By Jaypal Singh

The BSWA International Food Fair fundraiser has drawn to a close. It was bigger and grander than before, with a fantastic variety of delicious food from different nationalities—Thai, Malaysian, Singaporean, Sri Lankan, Burmese, Vietnamese, Christmas Islanders, Chinese, Indian and European. It catered for both vegetarian and non-vegetarians alike.

The food fair brought the Buddhist community together, with over 30 volunteers from different nationalities working harmoniously to ensure the success of this event. A special thank you goes out to Michael Ngo and the volunteers for making sure the fair ran smoothly.

The food fair was kicked off with a Lion Dance, celebrating both the 15th Day of Chinese New Year as well as the start of the BSWA International Food Fair. The food fair is an event a lot of people look forward to attending because of the variety of food there as well as being a model of different communities harmoniously working together.

There were over 30 stalls, selling food, potted plants and roses. There was also a trash and treasure stall, to recycle unused items. It was estimated that more than 2,000 people attended the food fair, and the car park was overflowing.

While the highlight of this event was the food, the people were regaled with Thai cultural dances and traditional music. Volunteers from the Children Dhamma School presented some songs. The audience could not ask for more, being entertained while enjoying the good food.

The support of the Buddhist community in Western Australia for BSWA and Ajahn Brahm has been incredible! The food fair brought in $66,900. But beyond that, it brought together the Buddhist community in Western Australia.

This event would not be the success it was without the support of the volunteers and community.

BSWA would like to thank the M.P. for Nollamara (Janine Freeman) and President of Thai Australian Association (Sawaran Srisukkho) as well as members of the non-Buddhist community for attending and supporting the food fair. It is deeply appreciated.

The proceeds of the food fair will be used by the Buddhist Society of Western Australia (Inc.) to continue providing quality Meditation classes/retreats, Dhamma talks and Buddhist activities for its members and the wider Buddhist community in Western Australia and around the world.

Thank you for all your support!
By Eddie Khoo

The 2010 Chinese New Year celebration was held on the Friday night of February 19th immediately after the Dhamma talk by Ajahn Brahm.

Dhammaloka was elaborately decorated with colourful lights, red lanterns, glittering firecrackers, a pair of huge dragons and Chinese good luck scrolls. A record crowd of over 500 people were greeted with a large banner at the main hall, wishing them "A Healthy & Happy Chinese New Year".

The evening started with Ajahn Brahm blessing six trays of Chinese Good Luck sweets, which was immediately distributed to the crowd by three persons clad in traditionally Chinese costumes.

This was followed by loud banging of drums and cymbals and five huge lions entered the main hall amidst the continuing noise of the drums, cymbals, giant firecrackers and one hundred poppers.

There was loud applause from the crowd to welcome the lions. The lions first paid respect to the monks before they began the traditional Lion Dance. The audience followed the traditional Chinese custom of feeding little 'red packets' to the lions while they were performing the Lion Dance. The feeding of 'red packets' signifies appreciation and bringing of good luck.

There was continuous loud applause from the crowd who enjoyed the lion dance. This was followed by even louder and more frequent applause when the lion troop displayed their amazing Kung Fu and Chi Kung skills. The atmosphere was one of total enjoyment.

The Lions paying respect to the Sangha.

After the entertainment, a variety of snack foods and drinks brought by Dhamma friends were shared outside the main hall.

I want to specially thank Quyen Luong, the leader of the Lion Dance Group and members of his team. They are from Chow Kwoon Yarn Yee Tong Kung Fu Academy. I would also like to thank all the others who helped in one way or another to make it a spectacular evening.

It promised to be a pleasant evening; however, Saturday dawned cloudy which developed into a small storm! Fortunately for us, the weather cleared by the evening and we all met an hour before sunset as planned.

Despite the windy conditions, the park at Trigg was filled with people (like us) enjoying the summer evening. As additional members arrived and the smorgasbord of food grew, we caved into our hunger and decided to eat first.

The evening went into full swing as we caught up with old members and welcomed new members. Amongst the fun and laughter, we did manage to miss the sunset!

Undeterred, we went ahead with the meditation session. By this time, we had the beach and park pretty much to ourselves.

Our bellies full of good food, the warm ocean wind blowing and the pleasant sound of the waves, we sat down amongst friends (kalyana mitta if you will) and meditated. It had been a thoroughly enjoyable evening and promising start for 2010.

(For those interested in Kalyana Mitta's activities, please check the noticeboard, Facebook page or email tseling.wong@gmail.com)

Kalyana Mitta welcomes 2010!

To start off 2010, the members of Kalyana Mitta decided to take advantage of the wonderful WA beach weather and organised an outing to Trigg Beach for a sunset meditation and beach barbecue.

Sunset view from Trigg Beach
Bodhinyana Monastery

Bodhinyana Monastery has been in the news a lot over the past few months, thanks to the Bhikkhuni Ordination issue. So much so, that one website ranked the Bhikkhuni Ordination as No. 3 of the Top 10 international Buddhist news stories of 2009.

Ajahn Brahms Travels - In December, Ajahn Brahms led the annual 9-day retreat in Penang, sandwiched between two talks in Singapore. He returned just in time to conduct the very successful 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' New Years Eve party at Dhammadoka. Crowd numbers (and crowd-participation!) was at an all-time high.

Remarkably, in January Ajahn Brahms never set foot in an aircraft, but stayed put in Perth. In February, Ajahn flew to Malaysia for a 6-day Dhamma Tour. He visited Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu and Kuantan, giving Dhamma talks and meditation workshops to many hundreds of people.

While in Malaysia, he (inadvertently) became caught up in the Chinese New Year celebrations. He would have preferred to sleep through, blissfully unaware, but the crackers at midnight meant he, along with everyone else, greeted the New Year wide-awake.

Comings and Goings - Ajahn Dhammarato visited for a short time from Malaysia. Venerable Lakkhana, following the sudden death of a sister, returned to Sri Lanka to help care for his family. Venerable Vimokkha, who ordained at Bodhinyana, returned from 12 months in Sri Lanka to visit his family, both monastic and lay. Venerable Santuthi returned from visiting Eastern states monasteries. Although he didn't return any lighter, he certainly adds an extra lift to life at Bodhinyana and his return was greeted with much happiness on the part of the lay supporters.

Building - Roadwork: more of the firebreak roads at Bodhinyana Monastery were surfaced with concrete to make them accessible for fire trucks. Two monks' huts are being renovated; state-of-the-art concrete ceilings have been added to provide a quiet room for the monk below and an enjoyable playground for mice, rats and snakes above. Screen doors have been installed on a number of the huts to bring cool air to roasting monks in the baking high temperatures of Summer (and even Autumn!). Electricity generating solar panels have been installed on the workshop roof, proving that even brown-clad monks can be green.

Jhana Grove Retreat Centre

Building and Maintenance - The concrete surfacing of two strategic firebreaks has been completed.

Various plumbing problems have been fixed, with work ongoing to fix the small number of repair-jobs left.

The bamboo floor in the foyer to the Meditation Hall has been completed.

The drain behind the top row of cottages has been cleared and a simple stone retaining wall has been installed. This should solve the problem of flooding behind the top row of cottages.

Various offices have now been provided with cabled internet access points. Thanks to Danny, James, Geoff and Greg for all their valuable planning and assistance in this project.

Plans for a teacher's cottage have been completed, containing two bedrooms with ensuites and a common lounge area. These have been submitted to the Council for approval.

Mike and Dania Percy have replaced Kevin as the caretaker. We thank Kevin for all his wonderful work caretaking during the often challenging early days at Jhana Grove.

 Shelving has been installed in several cupboards. A room is being fitted out as a mini-workshop. A second clothes line has been installed for dry insight practitioners. Electricity generating solar panels have been installed on the roof of the kitchen-dining hall building to reduce ongoing costs. Work has begun on a ramp from the North-Eastern-most cottage to connect to the Meditation Hall, providing quick access to Jhana for lazy yogis.

Activities - A successful weekend retreat was conducted by Ajahn Cittapalo. Many individuals have made use of the facilities for self-retreats at times when there were no formal retreats.

One Step along the Way - from Anagarika Annie to Ayya Analaya

By Eli Novello

On that day in Bundanoon, Anagarika Annie Keating was ordained as ten precept Samaneri Ayya Analaya.

The ordination ceremony was held in the beautiful intimate setting of the Moneysa Meditation Cave at Santi. Moneysa Cave provided a wonderful ceremonial space, enclosed within flickering candle-lit walls carved out of the local sandstone.

The ordination setting held and focused the attention of assembled Sangha, close family and friends of Ayya and the wider Santi Community.

Annie's new Pali name, Analaya means non-attachment - 'place of no rest'. Also ordained on the day was Anagarika Shirley, now known as Samaneri Ayya Pasada. Pasada means confidence. The preceptor for the ordination was Senior Bhikkhuni Ven. Chi Kwan Summ.

Bhante Sujato (abbot of Santi monastery) had explained at the Dana meal hours earlier, how the Anagarikas would cease to be human beings and grow horns and tails once ordained. This caused great alarm amongst some of the children at the Dana, and thankfully the "horns and tails" jest proved to be inaccurate, but the tale did fit in nicely with the ghost stories told in Moneysa Cave during the ordination.

Fortunately, ghosts don't linger at auspicious occasions as these - they drift away, and the mendicant's life takes control. Life then shines in a different light, but with dazzlings of uncertainty and delight as before.

Simply and sincerely history and her story will record that family, friends and Sangha joined in wishing Annie (now Ayya Analaya) all the very best on her 'going forth'.

Ayya Analaya as a new Samaneri

In contrast to the scorching hot weather in Perth on the Valentine's Day weekend of 2010, the Saturday of 13 February was cool and joyously moist at Santi Forest Monastery, Bundanoon, NSW.
Good Thinking

An interview with Venerable Sucinta

By Julienne van Loon

Venerable Sucinta is a German-born Bhikkhuni who was a kammavaccanari at the ordination of Venerables Vijayama, Nirodha, Seri and Hasanapaka in 2009. She returned to Dhammasara in early 2010 to stay for two months. I began by asking her how, as a Westerner, she first became interested in Buddhism.

I came across Buddhism in Germany through the path of psychology. Actually the first person who mentioned Buddhism was a teacher who gave us teachings in psychotherapy.

He was a Zen practitioner. He was different from other people I had met so he made me curious. So then I bought a book on the life of the Buddha and it really struck me that this was what I had been looking for. Later I learned about the Buddhist Society in Hamburg.

I asked Venerable Sucinta to tell me something about the setting in which she began her life as a nun, and who her first teacher was.

Her explanation took us on a long journey that brought home to me just what a pioneer she has been as one of the first Western women to take the Bhikkhuni ordination in the Theravada tradition. She began by explaining her first association with a Buddhist monastery.

A young couple in Hamburg said to me, "Oh, there is a Buddhist monastery in England. You must go there." It was Amaravati.

I travelled there and I met my first Buddhist nuns. I also spent some time in Sri Lanka and in the USA, in West Virginia, where I met my later teacher, Bhante Gunaratana.

But when I made the decision that I wanted to ordain I couldn't get a visa for the United States. As a European it was not difficult for me to go to England. Fortunately they accepted me at Amaravati because I had already given up my apartment at that point!

So, that was my first ordination, in 1991, taking the eight precepts at Amaravati. I became an Anagarika. I stayed there for about two years, and somehow I couldn't make up my mind to ordain at Amaravati, to go the next step.

When Bhante Gunaratana (Bhan G) came to visit Amaravati I explained my situation to him and he said to me "Just come! Just come!" It turned out once I had made the decision to go the USA there was the possibility for me to apply for a religious worker's visa. And this worked out.

So I had my second ordination, my samaneri ordination, at the Bhavana Society in the USA in May 1994. And then I got my name, Sucinta, which means Good Thinking, given to me by Bhante G.

One day I was working in the office, that was my duty at that time, and Bhante G came and said, "Ah, Sucinta, would you like to attend a conference in Australia?" And I said, "Oh, yes!"

And so in 1995 I went to Wollongong. And at this conference, it was called the International Monastic Seminar, the Bhikkhuni ordination for Theravada nuns was discussed.

My later preceptor, Venerable Master Hsing Yun, was there and talked about a possible ordination in Bodhgaya. He felt that this was a good place to have an International ordination for all Buddhist traditions together. And I thought this was an excellent idea.

So it took a few more years until this became really ripe. The event was organised by the Taiwanese. They invited me to Taiwan for another international seminar, where they discussed this question again.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun wanted to make sure that some Theravada monks would also support the ordination. A number of Theravada monks signed a petition, which was given to Venerable Master Hsing Yun, to support nuns from Theravada and other traditions.

So some time later, I received an invitation to come to an International ordination in Bodhgaya, and my own teacher, Bhante G, gave his permission for me to go.

The organisers also asked me to pass the invitation around the US and Europe but unfortunately at that time, I was the only Western nun in the Theravada tradition who was interested and able to go.

So when we got to Bodhgaya, I was put in a group with the other Westerners who were all from the Tibetan tradition. That was in February 1998. Altogether 135 nuns were ordained at that time. It was very special.

I felt very happy when I read a poster on the wall at Bodhgaya that the Bhikkhunis from Taiwan wanted to give the ordination lineage back to the Theravada tradition, especially to the Sri Lankan nuns, because originally they had received their ordination from there. It was a very beautiful gesture.

After her visa for the USA expired, Venerable Sucinta left the Bhavana Society and became a regular visitor to Burma.

It's very important to visit Asia. I would always recommend that Westerners who want to understand or to practice Buddhism seriously spend some time in Asia. It's very valuable, especially for monastics. So, I went to Burma, but by now I was already a Bhikkhuni, and that made it quite difficult.

In Burma, I studied for a year at Yangon. And at the university there was also another Theravada Bhikkhuni, a Nepalese woman.

She was very young and her teacher had said to her "Don't even tell anyone that you are a Bhikkhuni! Just live like a nun!" She was wearing the pink robe like a Burmese nun.

But we attended a Vinaya class at the university, and so she learned more and more about the Vinaya. And I felt we should not pretend that we are not Bhikkhnis!

So I encouraged her to open up and actually admit, or to tell people that she was a Bhikkhuni. Fortunately the rector, Sayadaw U Silananda, was at that time in Burma.

He is a very well known monk who also was teaching in California, so he knew the situation in the West very well, and I went to see him together with a Bhikkhuni from Malaysia. I told him of our situation and he responded very compassionately.
Dhammasara Monastery

Community

The community enjoyed friendly and beneficial visits from Ajahn Candarsiri from Anavarati, England from 14th to 23rd December 2009 and Venerable Sucinta from Sanghamittarama, Melbourne.

Ven. Sucinta had participated in the bhikkhuni ordination in October 2009 and returned to visit the monastery on her way to Germany from 23rd January to 24th March 2010.

Both of them shared their experience and life as a monastic with us as well as with our lay visitors at dana time.

Ven. Sucinta also gave some classes on vinaya and led discussion sessions on monastic discipline. We appreciated the time and effort that she put into teaching us.

Both Ajahn Vayama and Ven. Nirodha attended the 9 day Retreat from 25th December to 3rd January at Jhanna Grove taught by Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammadiva from Mectiri gala Nissarama Vanaya, Sri Lanka.

Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna attended the Australian Sangha Association Seminar on monastic discipline from 8th to 12th February at Santi Forest Monastery. Monastics from various traditions in Australia took part in the seminar.

Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna also participated in the samanera ordination of Annie Keating (a member of BSWA and former committee member) who become Samaneri Analaya. We wish her well on her monastic journey.

Ven. Seri was invited by her family to visit her sister in Melbourne from 15th to 22nd February after the ASA Seminar in Sydney. She stayed at Sanghamittarama with Ayya Atapi during her visit in Melbourne. Ven. Hasapanna returned to Perth on 15th February.

Good Kamma Busy Bee 2010

We were delighted to have 45 volunteers come and offer their support on 10th January. Another 40 people came later to offer dana to all those who participated in the busy bee.

All of us including the supporters were touched by the enormous participation. The stars of the busy bee were two brothers, our youngest volunteers on the day, Sudhara and Sahan Wecrakoon who helped to transport the leaves and branches to the gravel pit.

You are invited to join in the fun of the next busy bee! The dates of the coming busy bees are as follows: Sunday 18th April, Sunday 16th May and Sunday 20th June. Please bring a pair of gloves, a rake and a cutter if you have one, and be ready to start at 8.00am. Everyone of all capabilities is welcome.

Building And Maintenance

In February, for bush fire safety we installed shutters for all the glass windows and doors at the Nuns Cottage as well as the Abbot’s kuti. The shutters also offered a cool refuge in summer.

We will be putting a brick path between the Abbot’s kuti and the Nuns Cottage in March. We also will do some maintenance painting work on the Nuns Cottage and kutis.

Food Fair 28th February 2010

We send our congratulations and appreciation to everyone for your contributions for making the Food Fair a success.

Vesak Meditation Day

The monastery will be closed on Friday 28th May. Ven. Nirodha, Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna will be conducting the Vesak Meditation Day at DHAMMALOKA. Please arrive at 8.30 am for 9.00 am start for a day of practice in NOBLE SILENCE.

Funny Moments at the Monastery

These are some interesting stories at the monastery just to lighten the report and to show that we do have fun at the monastery!

Story one: The vice president came to the monastery on her regular Monday dana. She arranged to take a photo of the Abbot for this issue of ET. However the day happened to be the day after the uposatha day (a day that the community meditates and practices till at least 12am).

The Abbot asked the vice president to kindly wait for 10 minutes so that she could take all the cutters out of her hair for the photo. Please report to the monastery if you find any cutters in her no-hair!

Story two: At all major events including the busy bee there are two special task forces at work at Dhammasara, the Kitchen Dragon and the Shoe Dragon.

However, as from 2010 the titles have been changed by themselves to Kitchen Goddess and Shoe Goddess, to reflect the smiles and kind hearted effort of the two volunteers to ensure the smooth running and safety of all events. Please come and meet them!

It seems that a little bit of support from an individual monk can make a big difference to life as a Bhikkhuni.

Right, yes. This often makes a big difference. I have experienced it a few times. For example, two individual monks, in different places, they allowed me to go on alms round in Burma. Because normally nuns don’t go.

And so these monks on different occasions, they allowed me to follow the monks with my alms bowl. And I felt very happy, especially for the girls standing there, lining up, and offering rice, because I think they saw my female face. I felt great!

I felt very happy that I could do that. Especially in Burma. It was something so special.

Now you have spent some time staying at Dhammasara, can you talk about your impressions of the monastery here, and of the changes since the ordination of four Bhikkhunis here last year?

I came here the first time for the Bhikkhuni ordination, so I don’t have any experience of what it was like before. But I think it’s very important that the nuns here made the decision as a group to go for higher ordination.

This is a very good sign of a strong group, to make this decision together, and to go through it together. I also know from my own experience that it makes a difference to go through the ordination. For me it has never been just a formal act.

I have a very good feeling about this community, also the conditions are good, to be out in nature, this is very special, to have the kutis. It is very good to have the space here (at Dhammasara) to be alone, to do our practice alone.

I rather think that the community is there to support individual practice, and then of course, the individual practice also supports the community. It has to go both ways.

Ajahn Vayama has really done the hard work here, to have come to this point where the nuns can take the higher ordination together, and to have developed the relationship with the lay people who support the monastery so generously and lovingly. It is very beautiful.
**Letter to the Editor**

**Buddhist Nuns Flourished in Sri Lanka, Then and Now...**

Before the advent of the Buddha, women in India were generally not held in high esteem. They were also thought to be spiritually "regressive" compared with men.

It was the Buddha who raised the status of women in society, and showed that being a woman was not a barrier to reaching spiritual enlightenment. Women hold an honourable place in Buddhism.

The Buddha broke long held traditions in India by creating an order of nuns (bhikkhunis), thus admitting women into the spiritual life. The order was started by Buddha’s foster mother, Maha Payapati Gotami, with 500 women joining the order. Arahat Khema and Arahat Uppalavanna were made the 2 chief disciples of the order.

In the time of King Asoka, missionaries were sent far and wide to spread the teaching of the Buddha. In the year 308BC, on a full moon day in June, the King’s only son Arahat Mahinda and 4 other Theras arrived in Sri Lanka.

They introduced Buddhism and the order of Sangha, and taught Buddhist customs and manners to the Sri Lankan people. Thereafter, full moon days became days of religious observances in Sri Lanka.

The very first sermon preached by Arahat Mahinda to the Sri Lankan people was the parable of the elephant’s footprint. The sermon had such a profound, far-reaching and powerful influence over the Sri Lankan King and his retinue, that at the end of the sermon, the King and 40,000 people embraced Buddhism.

After the sermon, the King’s brother’s wife, Queen Anula and several hundred other ladies expressed their desire to join the nun’s order. Arahat Mahinda and King Devasamampiyathissa asked Arahat Sangamitta Theri to come to Sri Lanka and establish the order of nuns. On a full moon day in December of 308BC, Theri Sangamitta arrived in Sri Lanka. She brought with her a cutting from the sacred bodhi tree, the tree under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment.

Her visit to Sri Lanka lead to the establishment of the order of nuns there, and the planting of the sacred bodhi tree at Anuradhapura, where it remains as the oldest historical tree in the world.

The establishment of the order of nuns by this eminent disciple of the Buddha resulted in thousands of women joining the order. Even nuns from other countries (Thailand, Burma and Indonesia) took Bhikkhuni ordination in Sri Lanka.

Then in the 5th century, the Bhikkhuni lineage was transmitted from Sri Lanka to China. Now, it has been brought back from China to Sri Lanka.

In reverence and gratitude for his great service and dedication to the people of Sri Lanka, Arahat Mahinda was given the Appellation of the 2nd Buddha. Theri Sangamitta has been recognised as the first woman diplomat for her service to the people of Sri Lanka.

As a mark of respect, every year in June and December, Sri Lankan Buddhists carry their statues in procession.

As a senior member of the Buddhist Society of WA, I was very impressed and grateful for the opportunity to be at the first Bhikkhuni ordination held in Perth on 22 October 2009. It was the first time the nuns ordination has been held outside Asia!

I was overwhelmed by the support from all those who came from Australia and overseas, and I would like to thank them, as well as our monks - Venerable Ajahn Brahm, Ven. Brahmali and Ven. Sujato for giving Australia the chance to go down in history.

The Buddhist Society of WA has indeed come a long way from its humble beginnings. We now have a monk’s and nun’s monastery as well as a meditation retreat centre to cater for the spiritual needs of the increasing number of devotees in Perth and around Australia.

My heartiest congratulations to the pioneering Bhikkhunis - Venerable Ajahn Vayama, Ven. Nirodha, Ven. Seri, and Ven. Haspanna. Their achievement is a great inspiration for us to follow the spiritual path taken by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. I hope to see nuns from other parts of the world come to Perth for Bhikkhuni ordination in the near future.

Chandra Abeyesiriwardane

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**Home Invasion Protection of the Triple Gems**

On that fateful night of 19 January 2010, a masked intruder armed with a knife, garden fork and a hammer walked into my house through an unlocked door around 9 p.m. I was cooking in my kitchen and happened to turn around to be confronted by this strange looking masked man standing about 4 feet away holding up his weapons.

Extreme terror came over me. I let out two blood curdling screams in quick succession. In a split second, I went into denial as I stared into his face to see if it was my husband, Sunny, dressed up like that to frighten me.

Hearing the screams, Sunny came flying into the kitchen to investigate. The intruder ordered both of us to lie down on the kitchen floor and not to look at him. He told us to just look at his feet to know where he was.

As we went down on the floor, Sunny started chanting OM MANI PADME HUM, the Buddha of Compassion’s mantra and I joined him in chanting quietly under our breaths.

At that point I was shaking with fear. Thoughts of being robbed, bashed senseless, raped or even killed ran amok in my mind. Minutes later a calmness came over me. I even questioned myself if to why I was feeling so calm.

The first thing I said to him was “We are peaceful people. Just tell us what you want and we will give them to you but please do not harm us.” His reply to that was “I am also a peaceful person. If you do as I tell you, I will not harm you.”

That was cold comfort to us as he was the one holding the weapons and looked quite agitated and menacing. He added, “I want money. My wife is pregnant and I am homeless.” To that Sunny said, “I have $50 in my wallet”.

The views expressed are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia (Inc).
When he opened the wallet, he only found a $20 note. So then I gave him
my purse which contained $30. At that point I thought he would ask us to
drive him to the nearest ATM to get more cash and then will probably
finish us off, but surprisingly there were no demands from him for more
cash or anything else.

He was quite happy with the $50 cash, mobile phone and our car. He said
he will return the car keys another day and leave them in our letter box. He
later changed his mind, saying he will drive to Warwick Station and leave
the keys under the car seat.

During our half hour ordeal, he was apologised numerous times and asked
for forgiveness. Twice he sounded as though he was about to cry for
putting us through all this. Before leaving he asked for my name and I said
"Lee Chew" upon which he said "Oh, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Chew. Give me a
minute to pray. God please forgive me. I am very very sorry."

Immediately I said to him "We have forgiven you. I will pray for you and I
wish you all the best." Even when he had reversed the car out onto the road
he called out to us to come to him and apologised one more time before
driving off.

After he left, we felt no anger towards him. In fact we were thankful to him
for not physically hurting us. We also felt a little sorry for him for having to
commit such negative actions which will definitely bring great suffering to
him in the future.

The TV reporters who turned up at my house the next morning requested to
interview us because according to them it was a bizarre story. Initially I
turned them down but when they explained that our TV appearance will
serve to warm and benefit others, we reluctantly consented for that reason
only.

Looking back now, we actually had a gentleman robber who showed
concern for his victim. Although we had the negative karma to experience this terrifying ordeal, we also have a lot of good karma to
protect us from a worse outcome.

We can still rejoice in the fact we now have one less negative imprint to
experience. One of my dharma friends wrote in an email to me saying, "If
there is one thing she had learnt from our misfortune it is the power of
mantras, the power of forgiveness and the power of staying calm."

If the story appeared bizarre to viewers with the aggressor saying sorry and
asking for forgiveness, it is equally bizarre with the victim expressing
forgiveness, offering prayers for the aggressor and wishing him all the
best.

As I have told him I will pray for him. I have been faithfully dedicating my
daily merits to him and for him to find peace, happiness, contentment in
accordance with the dharma and to immediately cease to create terror in
other peoples’ minds, to have every opportunity to hear the dharma and be
transformed by the dharma. This is my sincere wish for him.

Lastly we'd like to thank all our dharma teachers for imparting Lord
Buddha's precious teachings that must have influenced the way we
handled ourselves at a time like that: Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu.

Lee Chew

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**Armada Mediation Group**

**Meditation and Dhamma Talk**

**Every Tuesday Evening.**

by Jo Donnelly

The Armada Meditation Group gives people the
opportunity to learn meditation and to hear a Dhamma talk
from one of the senior monks from Bodhinyana Monastery,
during the week and in a location south of the river.

We are run by the BSWA, and the evenings do have a distinct
Buddhist flavour. However, many people from non-Buddhist
backgrounds also attend these session as they just want to
learn to meditate.

We meet every Tuesday evening except at Christmas and
New Year. We start at 7pm & finish at 8.30pm (Arrive by 6.50
to get a seat).

Everyone from any background are welcome to join us at the
Community Health Building (right from the main gate),
Armada Health Campus (formerly Armada-Kelmiscott
Hospital), Albany Highway, Armada.

Our sessions are informal and relaxed. We are a friendly
group of people, and will help you if you are new to the group
and do not know what to do.

In these sessions, we practice different forms of Buddhist
meditation, i.e. meditation on the breath, “loving kindness”
meditation (Metta), body scan meditation or mantra
meditation. There are no physical exercises such as
stretching or yoga involved.

The programme is approximately as follows:

- **7.00pm**: Chanting of the Metta Sutta in English
- **7.05 - 7.30**: Introductory talk on meditation
- **7.30 - 8.00**: Guided meditation
- **8.00 - 8.30**: Questions and answers, and a short talk (if
time permits)

For further information,请 contact Jo Donnelly (Co-
ordinator for the Armada Meditation Group) email:
Armada@bswa.org or phone 92910702.
The Annual General Meeting AGM was held on Saturday the 13th of March. A new committee was installed.

We said goodbye to our long serving Treasurer Carol Chan. Carol has been a pivotal part of our committee and we will miss her. We do however wish her a well earned rest.

Long standing Assistant Treasurer Suzanne Kennedy-Keane also stood down along with Assistant Secretary Michael Dove. Thank you all for your efforts.

The newly elected committee members are Ananda Thilakasiri as our new Treasurer, Wengong Lam as Assistant Treasurer, and Kathly Nilsson as Assistant Secretary. The rest of the committee is remaining in place, leaving a good continuity that will make the committee very effective.

I would like to report to readers that the AGM moved a motion to express unanimous support for our new Bhikkhuni’s, Ajahn Brahmin and the committee, for the way they have guided and handled the Bhikkhuni ordination and the subsequent fallout from this event.

In this newsletter, I would also like to share with you some information that has subsequently come to light regarding the ordination, and that was passed over at the AGM. Hopefully this will be the last time I will have to write any justifications or explanations for what happened, as we all think it is time to leave the controversy behind and get on with being friends with all our Dhamma Colleagues.

As you all know I went with Ajahn Brahmin to the meeting at Wat Pah Pong and was greatly saddened by the treatment and disrespect he received.

From my point of view, he did not receive a fair go and was definitely misunderstood and not listened to. He tried to heal the rift but was cast out by what I determine to be a few disaffected senior monks who were in no mood to compromise. This story is in the last issue of the Enlightened Times.

Much has been said about the bhikkhuni ordination that we held in October last year. It created a great world wide controversy, which for most of us was an unbelievable happening.

Our monastery was disenfranchised from the Wat Pah Pong group of Monasteries. We were all very sad about that, because we did not set out to have anything like this happen.

It seems there are senior monks that are very angry with us and they have gone to extraordinary lengths to try and punish us. I would not have believed the things that have happened, would have ever been possible amongst Buddhist friends.

When some of the disaffected Wat Pah Pong elders realized, that rather than being pilloried, Ajahn Brahmin was being celebrated by groups around the world, they decided to take more drastic action.

So they called on the Monastery to be taken from him. There was a senior monk who was calling on members of our Perth Thai community to raise a petition to this affect and further, encouraging the lay community to no longer feed him.

There were apparently 2 or 3 people who did follow up this Monks instructions but the petition soon fizzled out, and Ajahn Brahmin says he is still “too fat”.

I did write a public letter to the Thai community to offset the untruths that were being spread about Ajahn Brahmin and the BSWA, and it was counter signed by all the available past Presidents.

The whole episode does seem to have died down now so we hope there will be no more bad blood. I might say that our Perth Thai community have been magnificent in their support for Ajahn Brahmin. This has been expressed in so many ways, including the huge effort they made on the day of the food fair.

The AGM passed a motion of gratitude to the Perth Thai Community for their good will and support for Ajahn and the BSWA.

We did always know that this ordination would be controversial, but heavens above, our candidates are all impeccable women with years of practice. It’s hard to imagine how such a beautiful thing can be so troublesome for some people.

There is one final matter where I would like to set the record straight. We have been accused in many forums of keeping the ordination a secret.

As I have reported in the Enlightened Times we kept the ceremony date secret for about 3 weeks, mainly because we were trying to organise the logistics of getting all the qualified Bhikkhus here at the same time.

The dates that they could all be here intersected on the day we did the ceremony. We kept it under wraps mainly so that nothing would interrupt that process.

As for planning a secret ordination, the following extracts form the AGM minutes from last year show that our intentions have always been right out in the open. These minutes were passed as a true and correct record at the AGM.

From Ajahn Vayama’s Report

One of the longstanding unresolved issues in Theravada Buddhism is the non-availability for women of the equivalent ordination to the Upasampada ordination that is available for men.

2007 saw a fundamental “shift in the wind” with regard to this topic. The combination of a body of scholastic research showing the validity of such ordination, even in the absence of an unbroken ordination lineage, together with the rejection of the gender based discrimination which supports the denial of ordination, led some senior bhikkhus to a fundamental rethink on this issue. There is now a real possibility that the bhikkhuni ordination will be available to the Dhammasara Sangha in the foreseeable future.

In March a seminar for nuns will be held at Santi Forest Monastery outside Sydney which will be attended by 28 nuns from around the world. The aim of the seminar is to maintain the forward momentum on this issue, to support and learn from each other.

Ajahn Vayama, Sister Suri, Sister Athapi and Mae Chee Yai will be attending. Three visiting overseas nuns will spend time at Dhammasara before and following the seminar. There is still a lot of work to be done but there is now a more positive prospect that the issue can be resolved. Dhammasara and all of us are part of this process.

From Ajahn Brahmin’s Report

The future 12 months will be inspiring. The 25th anniversary of Bodhivihana Monastery will be on 1st December 2008 and the 10th anniversary of Dhammasara will be a couple of days later. The opening ceremony of the Retreat Centre will follow in early 2009 and, hopefully, the first Theravada Bhikkhuni ordination in Australia will come next.

Our intentions about full ordination for women have always been crystal clear. I now think of us as being like a naive group that caused others to ignite a bomb that they were making.

I say this because, by contrast, we have since heard that the English Sangha had started a process of creating 5 rules for Nuns that would preclude them from ever being fully ordained.

Most of the Wat Pah Pong Monasteries were involved, but importantly Ajahn Brahmin was not invited to participate. I wonder why they kept us out of that secret loop.

These rules would have been ready for the Western Sangha meeting to be held in Perth but as history shows that meeting was subsequently cancelled in retribution for the ordination.

The new rules along with other rumblings that we have subsequently heard about, that came directly from WPP, means a Full Ordination may
have been discussed at the Perth meeting but it would never have been allowed.

The fall out from the ordination demonstrates this fact absolutely. The bomb as it were, blew up in their faces. Any wonder they were so angry with us for going ahead before the Perth meeting.

For the BSWA, we now know where we stand. We have four fully ordained Bhikkhunis and we know that what we did was right, proper and legal. We can move forward with the confidence that we have acted in good faith and in a beautiful compassionate way that fully respects the integrity of woman and the Buddha Saccana.

Finally, on the suggestion that Ajahn Brahm is heading up a Buddhist cult here in Perth. I have already addressed the misunderstandings that I believe some people have in this regard, through the way they listen to Ajahn Brahm's teachings on loving and accepting yourself.

Ajahn Brahm is very good at thinking well of himself and more power to him for that. It gives great results.

I want to share a story that came from a senior monk that lives with Ajahn Brahm at Serpentine. It is about how sometimes people who are leaders and live at the top, sometimes surround themselves with people who protect them and screen them from the vicissitudes of their followers.

I have seen this in many leaders, indeed I have tried, and I say tried, to do this for Ajahn Brahm at times. Sometimes this action does what it is supposed to do, in that it allows some respite and freedom for the leader concerned.

However oftentimes it can separate the leader from the group leaving the way open for all kinds of abuse to come about. It can indeed be very cultish.

The senior monk that told me this story said he is in a ideal position to note if anything like this happens at Bodhinyana. He said it most certainly does not.

He commented that even though he may be the closest of Ajahn Brahm’s inner circle, he has the same access as anyone else. Indeed a person of the street can easily gain equal access.

It is simply way off the mark to describe the leadership at the BSWA to be cultish.

### Fremantle Buddhist Spring Festival

The Buddhist Council of WA organised the inaugural Fremantle Buddhist Spring Festival in November 2009. The festival featured an international food fair and a range of Dhamma activities, such as free meditation sessions, distribution of free Buddhist literature and chanting.

Ajahn Brahmali and two other speakers spoke on environmental issues, particularly “how Buddhism cools the environment”.

The festival was a great success! It was a great show of Buddhist unity with the majority of WA Buddhist organisations participating together under the BCWA banner.

Representatives of the WA Premier, MP for Nollamara, Ms Janine Freeman and the mayor of Fremantle graced the occasion.

BSWA members will be happy to know that BSWA was well represented in the organising committee as well as in the number of stalls at the food fair. More information about the event may be found at www.wa.buddhistcouncil.org.au.

### Buddhists too celebrate Australia Day

On the 21st of January 2010, the Buddhist community was represented by Ven Ajahn Brahmavamso Thera (representing the Australian Sangha Association) and Dr Jake Mitra (representing the BCWA and FABC) at Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Australia Day Reception, held at Perth Town Hall.

About 350 local dignitaries and leaders of community were invited. The simple event featured an Aboriginal welcome by a leader of the Nyungar people. In his speech the Prime Minister expressed his thanks to all non-profit NGO's which provide physical, moral and spiritual help and guidance to the country.

On Sunday, 21 March 2010, the peaceful Minnawarra Park was transformed into a hive of activity when the City of Armadale held the Minnawarra Festival.

The atmosphere was fun with a lot of activities for everyone. The pleasant weather made the event more enjoyable, with a lot of people turning up to the festival.

The Armadale Meditation Group held an information stall at the festival, manned by generous volunteers from the group, with the aim to promote our Meditation Group and BSWA to this wonderfully diverse community.

The big hit of the day was our Alms Bowl full of 'Lucky Dips' of Wise Sayings by Ajahn Brahm, Ajahn Chah and other famous monks. One of our volunteers, Christina, did a fantastic job offering the wise sayings to as many people as she could.

Most who took a Wise Sayings from the Alms Bowl were genuinely moved by the wisdom on the little slips of paper. After receiving one of these sayings, they then ventured over to our stall, helping themselves to some free Dhamma booklets and meditation CDs.

We had a lot of expressions of interest from the visitors regarding meditation and our Meditation Group. It seems that many people living in and around the area were not even aware of our Meditation Group.

They have been venturing far and wide to attend meditation classes/group when there was one such group at their doorstep. In previous years, we had many newcomers to our Tuesday evening Meditation group as a result of speaking to our volunteers at the Festival.

We hope to see lots of new people attending our Meditation Group on Tuesdays. I would personally like to thank all of our volunteers this year: David, Christina, Norma, Pindal, Mariane and Sandra. It was very much appreciated!!
Introducing the new BSWA Committee Members for 2010. Each role is a voluntary position to enable the Buddhist Society to function well and efficiently and to serve the Buddhist and wider communities. Throughout the year there will be calls for extra volunteers to assist with ongoing activities as well as special events and functions.

If you would like to contribute your time or skills, please contact the relevant General Committee Member or Non-Committee Support Volunteer with your details.

If you are unsure of whom to contact, please direct your enquiries to the Assistant Secretary.

**Spiritual Directors**

- **Spiritual Director**
  - Ajahn Brahmavamso
  - Abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery

- **Assistant Spiritual Director**
  - Ajahn Vayama
  - Abbot of Dhammasara Monastery

**Committee**

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- **TECHNICAL OPERATIONS COORDINATOR**
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The Buddhist Society of WA Committee for 2010

Committee

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Part Time Paid Officials

ADMINISTRATOR
Danny Caporn

BOOKKEEPER
Joy Daglish
Ongoing Activities

Dhammaloka

- Chanting, Guided Meditation and Dhamma Talk - Every Friday, 7pm-9pm.
- Beginner's Meditation Class - Every Saturday, classes starts 1st Sat of the Month, 3pm-4pm.
- Sutta Study Group - 2nd & 4th Sunday of the Month, 3pm - 4:15pm.
- Dhamma School for Children - 2nd & 4th Sunday of the Month, 9:15am - 10:15am or 3pm - 4:30pm.
- Sangha Dana - Every Weekend, 10am.

Armadale Meditation Group

- Meditation Class - every Tuesdays, 7pm - 8:30pm

Meditation Retreats at Jhana Grove Retreat Centre

Nine Day Retreats
- 1 April - 10 April - Ajahn Brahm
- 18 June - 27 June - Ajahn Khemavaro
- 5 Nov - 14 Nov - Ajahn Brahm

Weekend Retreats
- 4 June - 6 June
- 10 December - 12 December

Movie Night at BSWA

There will be a free screening of Bernardo Bertolucci's "Little Buddha" at BSWA on 10 April 2010 (Saturday) at 6.30pm. This 1994 movie shows the historical journey taken by Prince Siddharta to becoming the fully Enlightened One - The Buddha. If you are interested in attending, please book your place by contacting cheery_always@yahoo.com as places are limited.

Family Day Camp

Families will get together for a day out in the hills of Kalamunda (Jorgansen Park, The Crescent Road, Kalamunda) on 2 May 2010 (Sunday) from 9am - 3pm. The participants will be involved in family building games, crafts, outdoor activities in the spirit of Buddhism, meditation practice and discovering what the Buddha said and did. This camp will cost $10 a family. For registration and more details, contact Ron Mutton (clients@bswa.org).

Vesak Festivities Day at Dhammaloka

There will be Vesak Day Festivities at Dhammaloka on 30 May 2010 (Sunday). Full Moon Observance Day and Vesak Silent Meditation Retreat Day will be on 28 May 2010 (Friday) at Dhammaloka. Ajahn Vayama & the Bhikkhunis will be in attendance.

Autumn 2010
Official Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia (Inc.)
Special thanks to all of our contributors and helpers.
Articles or information to be considered for the next issue must reach the Editor by 6th June 2010, by mailing to the postal address below or emailing: publicity@bswa.org
Please provide Word documents and images in jpg format where possible.
Printed by: The Environmental Printing Company www.environmentalprintingco.com using vegetable dyes & 100% recycled paper.
Layout & design by Sandra Harms
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Activities Disclaimer

The activities are correct at time of printing. Most activities times are changed during the Rains Retreat (Full moon in July to full moon in October). Please contact BSWA (info@bswa.org) to verify the times.