

LOOKING AHEAD

No 25



News from Amaravati – Spring 2016

Deep Foundations, Careful Growth

Ajahn Amaro writes: “The earth moves; Hertfordshire clay is well known for its capacity to demonstrate this mobility so the foundations for the Aroga Nursing Kutī, currently under construction, are buried deep. The eighteen pilings reach some fifteen metres (nearly 50 feet) down into the ground so that, regardless of the expansions and contractions caused by the water in the soil, the building will rest as a solid, well-integrated unit.

The winter retreat season at Amaravati serves a similar purpose. The three months of committed presence, and communal engagement in routines of formal meditation, function as firm pilings; the qualities of resolution and patience, energy and attention engendered by the practice of Dhamma serve to hold the structure of the Sangha together amidst the many travails and turbulences of the conditioned world. If the foundations are firm and deep, the earth can move as much as it wants and the structure will be undisturbed, as the Venerable Subhūti put it in the first verse of the Theragāthā:

I stay in a roofed hut; it is very comfortable.
The wind does not disturb me.
Dear rain cloud, rain as much as you want.
My mind has become perfectly still
and is liberated from all defilements.
I live with great energy.
Dear rain cloud, rain as much as you want.

Venerable Kiribathgoda Gnānānanda Thera, (trns)

About 60 people have been resident over the course of the winter retreat this year, being a mixture of nuns and monks, novices of Eight and Ten Precepts, some long-term lay residents, a group of lay people serving as the ‘winter retreat support team’ and a more fluctuating assembly of Retreat Centre helpers, carrying out the annual renovations and deep-cleaning. During these three months, there has been an atmosphere of great harmony and enthusiastic commitment to meditation and the various tasks involved, however, that should not be taken to mean that it has always been easy. There are often internal struggles with the mind as well as differences of perspective amongst the various residents and one’s fellow Dhamma-farers. This is to be expected but, if at these times, wisdom is applied appropriately then such

frictions can be a direct source of incisive understanding, liberation and well-being. It is like sharpening a knife, leaning the blade carefully into the grinding wheel at the optimal angle and pressure so it gets a fine cutting edge.

Similarly the spring season has, overall, brought a steady and fruitful growth to the Aroga Nursing Kutī. We had a richly rain-blessed ground-breaking ceremony on January 3, the contractors moved in on January 11 and, at the time of writing, the brick walls have begun to rise. It has not all gone smoothly. After the foundations were laid and the fine oak frame erected, some difficulties arose in meeting the high standards required for an energy-efficient building. We thus made an immediate thoughtful pause, looked closely at what was needed, and now things are proceeding on track and on schedule once again, with no loss of resources.

This is how the practice of Dhamma progresses most successfully, whether it be mind-training or building construction: chanda – there is a need and an interest to engage in a task; viriya – energy is applied to the work; citta – you think through what is necessary for success; vimamsa – you review the results of what has been done and adjust accordingly.

It is a delight and an honour to see and be part of this process in action; to witness so many people giving their time, attention and good-hearted energy to training their minds as well as serving the needs of others, and to see the Aroga Nursing Kutī arise from the Hertfordshire clay. The inner work is what maintains Amaravati as a genuine ‘Deathless Realm’, while the outer will provide a dwelling place for Luang Por Sumedho to stay in whenever he might be visiting and for the well-being of all other ailing and elderly monks, far into the future.”

News and Announcements

With the coming of spring, the community at Amaravati has moved into the active 9 months of their year. So the Retreat Centre opened its doors for the first monastic-led retreat of the year on April 1, and the community have returned to their duties and engagements. The much appreciated lay support team have mostly returned to their usual places of residence or gone on elsewhere, though a sizeable group have remained with the intention of taking on the 8-precept training, ... (Cont p. 2)

... (cont. from p.1) a living testimony to everyone's dedication to practice over the winter months. It is now just two weeks into April and already the daily landscape is very different, with guests arriving and departing, more activity, many visitors and more contact. This requires adaptability on everyone's part and a willingness to just be with what is moving. Yet as Ajahn Amaro writes, when the foundations of practice are firm, then the sense world, the world of perceptions, the world outside can move as much as it wants, for the heart knows how to remain at ease.

Retreat Centre News

The Retreat Centre has had its annual Spring-clean during the Winter. Didier, the Household & Maintenance manager, has also completed some much needed maintenance work in the office, the Shrine room and the bathrooms. This could not have happened without all the wonderful volunteers who generously offered their time and skills. So we would like to give a big 'Thank You' to everyone who made Didier's task much lighter and for helping to give us all a space from which we can benefit over the coming Retreats.

This Retreat year we are welcoming many visiting monastics. At the end of April, Ajahn Viradhammo, the Abbot of Tisarana monastery in Canada, will be leading an 8-day retreat, his first at ABM Retreat Centre in several years. Ajahn Jayanto is over from the US where he has been establishing a branch monastery in New Hampshire. And later in the year, Ajahn Candasiri from Scotland and Ajahn Vajiro from Portugal will be leading 10-day retreats. Joseph Kappel, an ex-monastic and close disciple of Ajahn Chah, will co-lead a 10-day retreat in May with Ajahn Amaro, this year on the theme of Sila. Due to many requests, we have also extended the annual Thai language weekend retreat to 5 days.

So begins another full year at the Retreat Centre and the good fortune we have to hear the Dhamma taught by those committed to the practice, continues

Information for New Visitors

There have been a number of enquiries coming in recently about when the place is open and how it all works. The gates open daily at 6.30 am, and remain open until after the evening meditation, approx. 9.30 pm. Anyone is welcome to visit, be it for a meditation session, to participate in the meal, use the library, meet like-minded people or just enjoy the quietude of the grounds and Temple.

Those new to the monastery might like to visit in the late morning (11.30 am) when the community gathers for their main meal and there are usually other visitors or monastics available to answer questions. The monastery website has information about the daily schedule, and is regularly updated with news of any events or activities taking place. You can also check with the office about what is happening on a given day. Contact details are on the back page.

Anagārika 8-Precept & 'Going-Forth' Ceremonies, Friday May 20

Didier, James, Andreas, Alex and João will be requesting to formally take the 8-precepts, the training as anagārika.

On the same evening, An. Laurence and An. Walter are due to be taking Pabbajjā, 'Going-Forth' as samaneras (novice monks). The ceremonies take place on the Vesākha full moon observance night, starting at 7.30 p.m. in the Temple and followed by a dhamma talk and circumambulation.

Anagārikā 8-precept ceremony, Sunday May 22

Suttisa Cox and Huyn-Kuyng Kim will be formally requesting to take the 8-precepts and train with the nuns' community as anagārikā.

This ceremony will form part of the Vesākha celebrations, and take place in the temple, starting at 1.30 p.m.

The monastery invites you to our Vesākha Celebrations on Sunday May 22

The day will start at approx. 10.15 am with chanting in the temple followed by a rice Pindapat and the meal offering at 11.30 am.

At 1.30 pm, there will be an Anagārikā 8-precept ceremony followed by a Dhamma Talk. The talk will be given by a visiting Thai Elder, Luang Por Toon, the abbot of Tam Saeng Paet Monastery in Thailand.

Introductory Meditation Workshops

Saturday afternoons 2-4 pm

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

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

The workshops are led by a monk or nun and held in the Temple.

Retreat Centre Monastic Retreats 2016

| Dates | Duration | Teacher | Booking opens |
|-----------------------|----------|--|-----------------|
| 23–30 April * | 8 days | Ajahn Viradhammo * | 23 October |
| 6–15 May ** | 10 days | Ajahn Amaro & Joseph Kappel – ‘Seamless Wellbeing: Protecting the World through Sila’ ** | 6 November |
| 3–7 June | 5 days | Ajahn Dhammanando | 3 December |
| 24–28 June | 5 days | Ajahn Cittapālā | 24 December |
| 22–24 July | weekend | Ajahn Ahimsako | 22 January 2016 |
| 29 July–7 Aug. *** | 10 days | Ajahn Candasirī *** | 29 January |
| 12–16 August | 5 days | Ajahn Amaro & Ajahn Ratanawanno Thai Language Retreat | 12 February |
| 16–18 Sept. | weekend | Ajahn Brahmavarā | 16 March |
| 23 Sept.–5 Oct. ** | 13 days | Ajahn Amaro ** | 23 March |
| 14–16 October | weekend | Brother Nicholas & Ajahn Mettā Buddhist/Christian Retreat | 14 April |
| 21–25 October | 5 days | Ajahn Nyānarato | 21 April |
| 11–20 November | 10 days | Ajahn Vajīro | 11 May |
| 9–11 December | weekend | Ajahn Bodhipālā | 9 June |
| 27 Dec.–1 Jan. 2017 * | 6 days | Ajahn Sundarā – New Year Retreat * | 27 June |

* Previous silent meditation retreat experience required

** This retreat is for experienced meditators. Attendance at a previous 10-day retreat required

*** Previous silent meditation retreat experience recommended

Booking opens six calendar months before each retreat start date and you can apply for up to three retreats in any one year. There are always waiting lists but if you can attend at the last minute it is always worth applying, as we often receive late cancellations which can be difficult to fill.

Full information about attending retreats, how to book, what to expect and what to bring, is available on the Retreat Centre web-pages at: www.amaravati.org/retreat-centre/ You can also change your personal details, your email address or cancel your retreat on these pages by selecting ‘Manage your details’ or ‘Cancel your retreat’. If you have any queries about monastic retreats that cannot be answered by visiting the webpages, please contact the Retreat Centre at retreats@amaravati.org

Retreat Centre Lay Retreats and Family Events 2016

Amaravati Family Events

Family Events are held in the Retreat Centre. They are led by the monastic sangha in cooperation with a group of lay coordinators and helpers. There are five retreats held each year, including a retreat for 13-19 yr-olds. The weekend in July is intended as an introduction for new families thinking of applying for the longer camp in August. The theme for 2016 is ‘The Life of the Buddha’.

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| 27–30 May | Rainbows Weekend |
| 8–10 July | Family Weekend |
| 20–28 August | Family Camp (places available) |
| 25–27 November | Young Person’s Retreat (13-19 yrs) |
| 2–4 December | Creative Weekend (18 yrs +) |

For bookings and information visit: www.family.amaravati.org

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. ALBA runs a series of days of prac-

tice and short retreats at Amaravati, led by experienced lay teachers.

Days of Practice: 21 May, 18 June, 10 September, 5 November, 17 December.

Retreats: 15–17 April, 15–19 July, 7–9 October.

For bookings and information visit: www.buddhacommunity.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 support for 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: 19 June, 11 September, 18 December.

Weekend Retreat: 28–31 October.

For bookings and information please write to: buddhist-womensnetwork@gmail.com

Visiting or Staying at the monastery

Information about visiting and staying overnight is available on the website at: www.amaravati.org/visiting or contact the Guest Nun for women (guestnun@amaravati.org) or Guest Monk for men (guestmonk@amaravati.org) to find out about staying as a guest.

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

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. The office is open Mon-Fri, 8.30-11.30 am and 2.30-4.30 pm.

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

Website

For Dhamma resources, audio files, retreat information and the latest news visit: www.amaravati.org

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> or post it to Amaravati. Please indicate whether you wish to receive Looking Ahead by email or by post.

Lotus Volunteer Group

For the many ways to help out at Amaravati visit: www.lotusvolunteergroup.amaravati.org

Notable Dates

Songkhran Asian New Year – April 17
Elders' Council Meetings – April 19-20
Vesākha Pūjā & Going-Forth ceremonies – May 20
Vesakh Festival – May 22
Ajahn Chah's Birthday – June 17
Āsālhā Pūjā – July 19
Vassa Begins – July 20
Pavāranā Day (End of Vassa) – Oct 16
Amaravati Kathina – Nov 6

Lunar Observance Days 2016

| | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Apr | ● 6 (Wed) | ○ 14 (Thur) |
| | ○ 21 (Thur) | ● 29 (Fri) |
| May | ● 5 (Thur) | ○ 13 (Fri) |
| | ○ 20 (Fri) | ● 28 (Sat) |
| Jun | ● 4 (Sat) | ○ 12 (Sun) |
| | ○ 19 (Sun) | ● 27 (Mon) |
| Jul | ● 4 (Mon) | ○ 12 (Tue) |
| | ○ 19 (Tue) | ● 27 (Wed) |
| Aug | ● 3 (Wed) | ○ 11 (Thur) |
| | ○ 18 (Thur) | ● 26 (Fri) |
| Sep | ● 1 (Thur) | ○ 9 (Fri) |
| | ○ 16 (Fri) | ● 24 (Sat) |
| Oct | ● 1 (Sat) | ○ 9 (Sun) |
| | ○ 16 (Sun) | ● 24 (Mon) |
| | ● 30 (Sun) | |
| Nov | ○ 7 (Mon) | ○ 14 (Mon) |
| | ● 22 (Tue) | ● 29 (Tue) |
| Dec | ○ 7 (Wed) | ○ 14 (Wed) |
| | ● 22 (Thur) | ● 28 (Wed) |

On lunar observance days, there is usually a pūjā and meditation starting at 7.30 pm, followed by a Dhamma talk and midnight meditation vigil.

Aroga Kuti Rising from the Clay

