 11.00 a.m. | Rice Pindabaht  |
| 11.30 a.m. | Meal Offering for all   |
| 1.15 p.m.  | Refuges & Precepts  |
| 1.30 p.m.  | "Recollections of Amaravati, 1984-85"   |
|            | Speakers: Ajahn Vajiro, Ajahn Sundarā, Ajahn Candasirī, Peter & Barbara Jackson, Martin Evans, Martin Kaufman, Pamutto & Sobhana, Medhina, Sophie Young, Alan Lewis & others TBC. |
| 3:45 p.m.  | Close of event  |
|            | Reflections on the Unconditioned & Sharing of Blessings.  |
| 4:00 p.m.  | Tea in the sālā.  |

**We look forward to seeing you for this special event!**

# 2015 Retreat Centre Schedule

## Monastic Retreats

2015	Duration	Teacher
8 – 20 May	13 days	Ajahn Amaro †
5 – 14 June	10 days	Ajahn Vimalo ☸
19 – 21 June	weekend	Ajahn Cittapālā
10 – 12 July	weekend	Ajahn Ratanavanno – Thai Language Retreat
17 – 26 July	10 days	Ajahn Kalyāno ☸
31 July – 4 August	5 days	Ajahn Ahimsako
11 – 20 September	10 days	Ajahn Amaro – ‘Have you seen the messengers? – ageing, sickness, death and renunciation’ †
2 – 6 October	5 days	Ajahn Ānando – ‘Why Mettā?’
16 – 18 October	weekend	Ajahn Mettā & Brother Nicholas – Buddhist/Christian Retreat
23 – 25 October	weekend	Ajahn Brahmavarā
6 – 10 November	5 days	Luang Por Pasanno
20 – 29 November	10 days	Ajahn Sundarā ☸
11 – 13 December	weekend	Ajahn Subhaddo
27 Dec. – 1 Jan.	6 days	Ajahn Nyānarato

☸We request that you complete a five-day or longer retreat, either at Amaravati or elsewhere, before attending this retreat.

†This retreat is for experienced meditators only who have previously attended a 10-day retreat at Amaravati or elsewhere.

How to Book a place: All bookings now have to be made online at [www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/booking/](http://www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/booking/)

This is where you will find booking opening dates, be able to check on retreat status, make a booking and see details of how to contact the Retreat Centre. **Paper forms are no longer being used for bookings.**

**NOTE: The Retreat Centre managers only deal with bookings for the monastic retreats. The ALBA, Buddhist Women’s Network (BWN) and Family Events each have their own booking system (see details below).**

### Amaravati Lay Buddhist Association (ALBA)

The ALBA was started in 1994 as a way to offer the lay community that frequents Amaravati a forum to connect with like-minded people. It runs a series of Days of Practice and short retreats at Amaravati, led by experienced lay teachers.

**Days of Practice:** 30 May, 4 July, 5 September, 14 November, 19 December

**5-day Retreat:** 7 – 11 August

**Weekend Retreats:** 17– 19 April, 9 – 11 October

For bookings and information please visit

[www.buddhacommunity.org](http://www.buddhacommunity.org)

### Amaravati Family Events

The Family Events are held in the Retreat Centre, with camping available during the long August camp. They are led by the monastic sangha in cooperation with a group of coordinators and helpers. New families are encouraged to attend the shorter June weekend before applying for the family camp.

Rainbows Weekend	1 – 4 May
June Weekend	26 – 28 June
Family Camp	22 – 30 August
Young Persons Retreat	30 October – 1 November
Creative Weekend	4 – 6 December

**For more information visit: [www.family.amaravati.org](http://www.family.amaravati.org)**

### Buddhist Women’s Network (BWN)

The BWN was set up in 2004 by women who are associated with Amaravati. It provides an opportunity to develop spiritual friendship and to support each other in our practice. These events are led by experienced lay women and include periods of sitting and walking meditation, sharing and discussion. Beginners and those new to this tradition are welcome.

**Days of Practice:** 5 July, 20 December.

**Weekend Retreat:** 25 – 27 September

For bookings and information please contact Shirley McDonald at [buddhistwomensnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:buddhistwomensnetwork@gmail.com)

## Introductory Meditation Workshops

Saturday afternoons 2–4 pm

Meditation instruction for beginners led by a member of the sangha with an opportunity for questions and dialogue.

Everyone is welcome – there is no fee and no booking is necessary.

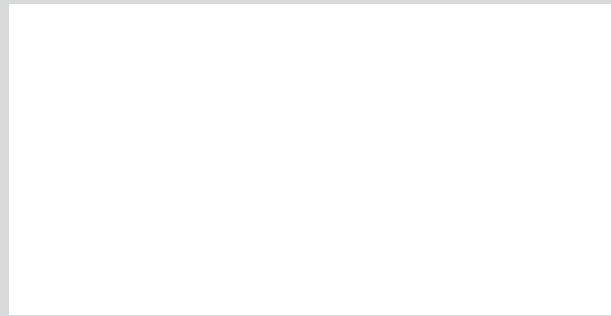
Classes are held in the temple

Delivered by



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If undelivered, please return to:  
Amaravati Monastery, St. Margarets, Great Gaddesden,  
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 3BZ, UK

## Notable Dates

### *Samanera Pabbajjā & Anagārika Precept Ceremony, May 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Anagārikas Stuart, Piero and Marcin will be taking Samanera Pabbajjā, Going-Forth as novice monks.

Walter & Lawrence will be taking the eight-precepts, Going-Forth as anagārikas.

The ceremonies will take place during the evening pūjā, starting 7.30 pm in the temple, and will be followed by the full-moon day Dhamma talk & a mid-night vigil.

Everyone is welcome to join us in the temple to witness this auspicious occasion.

Visākha Festival – Sunday 31 May

<sup>2</sup>Visākha Pūjā (Buddha Day) – Monday 1 June

Ajahn Chah's Birthday – Wednesday 17 June

## General Monastery Enquiries

For general enquiries such as arranging school visits, please write to the monastery secretary at the address below or email [monasterysecretary@amaravati.org](mailto:monasterysecretary@amaravati.org)

For enquiries about giving dana, the kitchen and what is happening in the monastery on a given day, please contact the monastery office on 01442 842 455.

## Staying Overnight

If you wish to stay as a guest, contact the Guest Nun for women ([guestnun@amaravati.org](mailto:guestnun@amaravati.org)) or Guest Monk for men ([guestmonk@amaravati.org](mailto:guestmonk@amaravati.org)). Information about staying as a guest is also available on the website at [www.amaravati.org/visiting](http://www.amaravati.org/visiting)

## Website

For the latest announcements, Dhamma resources, audio files, retreat information and more visit:

[www.amaravati.org](http://www.amaravati.org)

## Monastery Contact Details

Amaravati Buddhist Monastery  
St. Margarets  
Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ  
Office: +44 (0) 1442 842 455  
Retreat Centre: +44 (0) 1442 843 239

## Stewards

The English Sangha Trust (EST) is a registered charitable trust which stewards funds to support the sangha at Amaravati and Cittaviveka monasteries. Contributions can be made to the English Sangha Trust c/o Amaravati or online: [www.amaravati.org/Support](http://www.amaravati.org/Support)

## Lotus Volunteer Group

For the many ways to help out on festival days and throughout the year visit:

[www.lotusvolunteergroup.amaravati.org](http://www.lotusvolunteergroup.amaravati.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/LotusVolunteerGroup>

or email: [lvg.enquiry@gmail.com](mailto:lvg.enquiry@gmail.com)

## Lunar Observance Days

- |              |  |  |
|--------------|--|--|
| <b>April</b> | <input type="radio"/> 3rd (Fri.)               | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 11th (Sat.) |
|              | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 17th (Fri.)   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 25th (Sat.) |
| <b>May</b>   | <input type="radio"/> 2nd (Sat.)               | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 10th (Sun.) |
|              | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 17th (Sun.)   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 25th (Mon.) |
| <b>June</b>  | <input type="radio"/> 1st (Mon.) <sup>2</sup>  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 9th (Tue.)  |
|              | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 15th (Mon.)   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 23rd (Tue.) |
|              | <input type="radio"/> 30th (Tue.)              |  |
| <b>July</b>  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 8th (Wed.)    | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 15th (Wed.) |
|              | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 23rd (Thurs.) | <input type="radio"/> 30th (Thurs.)          |

*Looking Ahead is a newsletter from Amaravati. You can pick up a copy at the monastery or receive it directly by email or by post. Please send your email and/or home address to: [abmnews@amaravati.org](mailto:abmnews@amaravati.org) or post it to Amaravati. Please indicate whether you wish to receive Looking Ahead by email or by post.*