



# THE FOREST HERMITAGE

NOVEMBER 2543 / 2000

# NEWSLETTER

## THE FOREST HERMITAGE DIARY:

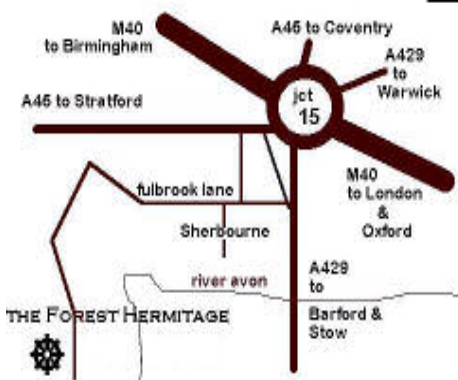
### ANGULIMALA WORKSHOPS

(mainly for Buddhist Prison Chaplains)  
December 2nd & March 17th  
from 10 a.m.

✿  
MEDITATION,  
A DHAMMA TALK,  
a reading & a cup of tea.  
Mondays & Fridays at 8 p.m.

### UPOSATHA OBSERVANCE DAYS

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<b>November</b>	4	11	19	26
<b>December</b>	4	11	19	25
<b>January</b>	2	9	17	24



If you are on our mailing list and/or a member of BDF or ANGULIMALA, your name, address, phone number & membership details are on our computer files. If you object and you let us know we'll willingly remove you.

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASAMBUDDHASSA  
HONOUR TO THE BLESSED ONE, THE EXALTED ONE, THE FULLY-ENLIGHTENED ONE

Memories of my early days in Buddhism at the old Hampstead Vihāra on Haverstock Hill came flooding back recently. One of the first things I learnt back then in the mid-sixties was that it requires a quorum of at least four bhikkhus - fully ordained in the lineage established by the Lord Buddha - to act as a sangha and that Buddhism cannot be said to have been established anywhere until a sangha of native born bhikkhus has been established. There was in those far off days at Hampstead intense interest in reaching that magic number and I believe they did succeed for a short while. I have no idea now how many English born bhikkhus there are scattered around the globe, quite a few I imagine, but still it's unusual anywhere in the West to find a locally established sangha. In the East, it's quite usual for almost any wat or monastery to be liberally supplied with monks from the surrounding communities but not so anywhere else, except, at least for the time being, here. We haven't reached the magic number yet and I don't set too much store by doing so but following the ordination on October 14th there are now three bhikkhus here and one sāmanera, all are English born and the two new bhikkhus and the sāmanera are all three local.

It's been some years since we last had a bhikkhu ordination at this wat and to achieve the necessary quorum of five for it to happen again it was essential for me to invite at least four more monks for the occasion. Ajahn Munindo of Harnham agreed to help and one of his monks, Ajahn Brahmano, came down a few days early to help prepare the candidates. Ajahn Munindo and the rest arrived early on the morning of the 14th. By then our big

inflatable marquee was up and in place and a gathering of Burmese, Thai and English devotees had assembled. The ordinations

began soon after we had finished the almsround and eaten. First was Tom (pictured making his request) who asked for and was granted the pabajjā or the "going-forth from the household life into homelessness" and became a sāmanera or novice with the new name of Manāpo. He was sponsored by Khun Laksana Supsakorn who was over from Bangkok with her husband to visit their daughter at Roedean and all three were able to be here. Next it was the turn of the two novices I had ordained last year, Dhammatejo and Dhammavāro. They were to ask the Sangha for the upasampadā or "full admission" as bhikkhus and were sponsored by Mr and Mrs Win and Dr Kyaw Myint and family. The ordination of a novice is a relatively simple and straightforward affair with the candidate making his request, then being instructed and robed and finally receiving the precepts and his new name but the bhikkhu ordination is rather more complicated. This is a Sangha proceeding presided over by a recognised Upajjhāya, or preceptor that has to be conducted within a formalised boundary with a minimum of five bhikkhus and requires the participation and agreement of all members of the Bhikkhu Sangha present and within that boundary. The candidates make their request and are instructed,





Khun Laksana and family with Samanera Manapo.

it was time to say farewell to Matthew and Tamara who were flying off for an extended trip through India and Thailand. Matthew had been staying at The Forest Hermitage for about a year and a half and had become almost indispensable. He has been marvellous and I am ever so grateful for all the time and trouble he took to make my life easier and the Forest Hermitage a success.

examined and then after their admission has been granted by the Sangha, the new bhikkhus are given further advice about their new way of life and its most important rules in a formal sermon recited by the Upajjhāya. Unlike religious of other persuasions, bhikkhus do not take vows but admission into the Sangha implies an undertaking to respect and observe the rules and duties of a bhikkhu and to respect and be guided by one's teachers and elders. The discipline and practice of this holy life rest on the twin pillars of duty and respect. For this ceremony the Shrine Room was cleared and the boundary secured. Our lay guests were permitted to watch but from a slight distance. The two young men made their requests, passed through the examinations both without and within the assembly and at 2.34 pm BST received their full admission into the Bhikkhu Sangha.

Until then, I had been the only bhikkhu living here and the only bhikkhu to spend the vassa here this year. We therefore couldn't qualify for a Kathina - five are needed - and so our devotees and supporters combined this occasion with a mass offering of requisites and other supplies to the Sangha. Anumodanā!

After all the excitement I continued with my three or four days a week of prison visiting and a week after the ordination spent a Saturday afternoon talking about Buddhist monasticism with members of the Knights Templars at a retreat they were holding nearby. I must say that they none of them cut quite the dashing and mysterious figure the name suggests and I was certainly amongst the youngest in the room but they were nice people.

Then just as we had put the clocks back

Another who has been a tremendous personal support to me and to Angulimala, the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy and who has also moved on and who I should have mentioned last



Mr & Mrs Win with the new bhikkhus.

month is Bill Gates who was at one time both Secretary and Treasurer of Angulimala and latterly the Secretary, with his wife, Lynn, a very able unofficial assistant. Bill was a tower of strength, always ready to do whatever was needed and deeply committed to Angulimala.

Life goes on and people move on and come and go and that is the nature of things. I'm grateful to everyone who helps us but I am especially indebted to Bill and Matt. Happily, people do return. Even as I have sat here composing this the phone has rung and a young woman who as a sixth-former used to attend meditation with us fifteen years ago has inquired about coming back. So with hopes of seeing them again before too long, my best wishes go out to Matt and Tamara and to Bill and to Lynn on their respective journeys.



Kyaw Myint and family with the two new bhikkhus.

On the first Saturday in November we braved the weather to again make the long haul up to Edinburgh for the day where I led a workshop for Angulimala, Scotland. This turned out to be a very good meeting.

A week later I took the two new bhikkhus with me down to Ford Open Prison in Sussex where we were to inaugurate the newly built Buddhist shrine there. Years ago I used to go to Ford and as we approached through the drizzle, I remembered the times I used to walk the mile from the station in driving rain leaning into the scant protection of my folding umbrella. Lord Avebury was there to join us and the Deputy Governor was in attendance. I'm pleased to say that there was such joy that this was happening that the rain didn't

matter, after all it was only weather!

Last month in this newsletter I sounded off about British Airways and their advertising campaign using two images of the Buddha. Twice I emailed them and I came close to threatening never to set foot on a BA plane again but on reflection that seemed a bit of an empty gesture as I've never been on a BA plane anyway. Eventually I did get a reply in which they said that prior to running the advert they had checked it out with a couple of Buddhist organisations (unidentified) that had no problem with it but they apologised anyway.

We've been talking about organising our own pilgrimage to the Buddhist holy places in India and Nepal for sometime next year. We want to arrange it so that the not so young can also be included and comfy. Please let us know if you're interested.